2018

Survivors' Experiences of Pet Abuse Within the Cycle of Domestic Violence

Taylor Chastain Johnson
Walden University

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Taylor Chastain Johnson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Susana Verdinelli, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Martha Giles, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Tracy Masiello, University Reviewer, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2018

Abstract

Survivors' Experiences of Pet Abuse Within the Cycle of Domestic Violence

by

Taylor Chastain Johnson

MS, Georgia State University, 2015

BA, Georgia State University, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

General Psychology

Walden University

August 2018

Abstract

Domestic violence is a pervasive issue that impacts all members of a household, including pets. There is comprehensive quantitative evidence to suggest that domestic violence and pet abuse commonly co-occur; however, as the personal accounts of pet-owning survivors have started to emerge through qualitative investigation, more research is needed to understand the unique experiences of pet abuse that take place alongside instances of domestic violence. This phenomenological investigation utilized control balance theory and a feminist framework to uncover the experiences of survivors who entered their pets into an animal care program specifically designed to help during times of domestic violence escape. Data from interviews with 12 participants were compared to secondary qualitative data from anonymous animal abuse surveys at the community partner organization. A lens of interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to identify global themes related to survivors' experiences of pet ownership while escaping domestic violence. From these testimonies, pets were revealed to be important to consider in responding to domestic violence because pets not only played key roles of emotional support in the survivors' lives, but they were also threatened and harmed by abusers to control victims. Furthermore, the provision of pet care for survivors who were escaping domestic violence was determined to be a meaningful intervention. Through learning of the experiences of pet ownership along the trajectory of recovery for domestic violence survivors, advocates may be better prepared to serve clients at this intersection. Furthermore, the empirical understanding of the role of the human-animal bond in domestic violence survivorship was augmented by this study.

Survivors' Experiences of Pet Abuse Within the Cycle of Domestic Violence

by

Taylor Chastain Johnson

MS, Georgia State University, 2015

BA, Georgia State University, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

General Psychology

Walden University

August 2018

Dedication

This project is dedicated to the queens and kings of unconditional positive regard who, despite the flawed nature of us humans, continuously respond to the world with nothing but love. To my little Lucy, the Yorkipoo who started it all…you have shown me that even the smallest of creatures is capable of leading a pack. To Rex, the world's most perceptive border collie, thank you for teaching me that I must take care of myself before I can tend to others. To Charley and Ivy, the therapy dogs who have remained vulnerable and kind regardless of the people who failed you prior to your rescue- if you can still be so tender, why can't we all? To all of my other great dog loves, Annie and Bronx and Leonard and Ruby and Walter and Fiona and Harlem. To Captain and Matza (all dogs go to heaven). This work is for you. I will spend my whole life doing all that I can to show the world the depth of your beings and the power of your love.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents for always making me feel as though I could achieve any dream that I set my mind to. Thank you for believing that there was more to the crazy dog lady madness than meets the eye. Dad, you are brilliant and creative, and I hope to carry the torch of your legacy as both a writer and a healer for many years to come. Mom, growing up as your daughter, there wasn't a single experience in my formative years that would have led me to believe that women had to fight to be considered equal. You are wise and powerful, and you embody good stewardship in all that you do. To whom much is given, much is also expected, and all that I'm able to give the world will have ultimately had its genesis in you.

To say that I am grateful to my husband for his unending support would be an understatement. Even while grounding me, you push me forward. You instinctively and always know just what I need, and you give me the confidence to accept it. I know that you will forever be my biggest advocate, and I will always be the same for you.

I would also like to thank my doctoral committee for your invaluable insight and leadership. To Dr. Susana Verdinelli, my committee chair, who has gone above and beyond to support my academic pursuits- I thank you. Dr. Martha Giles and Dr. Tracy Masiello, your thoughtful feedback has made me a better researcher, and for that I am grateful.

Finally, I thank the bold and brave participants who informed the findings of this study. Your survivorship is both humbling and inspiring, and I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to learn from your testimonies.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The link between domestic violence (DV) and animal abuse has been well-established both in the human services arena and in the empirical literature (Hardesty, Khaw, Ridgway, Weber, & Miles, 2013; Komorosky, Rush-Woods, & Empie, 2015; Krienert, Walsh, Matthews, & McConkey, 2012; Long & Kulkarni, 2013; McDonald et al., 2015). Realizing this link, practitioners have begun to recognize that interpersonal violence not only commonly occurs alongside pet abuse, but that pet ownership may also serve as a barrier for a person who is attempting to escape an abusive relationship (Collins et al., 2017; Krienert et al., 2012). Although increased awareness of the relationship between these two forms of violence has allowed for improved assessment and advocacy in the field of DV prevention, there remains a need for a more in-depth understanding of how pets fit into the cycle of abuse in interpersonal violence (Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Hardesty et al., 2013; Newberry, 2016).

In this chapter, I will provide a general backdrop for understanding the issue of DV and pet abuse. I will outline the theoretical and conceptual support for this study, leading to a discussion of the methodology that was chosen to explore the key concepts of this investigation. I will also consider the specific scope of this project alongside its inherent delimitations and limitations. Finally, the potential significance of this study will be identified, both in applied advocacy and empirical understanding.

Background

The existing literature on this topic has largely focused on obtaining a general understanding of prevalence using measures such as surveys and questionnaires to describe the co-occurrence of DV and pet abuse (Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2003a, 2003b). However, scholar-practitioners have been unclear about how the lived experience of witnessing pet abuse impacts survivors both during the abuse and after a person seeks safety (Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Hardesty et al., 2013; Simmons & Lehman, 2007). Though preliminary qualitative investigation on these experiences suggests that pets are often used to control a victim, more research on these experiences was called for so that advocates can work toward obtaining a developed understanding of the reactions of survivors who have been subjected to pet abuse as a control tactic within the cycle of DV (Collins et al., 2017; Hardesty et al., 2013).

Working to create a more comprehensive appreciation of survivors' experiences of pet abuse in DV could lead to a large payoff for both academic and applied practice (DeGue, 2011; Hardesty et al., 2013; Onyskiw, 2007). In recognizing these experiences, practitioners are better prepared to assist in the long-term mental health treatment of DV survivors (Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2003a, 2007). More attention must also be paid to the ways in which animals are used to maintain power and control in interpersonal relationships because the realization of this tactic is crucial in providing meaningful services to DV victims who have pets (Collins et al., 2017; Hardesty et al., 2013; Straka & Montminy, 2008). Not only does this information contribute to enhanced human and animal welfare, but it also speaks to the mechanisms of power and control

that sustain abusive relationships, ultimately empowering survivors and advocates to make steps toward ending DV in the treatment of both the victim and the perpetrator (Collins et al., 2017; DeGue, 2011; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Hardesty et al., 2013).

Problem Statement

Research has demonstrated that forms of violence, such as DV and pet abuse, often occur within the same household, but the intricate dynamics of the ways in which these forms of injustice relate is an area in need of further investigation (Collins et al., 2017; Hardesty et al., 2013; Newberry, 2016). Krienert et al. (2012) surveyed 767 nationwide DV shelters and discovered that 94% of shelter workers reported noticing a coexistence between DV and pet abuse, which then led to a delayed escape from the abuse for fear of the survivor's pet. Having realized significant statistical information about the coexistence of these issues, some researchers have adopted a qualitative approach to better understand how pets are used to control victims of DV (Collins et al., 2017; Flynn, 2000a; Hardesty et al., 2013; McDonald et al., 2015; Tiplady, Walsh, & Phillips, 2012). A study by Tiplady et al. (2012) yielded a qualitative appreciation of the experiences of animal ownership as it intersects with DV by interviewing five women who had recently escaped an abusive relationship. Through this study, the researchers learned that pets who are abused in DV situations often display behavioral changes and that resources were limited in terms of intervention at this intersection (Tiplady et al., 2012). Tiplady et al. also echoed the findings of previous research on DV and pet abuse, noting that abusers selectively use violence towards animals to control victims.

Recently, Collins et al. (2017) answered the call for further qualitative investigation on this topic by interviewing 103 survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) about their experiences of pet abuse related to DV, motherhood, and safety planning. Again, lasting themes emerged from this study, with the researchers noting the use of pet abuse to coerce DV victims (Collins et al., 2017). Among the other themes that are outlined in Collin et al.'s study, the experience of pet abuse to maintain control in DV was found to have an emotional and psychological impact on survivors.

As these foundational qualitative themes have been reported, further qualitative research was suggested to better understand survivors' responses to pet abuse in DV (Collins et al., 2017; Hardesty et al., 2013). Along with more personal perspectives that can speak to the ways in which pet abuse is used to control a victim, the existing literature called for exploration on the how the human-animal bond is experienced at this intersection and how these experiences influence the trajectory of DV recovery (Collins et al., 2017; Hardesty et al., 2013). In this study, I addressed the need for further investigation on these topics, yielding findings that not only extend the current knowledge base but also suggest directions for future research on DV and pet abuse.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand survivor's responses to pet abuse as a tactic that is used to maintain control in the perpetuation of DV. I used a qualitative methodology to explore ways in which pet abuse was experienced by survivors and the ways in which those experiences impacted the trajectory of the human-animal bond (see Collins et al., 2017; ; Quinn & Clarke, 2008; Straka & Montminy, 2008). Using an

interpretative analysis phenomenological approach (IPA), I examined participants' perceptions and perspectives to identify emerging themes and constructs related to this phenomenon (see Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2011).

The following research question guided this study: What are the experiences of survivors whose pets were abused within a context of DV? I also considered the following subquestions:

1. How do survivors explain the ways in which their abuser used a pet to maintain power and control within the cycle of DV?
2. How do survivors describe their attachment to their pet(s) before, during, and after DV?
3. How do survivors make meaning of their relationship with their pet(s) during the trajectory of DV recovery?

Theoretical Framework

I applied a combination of control balance theory and a feminist conceptual framework to inform research decisions and themes of interest in this investigation. Control balance theory was used to explain the role of DV victimization as a means for an abuser to try to maintain power within the contexts of an interpersonal relationship (see Castro, Nobles, & Zavala, 2017; Piquero & Hickman, 2003). When considering control balance theory, power imbalances are often found to yield deviant behavior by a person who perceives either a deficit or surplus in his or her power (Piquero & Hickman, 2003; Tittle, 2004). The application of control balance theory in this study supported the existing literature that identified pet abuse as a tactic to maintain power in DV (Collins et

al., 2017; Long & Kulkarni, 2013; Newberry, 2016; Upadhya, 2013). As the objective of this study aimed to shed light on various aspects of survivors' experiences, findings were conceptualized according to the perpetuating nature of power imbalances and the perceived impact that such imbalances have on survivors. Control balance theory was further complimented by the use of a feminist perspective in this study, arguing that abuse against women is strongly correlated with the values of a patriarchal structure (see Adams, 1995; Flynn, 2000; Lawson, 2012). The feminist orientation recognizes violence as a response to the need for domination, power, and control over women according to societal values and norms (Grose & Grabe, 2014; Lawson, 2012).

In comparing many different theories of DV criminology, I chose control balance theory due to its ability to offer a comprehensive look at the multitude of dynamics and factors that often lead to interpersonal violence (see Castro et al., 2017). While this theory outlines the role of both the abuser and the victim, personal blame for the abuse is not placed on the person who is victimized in these contexts (Tittle, 2004). The application of this theory also recognizes the key roles that power and control play within the cycle of DV (Castro et al., 2017; Piquero & Hickman, 2003).

The inclusion of a feminist perspective was essential to this project because a feminist framework has been successfully applied to understand the link between DV and animal abuse in many previous empirical investigations (see Adams, 1995; Flynn, 2000, Lawson, 2012). Researchers have frequently used a feminist perspective to conceptualize DV as a form of oppression associated with gender (Faver & Cavazos, 2007; Faver & Strand, 2007; Flynn, 2000a; Hardesty et al., 2013; Onyskiw, 2007). Furthermore, the

findings of many empirical studies on this topic support a feminist orientation, indicating that pet abuse within the cycle of DV is an action intended to maintain the control some men feel they are entitled to due to a flawed and oppressive culture surrounding gender (Newberry, 2016; Simmons & Lehman, 2007). The use of a feminist orientation further encourages continued exploration of the concepts proposed in control balance theory with the goal of ultimately yielding evolved, survivor-focused understandings capable of empowering a population that has historically been marginalized and inhibited by the control of others (Adams, 1995; Castro et al., 2017; Flynn; 2000; Lawson, 2012). In using a feminist lens for this study, it was especially important for me to allow for survivors' testimonies to be heard and understood in a way that entrusts the victim and realizes that there are no behaviors on the survivor's behalf that can reasonably explain their abuser's violent responses (see Grose & Grabe, 2012; Lawson, 2012).

Finally, the construct of attachment used in this study borrows from revisions of Bowlby's (1969) theory, naming pets and companion animals as important attachment figures in the lives of humans (see Knapp, 1998; Sable, 2013). In exploring this topic and addressing the research questions, I assumed that survivors had meaningful relationships with their companion animals. This assumption was supported by the application of attachment theory. I will further discuss the theoretical and conceptual groundwork for this project in Chapter 2, demonstrating alignment between the purpose, research questions, methodology, and theoretical groundwork of the study.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I used a qualitative, IPA approach to address the research questions. A qualitative methodology was selected to achieve the objective of this investigation because in-depth, survivor-informed experiences were intended to be understood through the completion of this project (see Larkin & Thomas, 2012; Quinn & Claire, 2008). This project aligned with an IPA methodology given the fact that little is currently known in the existing literature about the personal experiences of pet abuse in DV, and the goal of the project was to understand personal perspectives on lived experiences related to this phenomenon (see Hardesty et al., 2013; Smith, 2011). The selected methodology also complimented the theoretical framework of this study because the inductive, subjective focus of this approach allowed for the empowerment of survivors to inform the meaning that was made in answering the research questions (see Duke, 1984).

I considered two sources of data in this study. First, 12 individuals who met the inclusion criteria of the study and agreed to participate in the investigation upon reviewing the informed consent document were interviewed. The interviews were semistructured, lasted about an hour, and were recorded and transcribed after data collection. The transcriptions of the interviews were de-identified to protect participant privacy, and I assigned a number to each participant's transcription rather than using their name (see Haverkamp, 2005). The other source of data in this project came from a collection of 20 anonymous individuals' open-ended answers to an animal abuse survey that was administered as a portion of the intake process for a DV animal care program. By considering two different sources of data from participants who have similar

experiences, triangulation of the findings became possible (Deniz, 2009; Fusch & Ness, 2015). I took many steps to promote the trustworthiness of the results of this study, including member checking, triangulation, reflective commentary, and thick descriptions (see Fusch & Ness, 2015; Shenton, 2004). The findings of this study were informed solely by the participant's shared experiences, and all processes that lead to the ways in which meaning was made will be clearly explained in the upcoming chapters (see Smith et al., 2009).

Definitions of Terms

Domestic violence (DV): Any act of intentional intimidation including assault, threats, economic deprivation, emotional manipulation, isolation, and stalking (Carlson & Worder, 2005; Center for Disease Control, 2017; Simmons & Lehman, 2007). Given this study's use of a feminist perspective to consider a specific type of DV, this construct was applied to capture female experiences of male abuse that was perpetuated to maintain power and control in an interpersonal relationship (see Dutton & Corvo, 2007; Gandof, 20007; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Yllo, 1993).

Domestic violence pet care program: A program that exists for the unique and specific purpose of providing temporary pet care (shelter, vetting, rehabilitation) for pet-owning victims of DV who are actively seeking safety from the abuser (Ascione, 2000; Kogan, McConnell, Schoenfeld-Tacher, & Jansen-Lock, 2004; Ridge, 2008).

Pet abuse: The intentional infliction of pain, distress, or death to an animal through acts of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or neglect (Ascione, 1997; Becker & French, 2004).

Pet attachment: A meaningful bond that a person shares with his or her pet to provide mutually beneficial relationship, connection, and comfort to both the pet and the human companion (Sable, 2013).

Power and control in DV: The feeling of superiority in which a person has an imbalanced state of domination over his or her environment (Piquero & Hickman, 2003; Tittle, 1995, 2004).

Saturation: The point at which no new themes are emerging from a homogenous sample of participant interviews as triangulated against the data from open-ended survey responses, thus dictating the number of participants needed to make meaningful conclusions related to the research question (Denzin, 2009; Mason, 2010).

Assumptions

In outlining the various strategies and methodological choices that I selected to uphold the integrity of this study, there are also many assumptions that must be accounted for. I assumed that the participants who were selected to participate in this investigation shared authentic and true experiences related to the phenomenon of interest. It was also assumed that my approach to limit personal bias as the researcher in this study was effective in preparing me to adequately make meaning that was based solely from the participants' testimonies.

There are also various assumptions in this project that must be noted given the objective to consider a homogeneous group of individuals who can speak to a specific life experience (see Smith et al., 2009). First, I assumed that survivors of DV are female victims of abusive behaviors that were perpetrated by a male who was attempting to

maintain power and control in an interpersonal relationship (see Dutton & Corbo, 2007; Yllo 1993). This assumption does not discredit the fact that DV takes places across many unique life experiences and gender/sexuality differences, but it is based on a feminist perspective of DV as an unhealthy and dangerous reaction to a male's privileged position of power within society (see Dutton & Corvo, 2007; Gandof, 20007; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Yllo, 1993). There was also an assumption that when a victim of DV has a pet, the pet will then be somehow caught up within the cycle of abuse, either through direct harm or through manipulation to keep the victim from leaving the relationship (see Flynn, 2000; Hardesty et al., 2013; Krienert et al., 2012). Another assumption made in this study was that DV can take many different forms, expanding beyond just physical battering to include any form of harmful manipulation and intimidation on behalf of the abuser (see Carlson & Worden, 2005). Finally, it was assumed that the safety and well-being of a pet involved in DV is critical to the survivor, both within the contexts of immediately leaving an abusive relationship and in terms of long-term recovery from DV. Making this assumption, I recognized that a relationship with a pet is a valid source of personal attachment (see Knapp, 1998; Sable, 2013). The assumption was also supported by existing literature on the intersection between DV and pet abuse because many researchers have found that pets provide crucial support to survivors during these times of trauma (Flynn, 2000b; Hardesty et al., 2013; Kogan et al., 2004).

Scope and Delimitations

I intentionally adopted a narrow focus in this study to answer the research questions and to contribute to an empirical understanding of the unique and specific ways

in which pets are abused in homes where DV is present. The precise population that was investigated was not only suggested by the existing literature on the topic (i.e., Hardesty et al., 2013), but it also aligned with the feminist leanings of the study. According to the conceptual lens that was applied to this project, DV must be understood from a standpoint that appreciates the gender dynamics of power and control that so often perpetuate abuse (Adams, 1995; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yllo, 1993). For this reason, only female survivors of DV who were also pet owners at the time of their escape were considered in this study. Although the narrow focus of this study was called for based on the literature, theoretical background, and methodological choices for this study, the transferability of this study findings are limited to a very specific population. However, I hope that the themes that emerged from this investigation speak to real life experiences of DV, and therefore, can inform advocacy on a larger scale.

Limitations

This study was limited geographically because all survivors who were interviewed in this investigation lived in the southern United States at the time of their escape from DV. As previously noted, this study was also limited in transferability and generalizability given the homogenous nature of the sample that was considered (see Smith et al., 2009). Furthermore, given my position as an advocate at the community partner organization that provides pet care to victims of DV at the time of the study, I was inclined to experience bias from my personal experiences within this field. I was also inclined to experience bias by my passion for animal welfare. The many strategies I employed to reduce personal bias in this study will be outlined in Chapter 3, and a

continued commitment to honoring participant accounts as the only informants to the findings of this study were demonstrated throughout all stages of this project.

Significance

With this research, I addressed a gap in the existing literature while also contributing to a prevalent phenomenon that needs be considered in the provision of DV services (see Ascione, 1997; Simmons & Lehman, 2007). With the link between DV and pet abuse being clearly identified as a significant consideration to be made in DV advocacy, new research on the unique experiences that surround these co-occurring offenses was necessary (Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Hardesty et al., 2013; Simmons & Lehman, 2007). The results of this study provide insight into these experiences, allowing for the voice of survivors to direct the empirical understanding of this traumatic experience. Whereas existing literature has largely focused on determining the prevalence of animal abuse in DV situations (i.e., Allen, Gallagher, & Jones, 2006; DeGue & DiLillo, 2009; Carlisle-Frank, Frank, & Nielsen, 2004), in this study I used a qualitative approach to provide a survivor-informed, comprehensive appreciation for the intersection between DV and pet abuse. In this study, I specifically followed up on existing research that suggested the need for further exploration on survivors' responses to pet abuse as a tactic of control, with special attention paid to experiences of human-animal attachment both during the abuse and along the trajectory of recovery (see Collins et al., 2017; Hardesty et al., 2013).

Because advocacy must come from an informed perspective, there are many ways that the results of this study not only address a gap in the literature but might also be

capable of producing practical applications to generate positive social change. The unique dynamics of pet abuse within DV situations must be identified so that mental health practitioners and advocates are better prepared to treat the long-term traumatic effects of witnessing animal abuse (Allen et al., 2006; Collins et al., 2017; Farver & Strand, 2007; Quinlisk, 1999). These experiences must also be acknowledged so that trauma and subsequent risk factors for violence can be addressed within the entire family system (DeGue & DiLillo, 2009; Girardi & Pozzulo, 2015; McPhedran, 2009). The findings of this study have the potential to impact immediate crisis intervention, while also empowering both DV survivors and advocates to recognize signs of escalating violence and control (Farver & Strand, 2003; Hardesty et al., 2013; Krienert et al., 2012; Simmons & Lehmann, 2007).

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a general description of the phenomenon of interest in this study while also noting the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical support for the research questions and purpose of this project. Key words were defined in preparation for further discussion of these concepts in Chapter 2. The scope and limitations of this study were also identified, leading to a discussion about the potential for this research to bring about positive social change in the world of DV and pet advocacy. In Chapter 2, I will delve deeper into the foundational understanding of DV and pet abuse within the existing literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The intersection of DV and pet ownership has been explored and established as a critical junction across many different topics in the existing literature. In terms of the provision and logistics of DV safety planning, agencies and researchers alike have recognized the need for the consideration of pets when a person is leaving an abusive home (Ascione, 1997; Hardesty et al., 2013; Krienert et al., 2012). Furthermore, researchers have realized that pet abuse and DV commonly co-occur, pointing to various important implications in addressing both concerns (Fielding & Plumridge, 2010; Simmons & Lehmann, 2007). Not only can the presence of one of these issues suggest a need to further explore dynamics within a family, but the long-term psychological impact of having lived in a home where these types of violence occur seem to perpetuate a dangerous cycle of mental health burdens and potentially even continuous cycles of interpersonal abuse (Currie, 2006; Favor & Strand, 2007; Fielding & Plumridge, 2010; Hardesty et al., 2013; McPhedran, 2009).

In noting the various ways in which these two subjects collide, it becomes increasingly important to obtain an in-depth appreciation for the lived experiences associated with this intersection (Collins et al., 2013; Hardesty et al., 2013). Now that the prevalence of pet abuse as it occurs in DV situations has been clearly uncovered in the foundational literature, there remains a call for researchers to dig deeper and examine the intricate dynamics that coexists alongside this devastating relationship (Collins et al., 2013; Favor & Strand, 2007; Flynn, 2000a; Hardesty et al., 2013). I answered this call to

action through the objective of this study, which was to develop an understanding of the experiences of survivors whose pets were abused within the context of DV. Within this overarching goal, I conducted this study to better realize these experiences and their implications on power and control in abusive relationships, attachment to pets, and the trajectory of recovery in surviving DV.

In this chapter, I will present the literature search strategy that was used to examine the existing literature. After explaining the strategy to complete an exhaustive literature review, the conceptual framework and theory will be discussed to promote the inclusion of various concepts of interest in the study. In addition to these targeted endeavors, I will provide a general overview of the following topics: DV, the link between DV and pet ownership, pet abuse, the role of power and control in DV, and the impact of the human-animal bond. Finally, the chapter will be closed by highlighting the gaps in literature on this intersection, affirming the need for this research.

Literature Search Strategy

I employed a search of many different sources and topics to yield an inclusive and thorough acknowledgement of the literature that supports academic curiosity on this topic. Many different databases were used to complete this search, including PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycEXTRA, PyscINFO, Academic Search Complete, PsycARTICLES, Science Full Text Select, and Google Scholar. Although I was interested in finding various levels of publications related to this topic, I filtered my search to pay special attention to peer-reviewed documents capable of suggesting future studies. I also considered several different text books which focus on DV and/or the

human-animal bond, and I reviewed the sources used in these works to ensure that I was familiar with all authors who have contributed to this topic. Key terms that were used in various combinations throughout these searches were *domestic violence*, *pet ownership*, *pet, interpersonal violence*, *intimate partner violence, animal cruelty, family violence, domestic violence shelters*, *safe haven*, *human-animal bond*, *trauma*, *shelters*, *dogs*, *cats*, and *seeking safety*.

Although I focused my efforts on discovering articles and books that were published between 2006–2018, I also conducted searches of work published in earlier times to develop an appreciation for the scholars whose initial curiosities on this topic sparked the conversation that can be witnessed in the field today. As a researcher and advocate for DV awareness, it was essential for me to focus on the trajectory of the DV movement both in the past and moving forward in to the future.

Theoretical Framework

In the theoretical analysis, I will highlight the two major orientations used in this study: control balance theory (see Tittle 1995, 1997, 2004) and feminism as applied to DV (see Adams, 1995; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yllo, 1993). Along with a discussion of this framework, attachment theory will be discussed as a secondary theory to describe the importance of various aspects of the human-animal bond (see Bowlby, 1969; Knapp, 1998; Sable, 2013). Working together, these theories and conceptual framework set the foundation for the central concepts of interest in this investigation.

Control Balance Theory

Across the multitude of theoretical perspectives that have been formulated in an attempt to explain criminology, control balance theory stands out as one with particular relevance to the field of DV. Proposed by Charles Tittle (1995), control balance theory explains deviant behavior alongside the construct of control. Control balance theory has been debated, empirically tested, revised, and added to many times through the years (Castro et al., 2017; Piquero & Hickman, 2003; Tittle, 1997, 2004), yet its core assertion remains the same. According to this theory, a person who experiences a control imbalance is more likely to both perpetuate and/or experience deviant behaviors (Tittle, 1995). The effects of control imbalance thus explain two sides of the same coin. When a person has more power in a relationship or situational context, he or she may act in a deviant manner to maintain a surplus of control (Piquero & Hickman, 2003; Tittle, 1995, 2004). Alternatively, when a person is experiencing a control deficit, he or she is likely to experience a vulnerable state that predisposes victimization (Piquero & Hickman, 2003).

The levels of control in a person's life are explained according to the control balance ratio, or the amount of control an individual may encounter from external factors as compared to the amount of control the individual can execute over their environment (Piquero & Hickman, 2003; Tittle, 1995, 2004). A person's control balance ratio is often informed by various roles and life factors, such as relationships, societal constructs, coping strategies, and situational factors (Piquero & Hickman, 2003). The ways in which an individual experiences this ratio may also be inherently self-perpetuating (Piquero & Hickman, 2003). For example, a person who is accustomed to exercising high levels of

control has likely experienced the repeated rewards of their status while also eliciting a privileged response from others upon the recognition of his or her power (Piquero & Hickman, 2003). On the contrary, a person who has continuously endured low levels of control may feel apprehensive, passive, and uncertain because of his or her lived experiences (Piquero & Hickman, 2003).

As control balance theory has evolved alongside its empirical evaluation, the tenants of the concept have been adapted so that they can be applied in a generalized sense that corrects the erroneous categorization and inconclusiveness of the original theory (Tittle, 2004). Recent revisions to control balance theory have led to the recognition that the type of deviant behavior that a person engages in often depends on a range of personal life factors, including experiences of control ratio, opportunities, constraints, and self-control (Tittle, 2004). In addition to these factors, a person's control balance desirability also impacts his or her experiences of deviant behavior, with actions being motivated according to their long-term impact on a person's ratio of control (Tittle, 2004).

Although deviant behavior takes on a broad definition in Tittle's (2004) control balance theory, the framework can be directly applied to DV as a specific social problem. In a study by Castro et al. (2017), the hypotheses suggested by control balance theory were tested on a group of 401 college students. Realizing that young adults are overrepresented in DV-related incidences, the authors surveyed this sample of students to determine the role that control plays in IPV (Castro et al., 2017). The findings of this study not only supported the hypotheses stating that control deficits often lead to male

perpetration and female victimization in DV, but they also suggested that a person who experiences a marginalized status outside of the context of DV may be at higher risk for experiencing control deficits in general (Castro et al., 2017). All in all, Castro et al.'s research builds upon Tittle's foundational demonstrations that control plays a major role in violence while also suggesting important future research on the topic.

I selected the application of control balance theory for this study because the ability of the theory to clearly account for many of the constructs being considered in this project. This theory identifies the concept of control as being critical to an investigation involving DV and other forms of family violence (Castro et al., 2017; Piquero & Hickman, 2003; Tittle, 1997, 2004). Furthermore, in this study I was interested in the contextual perpetuation of these forms of violence, which is explained by the idea control balance theory proposes on how violence is systematically bolstered (Piquero & Hickman, 2003). In selecting a theory that conceptualizes deviance as a wide range of behaviors largely related to domination and control, I was able to solidly align the topic of interest, research questions, methodology, and findings of this study with its theoretical underpinnings (see Castro et al., 2017; Piquero & Hickman, 2003; Tittle, 1997, 2004).

Feminist Framework

There are several dominant sociological theories and frameworks in the field of DV that attempt to explain the objectives and constructs of this societal issue (Lawson, 2012). At the center of debate about which of these frameworks most accurately describes the experience of DV, scholars predominantly disagree on the origin and

function of this kind of interpersonal violence (Adams, 1995; Lawson, 2012). Some theories suggest the role of complex family dynamics in DV, while other theories focus on a unique pathology that leads to domestic deviance (Lawson, 2012). For the sake of this study, I employed a feminist approach toward understanding DV. Not only has the feminist approach had a history of successful application in terms of understanding DV in the existing literature (Adams, 1995; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Kurz, 1989; Lawson, 2012; Yllo, 1993), but the feminist perspective also stresses the roles of control and power in DV (CITE), complimentary to both control balance theory and to the objective of this study.

At the root of the feminist perspective on DV, a patriarchal societal structure and its subsequent impact on gender norms and relational dominance inform the conceptualization of DV (Adams, 1995, Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yllo, 1993). With such a large percentage of the world's population ascribing to beliefs and social systems that promote male privilege and female oppression, DV is conceptualized as a devastating reaction to a broken societal construct (Adams, 1995; Dobash & Dobash, 1979, Yllo, 1993). The feminist perspective removes all blame from the victims of DV, recognizing that no person's actions reasonably call for violence in interpersonal relationships (Adams, 1995; Lawson, 2012). Although a lack of control may lead to certain forms of deviance, DV is not believed to be the result of interpersonal conflict when using the feminist perspective (Lawson, 2012). Instead, a man's beliefs related to patriarchal values motivate this unhealthy behavior, prompting an abuser to use various reproachful tactics in attempt to maintain the power and control that he believes he is entitled to (Adams,

1995; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Flynn, 2000; Grose & Grabe, 2014). In this way, DV is not like any other form of violence or deviance, and it should be conceptualized as a unique issue systemically rooted in a damaged ideology (Kurtz, 1989).

One of the major criticisms of the feminist perspective on DV relates to the fact that this orientation assumes that males are always the perpetrators while females are always the victims (Lawson, 2012). Although scholars who promote a feminist orientation certainly realize that victims and perpetrators can vary in gender and in sexual orientation, the feminist application is applied in response to the fact that a significant majority of DV occurs in heterosexual relationships in which the male is the abusive party (Adams, 1995; Flynn, 2000). While realizing that it is crucial to acknowledge and honor all victims of DV across genders, sexual orientations, and nature of relationships, scholar-practitioners of the feminist perspective argue that there must be a feminist component to all frameworks that attempt to explain the constructs of DV (Yllo, 1993).

The feminist approach is especially useful in understanding the link between DV and animal abuse because animals are also considered by many cultures to be entities that require domination (Adams, 1995; Flynn, 2000a). Themes of control and power often emerge when considering animal abuse, even outside of its occurrence in IPV (Adams, 1995; Flynn, 2000a). Additionally, rates of DV and animal abuse have an important statistical similarity in that the perpetuators of both kinds of abuse are overwhelmingly male (Flynn, 2000a). When animal abuse and DV co-occur, animals are frequently used to try to maintain power and control over a female victim, capitalizing on the attachment that a woman has with her pet (Flynn, 2000a).

In this study, my application of a feminist framework set the backdrop for understanding aspects of DV, pet abuse, and the unique intersection of these societal issues. Furthermore, a feminist framework stresses the importance of adopting a client-centered, empowering research strategy with survivors of DV (Goodman & Epstein, 2008). For these many reasons, the present study was largely informed by a feminist orientation.

Attachment Theory

A secondary theory that is referenced in this study is attachment theory, especially as it is applied to understanding the human-animal bond. At the basis of this research project lies the assumption that pets play a meaningful role in the lives of their human counterparts. This assumption is fueled by an adapted understanding of attachment theory, realizing that pets often fulfill key attachment needs such as companionship, connection, and comfort in the lives of their human partners (Knapp, 1998; Sable, 2013).

In Bowlby's (1969) foundational work identifying the need for attachment as a required aspect of a psychologically healthy life, groundwork was set for future researchers to study and adapt our understandings of meaningful connection. Realizing that most American homes include pets, it became necessary for scholars to consider the roles that these pets play in the mental wellness of the overall household (Sable, 2013). Through various studies and reworking of Bowlby's (1969) original attachment theory, researchers came to recognize that relationships with pets allow for a different kind of connection with humans, ultimately impacting mental health (Knapp; 1998).

The attachment that a person has with his or her companion animal provides comfort, relieves loneliness, and inspires affection, joy, and laughter in the household (Sable, 2013). Furthermore, a person's relationship with a pet also provides a protective factor against stress, encouraging psychological grounding in the face of trauma while also motivating emotional regulation during times of duress (Chandler, 2012; Sable, 2013). Fields such as animal assisted therapy and animal assisted interventions have realized the special abilities that pets have in the lives of humans and have in turn created an auspicious intervention capable of assisting people across many different walks of life (Chandler, 2012). The human-animal bond provides a powerful and unique outlet for attachment, ultimately altering the human experience for those who share their lives with pets (Knapp; 1998; Sable, 2013).

In considering the experiences of DV alongside pet ownership and subsequent pet abuse, the role of human-animal attachment must be validated and considered (Faver & Strand, 2003a). Although pets typically serve as a protective factor in facing stress and trauma (Sable, 2013), a person must consider how pets are experienced within the context of an abusive home. In these instances, the presence of a pet might provide a coping outlet for the abuse victims, or survivors could instead be preoccupied with the responsibility of caring for and protecting their pets during these dangerous times (Faver & Strand, 2003a).

In noting the importance of the human-animal bond, the long-term outcome of a person's relationship with his or her pet while seeking safety and rebuilding from DV must also be considered (Faver & Strand, 2003a). Scholars and practitioners alike must

address the attachment that a person has with his or her pet to adequately respond the psychological impact of experiences of animal abuse in the home (Faver & Strand, 2003a; Sable, 2013). Finally, the degree to which a person is attached with their pet may impact the abuser's use of the pet to maintain power and control in a DV relationship (Faver & Strand, 2003a). Just as humans have different attachment styles with one another, the way in which a person perceives his or her connection with a pet may vary (Zilcha-Mano, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2011), thus altering the unique experiences of pet abuse within the cycle of DV.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

There are many different topics of interest that intersect at the focus of this study. Given the network of social issues to be explored in this project, there are various bodies of research from multiple different disciplines supporting this literature review. The key terms that are described below explore central areas of focus across the fields of DV, animal welfare, pet abuse, and advocacy.

Defining Domestic Violence

DV is a far too pervasive issue, both in its prevalence and in terms of its long-term impact on individuals, families, and society at large (CDC, 2017). The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence defines DV as "the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another" (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2017, para. 1). DV is a very common issue affecting people from a wide array of ages, social economic classes, and cultural

groups (NCADV, 2017). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey recognizes that as many as one out of every four women and one out of every seven men will report experiencing severe IPV throughout the lifetime (Center for Disease Control, 2017).

The terms 'domestic violence' and 'IPV' take on different conceptualizations depending on the audience who is ascribing meaning to the social concern (Yllo, 1993). Although most of the population tends to view DV only as the physical harm inflicted by one partner on another, efforts to increase DV awareness have helped to empower the general population with a broader understanding of the term (Carlson & Worden, 2005). For the sake of this project, the meaning of DV has two central ideas: DV is considered to be a response to a person's desire to maintain power and control, especially in cases involving male violence against women.

Moving forward beyond the supposition that DV only includes physical assault against an intimate other, DV has grown to encompass a wide range of abusive behaviors and tactics. DV can take on many different forms including: emotional manipulation, economic deprivation, isolation, threatening behaviors, stalking, and sexual violence (CDC, 2017; Simmons & Lehhman, 2007). Not only does DV describe a wide scope of abusive actions, but DV can be experienced by anyone in the household, including significant others, roommates, children, parents, and pets (Krienert et al., 2012). Although IPV can take place across various dynamics of interpersonal violence, DV is conceptualized in this study as male partner violence against women. Adopting a feminist orientation to the subject, the meaning of DV is focused in this project to include any

kind of male coercion of women that takes place within an abusive interpersonal relationship (Yllo, 1993).

Another key component of DV is noted in recognizing that DV is not a reactionary response of anger and aggression as much as it is a strategy used by an abuser to maintain power and control within a relationship (Dutton & Corvo, 2007; Gandolf, 2007; Pence & Paymar; 1993). The focus on power and control in the conceptualization of DV is largely based on the Duluth educational curriculum model, which has been empirically supported ever since it emerged as a portion of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (Wagers, 2015). According to this perspective, motives related to control must be realized in creating effective intervention and treatment in DV, both for the victims and the perpetrators (Dutton & Corvo, 2007; Gandolf, 2007; Wagers, 2015). For this reason, many of the current DV intervention programs that exist nationwide follow the Duluth model and assume that power and control are at the center of intimate partner violence (Wagers, 2015). This conceptualization is also informed by a feminist orientation, ultimately stressing the importance of the social context in which DV occurs (Jasinski, 2001; Wagers, 2015).

Ramifications of Domestic Violence

Experiences of DV impact individuals, families, and the community in far-reaching and long-lasting ways. To fully appreciate the topic of DV as one of empirical interest and societal importance, it is essential to consider the various ways in which DV affects many aspects of the human experience (Goodman & Epstein, 2008). DV is unfortunately a ubiquitous phenomenon that impacts mental wellness, family systems,

economic experiences, and the society at large (Chan & Cho, 2010; Harris, Lieberman, & Marans, 2007; Wilson, Fauci, & Goodman, 2015).

Mental health and DV. Mental health concerns and DV are closely intertwined given the fact that DV is often a traumatic experience for all involved (Wilson et al., 2015). Not only are people with mental illness more likely to be exposed to DV, but experiences of interpersonal violence may also lead to mental health concerns and even intense psychological illnesses for some survivors (Jarecki, 2014). In coping with the negative impact of DV, many victims report psychological concerns and issues with mental wellness (Humphreys & Thiara, 2003). These issues may present as depression, anxiety, mood disorders, substance abuse, and even suicidal ideation (Humphreys & Thiara, 2003). Having lived in an environment with persistent threats and feelings of powerlessness, survivors may even develop posttraumatic stress disorder in the aftermath of the violence (Salcioglu, Urhan, Pirinccioglu, & Aydin, 2017). Given the grave effects of DV on mental wellness, practitioners and researchers alike are encouraged to take on comprehensive, survivor-informed orientations in treating the mental health ramifications of having experienced DV (Salcioglu et al., 2017; Wilson et al., 2015).

DV's impact on family units. It goes without saying that violence that is experienced so intimately within a family unit has massive impacts on the wellness and long-term trajectory of all family relationships (Becker, Mathis, Mueller, Issari, & Atta, 2008). Not only does DV involve the intimate partners who are directly experiencing abuse, but all members of the family unit are impacted by this issue (Becker et al., 2008; Thornton, 2014). Children who witness DV in the home are placed in a disempowering

position, often feeling overwhelmed and without means to communicate their emotions or cognitions (Thornton, 2014). The general environmental context that often surrounds DV also promotes other behavioral issues, such as other means of abuse and neglect (Currie, 2006; McPhedran, 2009). Many studies on the experience of DV in childhood also point to these experiences leading to higher rates of aggression as a child matures (Becker et al., 2008; Currie, 2006; Feroz, Jami, & Masood, 2015). Finally, DV leads to decreased ability to adjust and attach, thus embedding many complex dynamics within each individual relationship in a family (Becker et al., 2008).

Economic costs of DV. Along with the mental health and family system concerns that exist alongside DV, there are considerable economic costs of DV that must be accounted for (Chan & Cho, 2010). The costs of DV are both tangible and intangible, with survivors losing assets of numerous different kinds of value while also incurring unforeseen costs at the hands of the abuser (Chan & Cho, 2010). In response to experiences of DV, a survivor first becomes responsible to the costs of any medical attention that is required due to the impact of the violence (Chan & Cho, 2010; Fishman, Bonomi, Anderson, Reid, & Rivara, 2010). The medical costs associated with DV unfortunately last long into a survivor's future, as it can be expected that he or she will have higher-than-average medical costs for years in to the recovery process (Fishman et al., 2010). In additional to the economic impact of medical care, DV survivors often lose property, require expensive legal services, and are vocationally impacted by the violence (Chan & Cho 2010).

Societal impact of DV. Society at large suffers when any person within the population is abused (Peace, 2009). Due to the outstanding prevalence of DV, society is called to invest in legal resources, programmatic preventative efforts, and raised awareness within the community to help bring an end to this destructive issue (Harris et al., 2007; Peace, 2009). When considering pet abuse that occurs within a violent relationship, legal advocates have called for stricter punishment that realizes the animal abuse as both an injustice to an animal but also as a crime that can be considered a domestic threat (Upadhya, 2013). This call to action becomes even more essential as the cyclical nature of violence is identified (Harris et al., 2007). If humans desire to create a healthier society in the future, DV must be addressed throughout all levels of society (Harris et al., 2007; Peace, 2007).

Link Between Domestic Violence and Pet Ownership

This project focuses on the intersection of DV and pet ownership, realizing that pet abuse frequently exists alongside DV (Carlisle-Frank et al., 2004; DeGue, 2011; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Krienert et al., 2012; Peterson & Farrington, 2007; Simmons & Lehmann, 2007). Empirical research has demonstrated that abusive behaviors rarely exist in isolation, and environments that promote one kind of violence often promote many different forms of violence and abuse (Currie, 2006; McPhedran, 2009). The link between animal abuse and DV is clearly established in the literature, with many studies identifying a significant percentage of DV survivors reporting that their pet was either harmed or threated in the cycle of abuse (Carlisle-Frank et al., 2004; DeGue, 2011; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Simmons & Lehmann, 2007).

In a study by DeGue and DiLillo (2009) a sample of 860 college students were surveyed to test for the link between family violence and animal maltreatment. In the end, 60% of the participants who had experienced pet abuse had experienced either child maltreatment or DV in their family of origin during childhood (DeGue & DiLillo, 2009). Similarly, a study by Faver and Strand (2003a) surveyed 41 survivors of DV, and it was found that almost half of them had experienced pet abuse or threat of pet abuse while they were attempting to leave an abusive relationship. The correlation between these two issues marks a dangerous intersection in the world of DV, as batterers who abuse pets tend to be more violent and controlling in their interactions with intimate others (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007).

Even in the cases of DV in which pets are not harmed, the fact that many DV survivors have pets cannot be ignored. When a person is making steps toward seeking safety from an abusive relationship, the provision of pet care becomes essential (Ascione, 2000; Collins et al., 2017; Roguski, 2012). Many studies have included questions about the experiences of survivors who own pets during the time in which they are leaving a dangerous relationship, and pets are often an unfortunate barrier in terms of getting in to shelter (Allen et al., 2006; Ascione, 1997; Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Hardesty et al., 2013; Krienert et al., 2012; McDonald et al., 2015).Viewing their pet as a member of the family, many women will not leave an animal behind if they are not able to remove it from the abusive home when they are seeking safety (Hardesty et al. 2013; Carlisle-Frank et al. 2004). The decision about what a survivor will do when seeking safety may become even more challenging when children are involved, as many parents

are driven to keep the children's' attachment to pets as secure as possible during the transitional nature of these difficult times (Collins et al., 2017; McDonald et al., 2015).

Defining Pet Abuse

Deeply rooted in cultural ideologies, personal differences, and even status of economic privilege, the treatment of animals is a controversial topic (Becker & French, 2004; Szűcs, Geers, Jezierski, Sossidou, & Broom, 2012). Domination over animals is normalized in many societies, and activities such as hunting and animal captivity bring forth countless debates over issues of animal welfare (Becker & French, 2004; Szűcs et al., 2012). The socially accepted treatment of animals also tends to vary based on species and domestication, complicating the empirical and societal debate on animal welfare (Beckre & French, 2004).

However, this project does not intend to spark a debate over these controversial aspects of animal treatment. Instead, a conceptualization of pet abuse for the purposes of this project borrows from Ascione's (1997) notion of pet abuse as being any intentional infliction of pain or distress to an animal. Pet abuse may take many forms, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, or even neglect (Becker & French, 2004). In this study, pets that are companion animals are specifically considered, and any harm that is purposefully caused to animals of this nature will be considered as pet abuse (see Ascione, 1997; Becker & French, 2004).

Services for Pets Involved in Domestic Violence

There are very few agencies dedicated to the provision of pet care for victims of DV in the United States (Ascione, Weber, & Woods, 1997; Kogan et al., 2004). In a

foundational study on the topic, Ascione et al. (1997) found that less than 10% of the safe house programs nationwide provided care for pets, while less than a third of the shelters even asked questions about pets while assisting a new client. More recently, Krienert et al. (2012) showed progress in the advocacy for human and animal victims of DV, with almost 75% of DV service providers who participated in a national survey indicating that they frequently assist survivors in finding resources for their pets while seeking safety from abuse.

Although current research is demonstrative of an increase in awareness regarding the issue of pet ownership and DV, numerous gaps and obstacles in DV programming still exist (Krienert et al., 2012). Pet-care resources and funding remain limited, and most organizations that do in fact assist in response to this issue are general pet care organizations who lack specific training and programming tailored to DV intervention (Krienert et al., 2012). Moving forward in advocacy and intervention efforts, more resources must be provided in securing an effective solution to the co-occurrence of human and animal interfamilial violence (Ascioe, 2000; Kogan et al., 2004; Komorosky et al., 2015; Krienert et al., 2012; Long & Kulkarni, 2013). This call to action is not only crucial in the immediate response of DV, but it is also necessary to inform the empirical understanding of family violence and to improve client-centered social services on a larger scale (Faver & Strand, 2003b; Krienert et al., 2012).

Pets Used for Power and Control in Domestic Violence

Anything that is valuable to a survivor of DV is at risk for being used as a pawn in the abuser's attempt to gain power and control over the victim (Hardesty et al., 2013).

Sadly, pets often fall into this cycle given the fact that their owners care so deeply for them (Faver & Strand, 2003a; Hardesty et al., 2013; Ridge, 2008). Abusers will threaten, harm, or even kill pets to intimidate their partner, disempowering the survivor and shifting the control balance in the relationship perilously in the offender's favor (Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Ridge, 2008). Desperate to protect their pets, victims are controlled at all stages of DV given the ways in which abusers use pets for power. In some cases, the threat of pet abuse is used to coerce victims into performing illegal activities, limiting the resources that are available to the survivor (Loring & Bolden-Hines, 2004). Victims may drop legal charges, delay seeking safety, meet up with the abuser, or even return home for good for the sake of their pets (Faver & Strand, 2003a; Flynn, 2000a, 2000c; Krienert et al., 2012). Pets are even caught up in the legal battles that result from DV, with many offenders aiming to gain legal ownership of a pet simply for the currency it provides over their partner (Flynn, 2000a).

The relationship that pets have with various members of the family greatly impact the intersection of DV and animal ownership. Victims who are more attached to their pets report higher rates of pet abuse within the DV, either because their abuser realizes the power that comes with using the pets, or because a victim who is closely bonded with a pet is more likely to consider the offender's action toward the pet abusive (Hardesty et al., 2013; Krienhert et al., 2012). These dynamics are often complicated when a couple has children, as abusers will sometimes employ even more control tactics involving the pets when children are present so that the victim experiences heightened pressure to respond according to the abuser's demands (Collins et al., 2017; McDonald et al., 2015).

Abusers might even hold resentment toward a victim's pet given the connection that the pet shares with the victim, putting the pet in more danger at all points in the cycle of violence (Flynn, 2000c).

Any time a pet is involved in a DV situation, advocates and survivors are called to seriously consider the safety of all who are involved in the violence. The inclusion of animals in the abuse marks an escalation of violence and control and can be indicative of the need for serious intervention on behalf of everyone in the family (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007; Volant, Johsnon, Gullone, & Coleman, 2008). Further research is suggested to understand the in-depth experiences of pet abuse for survivors of DV so that scholars, practitioners, and survivors can better comprehend the strategies that abusers use within the cycle of violence (Collins et al., 2017; Hardesty et al., 2013).

Long-Term Impact of the Human-Animal Bond

It has been established that the human-animal bond is powerful, and that the inclusion of pet considerations in DV services are rare (Ascione, 2000; Kogan et al., 2004; Krienhert et al., 2012). The gap that survivors face in terms of the consideration of their pets extends beyond a lack of pet care in the face of the violence, and conclusively impacts a lack of attention to the long-term mental health side effects of having witnessed animal abuse alongside experiences of DV (Collins et al., 2017; Favor & Strand, 2007; Flynn, 2000c; Hardesty et al., 2013; Krienhert et al., 2012). Human and animal victims of DV live in long-term terror that has lasting impacts on their wellness for years to come (Flynn, 2000c).

The pets' role as a source of comfort and companionship is challenged in the face of violence, with human victims often feeling guilt over the situation that has led to their pet being harmed (Flynn, 2000c; Hardesty et al., 2013; Loring & Bolden-Hines, 2004). Pets and humans who experience violence together share a unique experience that may increase the connection of their bond, even in the face of extreme terror (Flynn, 2000c). In seeking safety from DV, many survivors must leave their pets either temporarily or permanently, either with a supportive program, with a friend/family member, or with the abuser (Ascione, 2000). In these times of separation, many survivors report being preoccupied with worry about their pet, and they struggle without the presence of the very companion that was there to offer so much support during the trauma (Flynn, 2000c; Hardesty et al., 2013).

In 2007, Favor and Strand presented a theoretical perspective on how pet abuse translates into emotional abuse in DV situations. Within these contexts, the attachment that a survivor has with her companion animal is complicated and often challenged by circumstantial experiences (Faver & Strand, 2007). In a qualitative study on the topic, Tiplady et al. (2105) noted that a pet's behavior may also be changed by experiencing of abuse, thus impacting the pet's connection with the survivor. Five pet-owning DV survivors were interviewed in the study conducted by Tiplady et al., and each one reported that their pet demonstrated behavioral changes that lasted even after escaping the abuse. Although all pets represented in this study were reported to be more fearful, distrustful, and sometimes aggressive due to their experiences, the survivors still reported

that they shared a special bond with the pet because of their shared experiences of abuse (Tiplady et al., 2015).

The long-term outcome of a person's relationship with his or her pet after experiencing DV greatly impacts feelings of wellness and personal empowerment (Faver & Strand, 2007; Hardesty et al., 2013). When a person is empowered with the ability to care for a pet while seeking safety, feelings of guilt and concern are often alleviated (Hardesty et al., 2013; Kreinhert et al., 2012). Furthermore, the ability for a survivor to reunite with their pet upon leaving a DV shelter may enhance the trajectory of a person's coping skills and emotional well-being long into the future (Faver & Strand; 2007; Kreinhert et al., 2013). Researchers are called to determine the perceived impact that reunification with pets has on a survivor, as some evidence in the existing literature points to pet reunification after abuse as a potential buffer to the traumatic impact of DV (Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2007). In light of these foundational findings, more empirical attention needs to be paid to the ways in which the outcome of a human-animal relationship impacts a survivor during the recovery from abuse (Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2007; Hardesty et al., 2013). Survivors need to be interviewed to determine their responses to pet abuse depending on the outcome of their pets' well-being (Faver & Strand, 2007). Specifically, questions that will determine if all pets survived the abuse need to be asked (Faver & Strand, 2007). Through these efforts, advocacy programs will be informed and encouraged to empower survivors through the short- and long-term consideration of pets within the cycle of DV (Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2007; Hardesty et al., 2013).

Summary and Conclusions

DV is a permeating issue that impacts a large percentage of a diverse population (CDC, 2017). Given the pervasive nature of this social issue, along with its unique intersection with the experience of pet ownership and abuse, the crossing of these concerns is worthy of further empirical consideration (Hardesty et al., 2013; Kreinhert et al., 2012). By contributing to the academic understanding of pet abuse that takes place alongside DV, enhanced advocacy for both social issues are promoted while also yielding potentially significant implications for future research and programing.

Beyond systematic and academic impact, this research is capable of affecting survivors at the individual level. In realizing the co-occurrence of DV and pet abuse, advocates who wish to adopt a survivor-informed response to DV must pay careful attention to the intersection of these issues (Faver & Strand, 2003b). The poignant impact of the human-animal bond must be acknowledged, especially considering a person's experience with trauma and recovery within the context of DV (Hardesty et al., 2012). These considerations influence immediate safety and long-term rehabilitation for all victims of DV, human and animal alike (Collins et al., 2017; Kreinhert et al., 2012).

Finally, an in-depth appreciation of pet abuse as it occurs in violent homes honors the desire to empower survivors while also allowing victims to dictate the empirical understanding of effective DV conceptualizations, interventions, and ultimately prevention (Collins et al., 2017; Hardesty et al., 2012). All in all, the objective of the current study has the ability to positively impact social change on many different levels.

In this upcoming chapter, rationale and design choice for this study is described. Within this discussion, the study's sampling strategy is explained, and the population is introduced. Methods for data collection are clearly detailed, and an exploration of phenomenological methodology is provided to empower the reader to understand the ways in which meaning has been made in answering the research questions. Operational definitions that are grounded in the existing literature are discussed, and an examination of the trustworthiness of this project is provided. In the end, ethical considerations are presented alongside evidence of the steps that were taken to uphold optimal ethical integrity at each point in the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

My predominant focus in this phenomenological investigation was to explore the experiences of survivors whose pets were abused as a tactic in the perpetuation of DV. Along with this objective, the completion of this study was also aimed at shedding light on the specific ways that pets are used to control victims of DV and how these experiences relate to a survivor's relationship with her pet. In noting these unique accounts, my intention with this study was to contribute to an enhanced empirical understanding of the unique experiences deeply rooted in the complex dynamics of IPV.

In this chapter, I will outline the IPA approach that was used in this study while also explaining the various reasons that this methodology was selected to address the objectives of the study. Certain aspects of IPA will be described in detail, empowering the reader to understand the ways that meaning was made in this study. This chapter will also include an overview of the participants, describing both the process for participant selection as well as the general procedures that helped to contribute to the findings of this study. Data collection and analysis will be outlined along with tools that assisted in generating the rich data that were considered in this investigation. I will also present the strategies employed to enhance trustworthiness and note the ethical considerations made to express my commitment to best practices and participant empowerment in this study. Finally, the quality of the data will be discussed alongside the guidelines for optimal IPA research standards.

Research Design and Rationale

I developed the following central research question to guide this phenomenological study: What are the experiences of survivors whose pets were abused within a context of DV? Although it is important to acknowledge that DV can encompass a wide array of abusive behaviors across a large context of interpersonal relationships, the theoretical underpinning of this study suggest a conceptualization of DV as violence against a woman in an intimate partner relationship that is ultimately employed as a tactic to control the victim (see Yllo, 1993). Within this overarching research question, I also considered the following subquestions:

1. How do survivors explain the ways in which their abuser used a pet to maintain power and control within the cycle of DV?
2. How do survivors describe their attachment to their pet(s) before, during, and after DV?
3. How do survivors make meaning of their relationship with their pet(s) during the trajectory of DV recovery?

Although the existing literature clearly establishes a link between DV and animal abuse as forms of violence that commonly co-occur (Hardesty et al., 2013; Krienert et al., 2012; McDonald et al., 2015), there is little in-depth empirical understanding of the specific experiences of pet abuse that survivors witness alongside the coexistence of these issues (Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Hardesty et al., 2013). Currently, the extant literature on this topic calls for further investigations that dig deeper to uncover the specific and unique experiences of DV survivors with pets (Collins et al., 2017; Faver &

Strand, 2003a, 2003b; Hardesty et al., 2013). Given that the goal of this project was to yield detailed and comprehensive accounts of those who have experienced the intersection of DV and animal abuse on a personal basis, I selected a qualitative IPA approach.

Qualitative Research Approach

A qualitative method was the most appropriate design choice for this study for many different reasons. As described by Maxwell (2012), the qualitative tradition often includes the consideration of various intellectual goals that originate in the inductive approach of the methodology. One such intellectual goal is to uncover personal meaning, which was the aim of this study. In addition to this intellectual goal, qualitative research often stresses the importance of investigating a specific context that informs the participant's experiences (Maxwell, 2012). Qualitative research is employed to contribute to new theories and new ways of perceiving phenomenon as apprised by those who can speak first-hand on the topic of empirical interest (Maxwell, 2012). Each of the intellectual goals described by Maxwell fit with the objectives of this study, thus promoting the choice of a qualitative design for this investigation.

Interpretative Analysis Approach

Having determined that a qualitative approach was the best fit for this study, I selected an IPA methodology as the optimal strategy to address both the research questions and the theoretical background of the project. Although grounded theory methodologies yield more generalized concept formation where existing theory has not yet been applied, IPA focuses on the humanity and experiences of one participant at a

time, yielding findings that are less generalized and more idiographic in nature (Smith et al., 2009). Even though there is individualized focus on the data in an IPA study, the use of IPA allows for more participants than a case study, and there are analytic procedures in IPA that can help to generate theoretical transferability to speak to a larger human experience (Smith et al., 2009).

True to phenomenology, IPA focuses on deriving empirical understanding from experiences and their unique significance on people (Smith et al., 2009). IPA also relies on hermeneutics, prompting a researcher to attempt to interpret a participant's experiences alongside the shared ways in which the participant makes meaning of their accounts (Smith et al., 2009). Originating within the field of psychology, this approach has been increasingly used in understanding experiences of psychological distress and transitional periods in life, making it a great fit for the phenomenon of interest in the current study (see Smith et al., 2009).

Role of the Researcher

One of the hallmarks of qualitative research is the fact that the researcher plays a large role as an instrument for data collection and analysis (Haverkamp, 2005; Maxwell, 2012). This becomes especially true when adopting IPA because the researcher must facilitate an environment in which the participants feel comfortable having a lengthy and personal conversation about his or her lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). It is critical that the researcher establishes rapport in these settings, since the findings of the final investigation largely depend on the participants' willingness to share when conducting this type of research (Smith et al., 2009).

There were many different tasks associated with my role as researcher in this study. I worked with the community partner site to establish a list of participants who were eligible for participation in the interview process of this study. From there, I contacted and recruited participants, staying committed to the goal of building rapport and empowering participants as the true experts on the topic from the beginning of our interactions (see Smith et al., 2009). When I conducted the face-to-face interviews with each of the participants, I facilitated conversation while also speaking as little as possible to promote participant-informed findings (see Smith et al., 2009). Once the data were collected and recorded, the interviews were transcribed. I then reviewed each of the transcriptions while also listening to the recordings to ensure verbatim accuracy in the transcriptions prior to the start of data analysis. The transcriptions were then coded according to emerging themes and strategies that will be outlined later in this chapter. As the researcher in this study, my goal was to make meaning that was based off the participant's meaning and significance and to generate an understanding of both the particular as well as the shared experiences of individuals who have survived DV alongside animal abuse (see Smith et al., 2009).

In addition to the interview data to be considered in this study, I also collected and reviewed open-ended survey answers from 20 anonymous clients at the community partner organization, which exist as a portion of the new client intake records. The data that were collected from the open-ended, intake survey questions related to experiences of animal abuse were analyzed to allow for comparison of emerging themes and to measure the degree of saturation that was accomplished (see Denzin, 2009). The

consideration of this data also allowed me to triangulate and validate the emerging themes (see Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Lastly, I created the interview schedule that was used for this study, which included questions suggested by an exhaustive search of the existing literature (see Collins et al., 2017; Hardesty et al., 2013; Krienert et al., 2012; McDonald et al., 2015; Tiplady et al., 2015). I also created the informed consent document as suggested by the research ethics and compliance standards of the supporting academic institution. In playing such a large role in the research process given the design of this study, it was especially critical that I based all my research processes on a foundation of empirical support, peer feedback, and methodological alignment.

Methodology

Having discussed the general approach that I used in this project, there are various methodological choices that must be clearly explained to promote transparency and trustworthiness in this study (see Shenton, 2004). I will present the research procedures employed and their justification in the following subsections. These descriptions are provided in detail so that the study could be replicated in confidence that similar findings would emerge.

Participant Selection

I purposefully recruited participants for the interview portion of this stud from a sample of individuals who used an organization specifically designed to provide pet care for people who are escaping DV. All participants were adult female survivors of DV who owned pets at the time of their escape from the abusive relationship. True to the

methodological selections in this study, participants were chosen from a homogenous sampling frame to allow for an in-depth analysis related to the research questions (see Patton, 2002). By considering participants who shared similarities in their experiences, it became possible for me to analyze convergence and divergence, extending the findings so that they can speak toward more generalizable experiences of DV and animal abuse (see Smith et al., 2009).

To be eligible to participate in the interviews, each participant met criteria including (a) previous experiences of DV, (b) previous enrollment in the community partner's pet care program, (c) pet ownership at the time of escape from DV, and (d) fluency in the English language. The organization that acted as the community partner for this investigation is one where I was employed as a victim services coordinator at the time of the study. With permission from the site, I was provided with a list of clients who entered the animal care program prior to my employment with the organization in January 2017. The list only included the names and contact information of individuals who had previously expressed interest in being involved in future studies on the intersection of DV and pet abuse. By only considering individuals who had reclaimed their pets prior to my position within the organization, I was able to limit the impact of personal bias, and I could consider the accounts of participants who I had never previously interacted with. Furthermore, the organizational structure of the community partner site is limited in its capacity to assist individuals who have already used the program's services, ensuring that participation in this study did not impact a person's ability to receive community partner program services in the future.

As a portion of the intake process for all clients who used the services of the community partner organization, all participants were at least 18 years of age and had met the criteria of having been actively seeking safety from DV at the time they entered their pets into formalized care. The participants in this study owned various kinds of pets, including dogs, cats, and horses. Each participant also successfully completed the animal care program, reclaiming their pets upon securing a safe environment after the abuse.

Upon contacting potential participants, I selected 12 individuals to participate in semistructured interviews that ultimately yielded the rich data for this study. If new themes emerged as data were being collected, more participants would have been recruited until saturation was accomplished. To strengthen the validity and triangulate the sources of data in this investigation, I considered 20 anonymous survey answers on eight questions related to experiences of pet abuse at the time a person entered the community partner organization (see Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012).

Informed Consent

Once recruitment for the study was completed, I presented an informed consent document to all interview participants. This document was drafted based on the ethical expectations of the Institutional Review Board (IRB No. 0215180624709), the community partner site, and the American Psychological Association Code of Ethics. Given the theoretical background of this study, I carefully worded the informed consent document to best achieve participant empowerment (see Goodman & Epstein, 2008). Upon reviewing the informed consent document with participants and confirming that participants had no questions about the study, the documents were signed (physically or

digitally) and stored in a secured file. Participants were also provided with a copy of the informed consent document should they have needed to review it at any time after the data were collected.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected for this study using semistructured interviews, which lasted between 35 and 80 minutes for each participant (Appendix A). Data were also pulled from existing, anonymous animal abuse surveys to allow for multiple sources to be considered. By reviewing many different scholars' suggestions about an ideal target sample for a study of this nature (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Mason, 2010), a sample size of 10 to 12 participants was predicted to be appropriate for this project. This target sample size was selected given the likelihood of reaching theoretical saturation with this number of heterogeneous participants from a specific group of interest (Mason, 2010). Saturation was further evaluated in triangulating the interview data and the secondary content analysis data pulled from the anonymous intake surveys (Denzin, 2009; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Although the interview schedule that was used for each participant included certain inquiries for each research question, follow-up questions and clarifications were tailored to the personal testimonies of each participant (Smith et al., 2009). Even though all participants were adequately prepared with the informed consent document prior to interview, each data collection session began with an overview of the interview style and purpose to both empower the participants and to build rapport (Smith et al., 2009). From the start of the interview process, participants were reminded that

there are no correct answers to the questions, and that the objective is simply to learn from their personal experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

Face-to-face interviews were conducted in one of the offices at the community partner site, providing a quiet and secure location for data collection. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, a slight change to the data collection procedure was requested and granted halfway through the data collection process, allowing for interviews to also be conducted over the phone. Each interview session was recorded, and the participants were made aware of the recording both in the informed consent document and in the informal debriefing (Smith et al., 2009). The interview schedule was structured in a manner that allowed for narrative experiences to open the participant's dialogue, and a focus on specific accounts and correlated thoughts was explored more toward the middle and end of the interviews, once the participants had a chance to become comfortable with the interview process (Smith et al., 2009). After the completion of each interview, the conversation was transcribed as quickly as possible. By transcribing each interview before moving along to the next participant, I was better able to examine and amend and the interview schedule as well as my style of interviewing as needed (Smith et al., 2009).

Demographic information. Some of the most basic data that was considered for the purposes of this study was demographic information that was obtained through the intake paperwork shared by the community partner organization. This information was also validated with participants at the beginning of the semistructured interviews. Information about each participant's age, number of children, marital status, and ethnicity was collected. Other information, such as the participant's type/number of pets, duration

in the animal care program, and length of abusive relationship was also collected to help conceptualize the participant's experiences within the occurrence of their escape from DV. The inclusion of such demographic information was essential in ensuring a homogenous sample while also anchoring the findings within their individual contexts (Smith et al., 2009). This information also allowed for consideration of themes from the existing literature, such as findings by Hartman, Hageman, Williams, and Ascione (2015) which suggest that types of animal abuse in DV situations may vary according to a perpetrator's ethnic background.

Semistructured interviews. The research questions at the focus of this study call for in-depth, participant-informed data. To inspire the sharing of this kind of information from participants, semi-structured interviews were conducted. This form of data collection helped to establish rapport between researcher and participant, while the semistructured nature of the interview also allowed for flexibility to follow up on certain experiences and beliefs that may not otherwise have been addressed in a more structured format (Smith et al., 2009). Furthermore, semistructured interviews have supported many of the empirical findings related to the intersection of DV and animal abuse (Flynn, 2000a; Hardesty et al., 2013; McDonald et al.., 2015).

Although many of the foundational studies on this topic utilized quantitative methods or surveys to establish the prevalence of the co-occurrence of DV and animal abuse, many of the initial studies suggesting this project have been based on interviews with survivors who can speak to the intersection based on personal experience. Flynn (2000a) used in-depth, semistructured interviews to uncover themes about the symbolic

interaction between DV survivors and their pets. McDonald et al. (2015) also used interviews to examine the experiences of children whose companion animals were abused within the cycle of DV. Finally, existing research that supports the current study relied on interviews to yield critical themes related to controlling behaviors within this intersection, urging more research to be done to determine the unique dynamics of abuse and control in families who experience both DV and pet abuse (Collins et al., 2017; Hardesty et al., 2013).

Not only does the existing literature support this methodology, but the use of semistructured interviews also closely aligns with the theoretical framework of this project. Control balance theory encourages one to conceptualize violence as it occurs in response to power and control imbalances in relationships (Piquero & Hickman, 2003; Tittle, 1995, 2004). This complex phenomenon could not easily be perceived in using a structured tool for data collection. Similarly, it is critical to the feminist leanings of this study to empower the participants as much as possible (Goodman & Epstein, 2008) and to allow for them to be have authority on the topic of interest (Smith et al., 2009). This intent was achieved by using semistructured interviews, as participants were encouraged to freely share their experiences for the sake of impacting empirical findings.

Interview schedule. As suggested by Smith et al. (2009), the interview schedule that was used in this study included questions that were specifically created to avoid assumptions and researcher bias. The questions were also grounded in the supportive literature, as many of the questions that were included in the interview schedule were based off questions that were used in Hardesty et al.'s (2013) qualitative study on

coercive control and animal abuse. Questions also followed up on themes from Collins et al.'s (2017) qualitative study, urging for more empirical exploration about the impact of these experiences on the human-animal bond and DV recovery. The dissertation committee reviewed the questions, phrasing, and order of inquiries in the interview schedule to promote accuracy and inspire rich data collection on the topic of interest. The interview schedule included inquiries that touch on the study's research questions while also allowing for deliberate consideration of the phrasing of complex questions and the delicate inclusion of questions on sensitive topics (Smith et al., 2009). Although the interview schedule was available to help guide the data collection process, the participants in this study were considered the experts on their own experiences, and questions were flexible according to what each participant was uniquely disclosing (Smith et al., 2009).

Open-ended survey information. As a portion of the new client intake process at the community partner organization, all clients complete an anonymous animal abuse survey (Appendix B). This survey was created by the partner organization in attempt to contextualize the abuse that a new animal in their program has experienced. In these surveys, the clients are invited to answer certain questions about the prevalence of pet abuse in their home. They are also prompted to disclose information about how their pet might have been an unfortunate barrier in their ability to seek safety from DV in the past. These surveys include open-ended questions to allow for the clients to describe the kinds of animal abuse that they experienced in their own words. To enhance the validity of this project, the open-ended data from 20 anonymous clients at the community partner

organization was considered (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Fusch & Ness, 2009). Qualitative content analysis of this data was triangulated, and the emerging themes from the participant interviews was supported (Denzin, 2009; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in IPA research is flexible, creative, reflective, and interpretative (Larkin & Thomas, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). Each participant was individually considered, and each line of the interview transcripts was read multiple times to promote understanding and accuracy in portraying the participants' lived experiences and their associated conceptualizations. Although analysis in IPA can be flexible, the "focus directs our analytic attention toward our participants attempts to make sense of their experiences" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79).

To begin the process of data analysis, each interview was reread while also listening to the audio recording of the interview session. During these early stages of analysis, a journal was kept, monitoring initial impressions and ideas. As I became more immersed in the data, I paid careful attention to the people, places, language, and contexts of the participants' accounts, supporting the goal of understanding the meaning that the participants are making of their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). The notes identifying these key areas of interest were marked on the left side of the hard copies of the interview transcripts. In the next round of data analysis, I spent more time noticing the similarities and differences within each interview. I looked for reoccurring feelings or perceptions, and I made notes of any contradictions that appear in the participants'

account (Smith et al., 2009). Summaries of these initial themes were marked on the right side of the transcript documents.

Reflection, revision, and openness to supervisor feedback were critical as emerging themes were recognized throughout the evolution of data analysis (Larkin & Thomas, 2012). It was also important to compare the notes on the margins of the transcripts to verify that researcher impressions were flowing naturally from participant experiences (Quinn & Clare, 2008). Through these efforts, I worked to ensure that each step in the interpretation of the data came from the crucial foundation of the participants' accounts, instead of originating from any degree of my personal bias on the topic (Smith et al. 2009).

The emerging themes were contrasted to the data that was pulled from the anonymous client surveys at the community partner organization. As themes appeared to be consistent across sources, I knew that I was nearing saturation (Denzin, 2009; Fusch & Ness, 2015). On the contrary, had I been finding conflicting or variable themes in either the interview transcripts or the open-ended survey information, I would have known that I needed to consider more participants until consistent themes with no new findings emerged (Denzin, 2009; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Throughout the process of analyzing data in IPA methodology, the data grows to include researcher notes and perceptions (Smith et al., 2009). From these notes, thematic development can begin to occur. The hermeneutic circle that is used in IPA allows for the data to be whole, then fragmented, then made whole again to reflect the final findings of the study (Smith et al., 2009). Once the themes in the data were recognized, I then began

the process of mapping the themes to see how they were both interconnected and unique. The themes that seemed to be the most dominant were highlighted, while other themes started to lose their importance at this stage in data analysis.

Exit Procedures

After each interview was completed, participants were contacted via email to thank them for their time, to remind them of the referral services available to them, and to recall how the findings would be used as a portion of this research process. Participants were also provided transcripts of their interviews so that had the opportunity to ensure the validity of the data. If participants had any questions or concerns about the transcriptions, they were invited to address their concerns with the researcher within a week of receiving the transcripts. At the end of the project, participants were provided with a summary of the study's findings.

IPA Strategies for Data Analysis

Deconstruction is one method that was used to transition from understanding the data line-by-line into the development of a more comprehensive appreciation of the participants' experiences. As suggested by Smith et al. (2009), deconstruction can sometimes be helpful so that the researcher can consciously consider a section of the narrative separately from the overall interview. In this way, it becomes possible to realize the complex nature of the participants' perceptions, taking the time to specifically consider all that is being offered up by the study's participants.

Another strategy that was frequently utilized in this project is abstraction, or the grouping together of similar themes (Smith et al., 2009). Themes that relate back to the

research questions were clustered, and these bundled experiences were then used to inform the ways in which participants were thought to be making meaning of their experiences. Numeration was used to identify the frequency (and infrequency) of certain themes, drawing my attention back to what the participants seemed to think was most important in understanding their experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

Finally, a visual guide was created to organize the findings of this investigation. The visual guide not only drew attention to the significant outcomes of the research, but it also outlined the organization process of the data analysis that led to the final empirical impressions (Smith et al., 2009). It is important to note that while the findings of IPA research are valid and valuable when conducted in a professional manner, they are also subjective and speculative by the very nature of the methodology (Smith et al., 2009). Although it is worth acknowledging this aspect of the project's approach, the perceptive nature of this methodology is a strength of the approach given its reliance on individual and introspective findings related to complex human experiences.

Trustworthiness

Determining the quality of a research project varies depending on the type of methodology that a researcher uses (Seale, 1999). In qualitative orientations, researchers must demonstrate aspects of trustworthiness to communicate the quality of the project and the authenticity of the study's findings (Shenton, 2004). Beyond establishing a study's trustworthiness by demonstrating credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981), there are several unique aspects of an IPA research project

that can help in establishing the quality, rigor, and impact of the project's findings (Larkin & Thompson, 2010; Smith, 2011).

Credibility

Similar to the concept of internal validity in quantitative research, credibility in qualitative studies demonstrates that a study does in fact measure what it intended to measure based on the research questions and selected methodologies (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). In establishing credibility, a researcher also works to provide evidence that the study's findings are congruent with real life experiences (Shenton, 2004). One of the ways in which credibility was achieved in this project was by using established, theoretically supported methodologies. This effort was also enhanced by basing the interview questions from an interview schedule that was successfully used in the existing literature (Hardesty et al., 2013). In selecting an approach that is empirically supported, the accuracy of the inquires in this study was enhanced (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, the voluntary nature of participation in this study promoted credibility by setting the stage for participants to share their personal truths based on their honest willingness to be involved in the project (Shenton, 2004).

Member checking was utilized in this project, as all participants were invited to review the transcripts for accuracy (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation via data sources and by using supportive demographic data also protected the credibility of the findings (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Denzin, 2009; Fisch & Ness, 2015). In my role as the researcher, I engaged in reflective commentary throughout the process of data analysis, and I received peer review at all stages of the study (Krefting, 1991; Larkin & Thompson,

2010; Shenton; 2004). Given the fact that this project was completed in collaboration with a university, this study was be held to a standard of academic integrity and accuracy at all stages of its completion.

Transferability

Although the goal of this study was to develop insight on the individual experiences of DV and pet abuse, the findings were intended to be generalizable enough to impact positive social change through an improved understanding of DV and its subsequent interventions. This study included extensive information about the context of the investigation so that readers are empowered to determine whether its findings are transferable to his or her unique situation (Shenton, 2004). Thick description of the phenomenon of interest was also provided, and general information about the study's participants allowed for appreciation of the specific setting in which the findings have meaning (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability speaks to the extent to which similar findings would arise if the study that was replicated (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). One of the most foundational strategies for upholding a project's dependability is to clearly describe all the procedures that are a part of a research project (Shenton, 2004). Such explanations are provided in this study, informing readers about the decision-making processes behind each methodological choice and analytical finding (Shenton, 2004). I maintained an audit trail throughout this investigation so that each step in the process of

data analysis could be witnessed by those who are reading about the study and its ultimate findings (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability

The methodology, theoretical background, and purpose of this study all aimed to yield findings that are true to the participants who informed them. For this reason, confirmability is critical to this project. I remained as objective as possible throughout the research process, being honest with myself and my supervisors about any predispositions I that I was inclined to experience toward the participants or toward the data (Shenton, 2004). Many of the strategies previously mentioned in this chapter also helped to promote confirmability. For example, triangulation of the data assisted in minimizing researcher bias (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Denzin, 2009; Shenton, 2004). Peer validation also helped to create subjective conclusions that were true to the participant's experiences (Krefting, 1991). Finally, I adopted a reflective role as the researcher, continuously evaluating the processes, procedures, and empirical impressions that resulted from this study.

Quality IPA Research

One of the most essential aspects in maintaining quality in IPA research is to stay true to the theoretical groundwork that supports the methodology (Smith, 2011). There are three critical aspects of IPA research that must be demonstrated throughout the description of a researcher's analysis and findings: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideographic approaches (Smith, 2011). These principles of IPA are demonstrated in this study, honoring the philosophy that supports the use of this methodology. The

methodological theories applied to this study also compliments the theoretical and conceptual framework associated with the topic of investigation, supporting overall alignment in the project.

In addition to a solid theoretical framework, careful descriptions of analysis and researcher perceptions are provided throughout the study to promote transparency (Quinn & Claire, 2008). By clearly explaining the way meaning was made in the study, readers will have the option to formulate educated assessments of the ultimate findings (Smith, 2011). The use of participant extracts also support this effort, basing the conclusions in the accounts of the true experts on the subject (Larkin & Thompson, 2010; Smith, 2011).

Smith (2011) offers critiques of IPA research based on how clear the researcher's focus is throughout the duration of the study. A precise focus in both subject matter and methodology should be demonstrated, as IPA is intended to examine specific and personal life experiences (Smith, 2011). In the current study, a focus on the experiences of DV and animal abuse are continuously intertwined throughout the objective of honoring the chosen methodology, thus promoting the esteem of the project.

Ethical Considerations

At the core of ethical integrity in research stands the commitment to do no harm (Smith, et al., 2009). To uphold this professional obligation and to assure the principled esteem of this project, various ethical considerations were put in to place. Although participants in this study were not at risk of physical harm, the topic being investigated had the potential to bring forth psychological duress and emotional recall of a previous period of trauma (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Not only were the participates

informed about the nature of the study prior to data collection, but they were also provided with multiple resources in case participation in this study led to any psychological stress. Hotline numbers were provided, as well as a referral to a no-cost community counseling program for survivors of trauma. In my role as the researcher, I made certain to take notice of body language and nonverbal cues indicative of stress during the interview, and I did not probe the participants in these situations (Smith et al., 2009).

For the sake of both ethical integrity and the theoretical underpinnings of this project, it was important that participants were informed and empowered throughout the research experience. One way in which the participants were informed about the study was through the provision of a carefully constructed informed consent document. The informed consent document outlined what the research process looked like, and participants were made aware of the ways in which their experiences and the subsequent outcome of the investigation would be utilized (Haverkamp, 2005; Smith et al., 2009). The informed consent was signed (physically or digitally) by each participant, and it was thoroughly reviewed at the start of each interview session. Participants were invited to ask any questions they had about the informed consent document or the research process as a whole. As a portion of the informed consent document, participants were provided with information disclosing my role as a researcher. In the form, participants were made aware of my educational and professional background with the community partner organization, and the intent of the project was again discussed. The inclusion of this

information was especially important given the professional role that I obtain at the site in which participants were recruited from (Haverkamp, 2005; Smith et al., 2009).

Although it is impossible to maintain true anonymity for the participants in a qualitative study, all possible measures were taken in the current study to maintain participant confidentiality (Smith et al., 2009). The raw data that were collected for the purposes of this study was only provided to the research team, and it was de-identified to protect confidentiality (Smith et al., 2009). To ensure that participants cannot be identified based off their transcriptions, each transcription was assigned a number, and identifying demographic information was either removed or generalized (Haverkamp, 2005). Conversations about representation without personal identification were facilitated with each participant to ensure that they understood the objective of the study and the way in which their experiences would be used to inform scholarly efforts (Smith et al., 2009).

Ethical integrity was also maintained in relationship to the community partner organization that supported this study. A completed version of the letter of cooperation was be signed by the community partner site. In the letter, the partner organization had the opportunity to read about the study's procedures, planed usage of the site's rooms for interviews, and the supervision of university staff throughout the completion of the study.

Beyond the ethical considerations made to protect this study's participants, I upheld the expectation of ethical integrity set by the academic institution that promotes this endeavor. I obtained approval of my research proposal from my committee members. From there, an application to conduct the research was submitted to the Walden

University IRB. Prior to receiving approval from the IRB, no recruitment efforts or data collection took place. Instead, I focused on creating documentation and study protocols at these early stages in the research process that would ultimately enhance the credibility and ethical integrity of this study.

Potential Research Bias

My educational and professional background closely ties me to the topic of investigation in this study. With a background in professional dog training and therapy dog training and practice, I am passionate about the welfare of animals. I am also employed by the community partner organization that served as the site for this study. These experiences have allowed me to become knowledgeable on both DV and animal abuse, and they have infused my drive for advocacy in this arena. However, these experiences have also taught me the importance of empowering survivors to tell their own stories, an objective that rests at the heart of this project. A research journal was kept throughout the duration of this project, prompting me to carefully consider my own personal biases toward the topic. If a bias was noticed at any time, it was addressed in peer consultation and collaboration. My background in mental health counseling also promoted these efforts, as I have received in-depth training on avoiding personal biases in both treatment and interview settings. With support from the theoretical orientation, methodology, and even the existing literature on this topic, this study was consciously designed so that the results of this project honor the participants and their path to survivorship.

Limitations

Although this study intentionally focused in on a precise group of individuals with a kindred life experience, I expected to encounter some limitations in identifying participants who were willing and able to participate in the study. I was geographically limited by working with a community partner organization that is specifically funded to help individuals in the southern United States. I was also financially limited in supporting a large sample size, as I personally financed the study. Although there were certain eligibility criteria for participants, the primary eligibility consideration came from an individual's genuine desire to participate in the study. On the flip side of that consideration, I expected to be limited in finding survivors who wanted to share their experiences of a difficult time in their pasts. These limitations were noteworthy, but the design of this study still yielded representative and meaningful results capable of bringing forth positive social change.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss the selection and implementation of the qualitative, IPA methodology for the purposes of this study. The reasoning for this approach was noted, outlining the key features of IPA that fit with the objectives and theoretical foundation of this investigation. The way participants were purposefully selected for this study was also described, and the creation of an interview schedule was explained. Data collection and analysis procedures were examined, and steps taken to ensure the quality of the data and its subsequent findings were described. Finally, my role as the researcher in this project was explored with emphasis on the ethical considerations that were made to protect the

integrity of this work. Having chronicled the methodological framework for this project, I will focus on the study's findings and outcomes in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand survivors' responses to pet abuse as a tactic that is used to maintain control in the perpetuation of DV. Individuals who had previously entered their pets into a community-based program that provides pet care for people escaping DV were considered for participation in this study. These participants were then interviewed to shed light on the primary research question: What are the experiences of survivors whose pets were abused within a context of DV? The following subquestions were also addressed:

1. How do survivors explain the ways in which their abuser used a pet to maintain power and control within the cycle of DV?
2. How do survivors describe their attachment to their pet(s) before, during, and after DV?
3. How do survivors make meaning of their relationship with their pet(s) during the trajectory of DV recovery?

In the following chapter, I will discuss the setting and demographic information representing the participants of this study. Data collection and analysis will also be described along with evidence of the trustworthiness of this study. Finally, the results of this study will be presented.

Study Setting

I obtained participants for this study from a list given to me by the community partner organization that provides pet care services for people who are escaping domestic

violence. Previous clients from the organization that indicated interest in being involved in future studies as a portion of their intake paperwork with the community partner organization were included on the list. Along with my role as researcher for this project, I was also employed by the community partner organization at the time of this study as of January 2017. To minimize the impact of personal bias or participant coercion, individuals from this list were only recruited if they were a part of the community partner organization prior to my professional role with the group. Taking off the names of individuals who used the program during my time of employment, I was left with approximately 100 individuals on the list. Using the contact information on the community partner list, I called potential participants to see if they were interested in participation. When a participant indicated interest in the study, I asked them to provide me with an e-mail address so that I could send them a copy of the consent form for their review. Once the participant received the consent document and agreed to participate in the study, I scheduled an interview time that worked best for the participant.

As originally planned in the data collection strategy for this project, I conducted face-to-face interviews with the first five participants in this study. However, after speaking with many potential participants who were interested in being involved in the study but were now living outside of the southeastern U.S. state that the community partner serves, I applied for a revision on my data collection plan. After obtaining approval for this change with the IRB, I then completed the last seven interviews on the phone. Consent for phone interviews was obtained in an e-mail response to the consent document with participants being sent the form and asked to respond with the statement

"I consent" if they were willing to participate in the study. All interviews were scheduled within 2 weeks of first e-mailing participants who expressed interest in this project after initially being recruited for participation on the phone. Once the interview was completed, I e-mailed a digital gift certificate for $20 to PetSmart to each participant. Participants were also e-mailed a copy of their transcribed interview so that they could review and approve the data. While each participant received a copy of their interview's transcription, there were no suggested changes to the data made by any of the participants.

Demographics

As intended in the purpose of this study and subsequent recruitment plan, all 12 participants who were interviewed for this project were female. While this study was intended to consider a purposeful sample of participants who shared a similar life experience, participants were recruited to represent a variety of demographic categories. Participants were Black (n = 3), White (n = 6), Biracial (n = 1), and Hispanic (n = 2). Participants were between the ages of 20 and 29 years (n = 2), 30–39 years (n = 4), 40–49 years (n = 3), and 50–59 years of age (n = 3). The participants also varied in terms of their relationship statuses at the time of data collection. Participants in this study were divorced (n = 2), separated (n = 1), widowed (n = 2), single (n = 6), and one participant was still married to the person who she previously escaped from. Of the participants, two people were in relationship with their abusers for less than 1 year. Seven participants were in relationship with their abusers for 1 to 5 years, one participant had a 6-year

relationship with the abuser, and the remaining two participants were in relationships with their abusers for longer than 10 years. This information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Race	Age	Current Relationship Status	Length of Abusive Relationship
Participant 1	Black	49	Divorced	15 years
Participant 2	Biracial	34	Married	5 years
Participant 3	White	54	Single	6 years
Participant 4	White	43	Divorced	3 months
Participant 5	Hispanic	34	Single	1 year
Participant 6	White	46	Widowed	6 months
Participant 7	Black	56	Widowed	2 years
Participant 8	White	35	Single	2 years
Participant 9	White	28	Single	2 years
Participant 10	White	24	Single	3 years
Participant 11	Black	47	Separated	25 years
Participant 12	Hispanic	33	Single	4 years

The participants that were interviewed for this study also varied in terms of their experiences of pet ownership, which is summarized in Table 2. Participants who owned dogs, cats, and horses were all interviewed. Nine of the participants owned dogs, six of the participants owned cats, and one of the participants owned horses. Three of the participants owned more than three animals at the time of their escape from DV, while the remaining nine participants owned less than three pets.

Table 2

Participant Pet Ownership

	Kind of Pet Owned	Number of Pets Owned
Participant 1	Cat, dogs	3
Participant 2	Dogs	2
Participant 3	Cats	2
Participant 4	Dogs	3
Participant 5	Dogs	2
Participant 6	Cat, dog	2
Participant 7	Dog	1
Participant 8	Dog	1
Participant 9	Cat	1
Participant 10	Cat, dog, horses	5
Participant 11	Dog	1
Participant 12	Cat	1

Data Collection

The secondary qualitative data were the first data that I collected for this project. The director of program services at the community partner organization provided me with 20 anonymous pet abuse surveys from existing clients that were selected at random. These surveys included open-ended questions about clients' experiences of pet abuse during their attempt to escape DV. This secondary data that was considered in this study was given to me over the duration of 1 work day.

All other data for this study were collected during interviews with participants. Interviews were conducted over a 4-month period, starting in March of 2018 and ending in June of that same year. I began each interview by asking the participants for demographic information and for information about their pet ownership. All interviews were recorded using a handheld recorder. The face-to-face interviews were recorded by setting the audio recorder on the desk during the interview sessions, and the phone

interviews were conducted on speaker phone so that they could be recorded with the same recording devise. I conducted each interview at the community partner organization. After each interview was completed, the digital recording of the interview was saved as a wma audio file on my password-protected laptop. The interviews varied in terms of how long that they lasted. While two interviews lasted over 60 minutes, three interviews lasted between 25–30 minutes, with the average interview time being about 40 minutes in length.

The only unanticipated circumstance that I encountered during the data collection process was that a few of the participants struggled with understanding how to consent to participation for phone interviews when the consent document was e-mailed to them. I asked participants to read the consent document, contact me with questions, and respond to the e-mail with the words "I consent" and their signed name when ready to move forward with participation. However, several participants were unsure of how to consent and called me to verify that they were providing the appropriate documentation for participation in the study. In these instances, I talked with each participant to ensure that they did not have any further questions about the study, and I asked them to respond to my e-mail with their statement of consent once they were ready to do so. After having phone conversations with these individuals, they were all able to send back an e-mailed version of their consent for the study, and data collection proceeded as planned.

Data Analysis

According to the IPA qualitative research tradition, the process of coding data is flexible and led by the goal of uncovering the ways in which participants make sense of

their lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Smith et al., 2009). With this goal in mind, data analysis for this study took place over many different phases. I transcribed each interview as soon as it was uploaded onto my computer. Playing the audio file on the laptop, I typed each interview word-for-word into a Microsoft Word document. I assigned each participant with a number, and the transcription was saved according to the participant number of the interview I was transcribing. The only changes that were made to the data in transcribing the interviews was the removal of any potentially identifying information. If a participant said the name of her pets, I would change the names as a precaution against her testimony being identified. I also replaced any geographically identifying information for the transcriptions. For example, one participant talked about which city she was in when she was escaping DV. Instead of writing the city's name on the transcription document, I used the word "city." In addition to this change, any time a participant named the community partner organization during their interview, I replaced the name of the organization with the words "Community Partner Group." Once I completed transcribing the interview, I sent the document to the participant so that she could review her transcription and ensure its accuracy. I asked all participants to let me know if any changes needed to be made to the document to better reflect their testimony, and I asked that all changes be submitted within 1 week of receiving the transcription. None of the participants requested changes in their documents.

Once I had verified with each participant that the transcription of their interview was accurate, I began the process of coding the data. I first listened to each interview once more while reading through the final transcription. During this process, I made

notes on the right side of the printed transcription, noting my impressions, questions, and realizations of commonly discussed or seemingly salient codes. I later used these notes to create researcher memos at the bottom of each interview's coding document because the qualitative nature of this investigation called for a reflective data analysis process (see Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To keep the data organized, I created a coding template that I then used to code each transcription. The template was made in a Microsoft Word document, and each coding document was titled as "Participant Number _ Coding". The document had three columns (see Table 3). I copied the interview's transcription into the left column of each document. The middle column was used for line-by-line coding, and the right column was used to identify emerging codes.

Table 3

Example of Transcription Code Book

Transcription	Line by Line Coding	Code
P: Yeah. Because he knew that me and my dog was close. He would say "I'm going to kill your dog!" and all kinds of stuff like that. I: That's so scary. P: Mmhmm. I: What was his relationship like with your dog? P: My dog didn't like him.	He knew she was close with her dog. He would threaten to kill her dog. Her dog didn't like the abuser.	ABUSER AWARE OF HER CONNECTION WITH DOG ABSUER THREATENED DOG DOG DIDN'T LIKE ABUSER

At the end of the coding table, I created an area titled "Memos" where I copied my perceptions of the interview. Given the fact that my impressions became a part of the

data when using an IPA approach, it was essential for me to keep official record of these notes (see Smith et al., 2009). After the memo was input into the document, I numbered and defined each code that was identified in the right column. For example, when the code "pet like a child" was listed, I then created a working definition of the code, stating "this code refers to the participant's conceptualization of her pet as being one of her children." The creation of working definitions was informed by both the existing literature and by strategies suggested in IPA research. When codes emerged in the data and had also appeared in existing published research on pet abuse and domestic violence, I based my definitions of the code from the conceptualizations described in foundational studies on the topic. For instance, Collins et al. (2017) defined animal maltreatment to include abuse, killing, neglect, and threats towards a survivor's animal. In conceptualizing animal abuse in my study, I adopted a similarly broad definition as it was empirically supported in previous research (see Collins et al., 2017). When codes appeared that were new or unique to this study, I based the definition off the participants' shared perceptions of the notion that they were describing (see Smith et al., 2009). For example, in defining the relief that participants reported feeling upon securing a safe place for their pets, I used participants' precise words to name and define the emerging code. In sharing and seeking supervision regarding the data, emerging codes, and definitions with the dissertation committee, interrater reliability was used to validate the ways in which meaning was being made at each step in the analysis process (see Marques & McCall, 2005).

Once all codes for the interview were listed and defined, I began the process of abstraction (Attride-Stirling, 2001). In abstraction, codes are grouped together in terms of the similar themes that they express (Smith et al., 2009). One of the themes that was identified during this process and was represented in each interview was "abuser uses pets to manipulate survivor." I defined this theme as the many instances in which the abuser controlled the participant through pet abuse. After this theme was created, I then went through the interview and found all codes that related to the overarching theme (Attrie-Stirling, 2001). I copied the defined code from the previous section of the coding document and pasted it under the identified theme so that I could easily reference which codes comprised the overarching theme throughout the data analysis.

When using IPA, each interview is first considered individually and meaning is made from the perceived perceptions of the participant who is yielding the data (Smith et al., 2009). However, given the hermeneutic process of IPA methodology, after each transcription has been analyzed, it becomes fragmented before it can be made whole once more (Smith et al., 2009). In comparing each interview and the participant's shared and unique experiences, I went back to edit and refine many of the themes that were previously identified in the first transcriptions. For example, I had originally identified a participant's love for her pet in the same theme as her expressed love for animals in general. As I became more immersed in the data, I decided to go back and break down that theme to include two overarching themes. In the end, it became necessary to break these experiences up to capture the participant's feelings towards her pet and towards animals in general, as the original theme was too general in nature.

Finally, once all transcripts had been coded and the family of themes had been realized for each individual piece of data, I created one large document to capture the themes from all interviews. This codebook also had three columns (Table 4). The left column listed the theme and its definition. The middle column considered the numeration of each code, counting how many times it appeared throughout the data (Smith et al., 2009). In the right column, I listed which interviews the theme appeared in so that this information could be easily referenced throughout in making meaning of the comprehensive data. A sample of the codebook is listed in Table 4. The full codebook is in Appendix C.

Table 4

Sample of Interview Code Book

Theme	Number of Times Code Appeared in Data	Interviews in which Theme Appeared
PET AS FAMILY MEMBER: This overaching theme refers to the participant's various expressions that her pet(s) are included as complex and valuable members of the family unit.	38	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12

After the comprehensive code book had been created, I started to consider which codes and themes seemed to be most meaningful to the participants, and how these codes and themes related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By pulling pieces of data from individual interviews, I deconstructed the information and considered sections of narratives as single units (Smith et al., 2009). I looked for reoccurring patterns and/or experiences, and I also took note of experiences that seemed to be more unique to an

individual participant (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By considering the data first as single interviews, then by breaking it down into units and comparing findings across participants, I then put the data back together to yield key, participant-informed themes related to this study's research questions (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Themes from the Data

Many different levels of themes emerged from the data, and they all shed light onto this study's research questions. To conceptualize and interconnect the various premises from this project, the terminology of basic themes, organizing themes, and global themes was used (Attride-Stirling, 2001). By identifying themes in a network of this structure, categories of basic themes became summarized by comprehensive organizing themes, which ultimately informed principal meaning from the collective data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Web maps to visualize the thematic networks of these themes are provided in Figure 1 and 2. As meaning was made of the collected data in this study, two global themes emerged.

The first global theme is that pets are important to consider within the context of DV. This global theme is comprised of three organizing themes. First, pets were used to control participants in this study. Basic themes that contributed to this finding include: pet abuse, pets used to manipulate, abuser jealously of pets, and abuser feelings towards pets. Second, pets were experienced as an unfortunate barrier to survivors who were trying to escape DV. The following basic themes can be noted in this organizing theme: pets as a family member, survivor passionate about animal welfare, and pet ownership impacted decisions about leaving. Finally, the third organizing theme is that pets provide

emotional support to survivors of DV. This organizational theme is supported by two basic themes: sense of protection and emotional benefit of pet ownership.

Figure 1. Thematic web of Global Theme 1: Pets are important to consider in DV. Basic themes (purple) led to organizing themes (pink). Organizing themes led to global themes (plum).

The second global theme that emerged from this data was that the provision of pet care is meaningful to DV survivors. There are three organizing themes associated with this overarching finding. First, pet care was experienced as a relief to participants in this study. This organizing theme is complimented by two basic themes: participant feelings of reprieve and participants feeling as though they did not have to worry about their pets. Next, the second organizing theme is that reunification with pets became a tangible goal for many participants in this study. Two basic themes support this finding, as being away from pets was difficult and reclaiming pets thus became an important goal for survivors.

Finally, the third organizing theme supporting the provision of pet care for DV survivors relates to the participants' expression of recovery from their experiences of DV. There are four basic themes associated with this organizing theme: participant is recovering, pet behavior is improving, desire to give back, and knowledge of DV. These themes will be further unpacked in the upcoming discussion of this study's findings. Example of participant quotes that lead to the formation of the themes are outlined below.

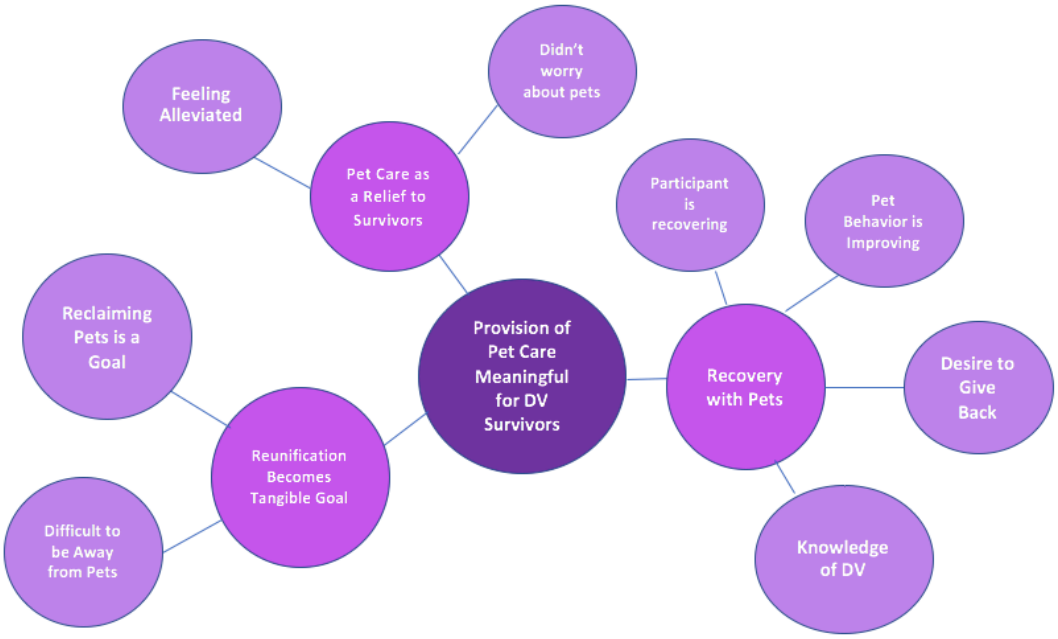

Figure 2. Thematic web of Global Theme 2: Provision of pet care meaningful for DV survivors. Basic themes (purple) led to organizing themes (pink). Organizing themes led to global themes (plum).

Negative Case Analysis

Thematic analysis of all the cases considered in this study consistently yielded the key findings of this investigation. However, there were some minor discrepancies

between the details of the participant's accounts. Out of the 12 interviews, one participant had very different experiences from the rest because she reconciled with the abuser and was reinvolved in a romantic partnership with him during the time of the interview. Unlike all the other participants, this individual expressed a belief that a DV abuser can change his abusive ways. This participant's experience was unique, and she demonstrated awareness of her situation being rare. In her words, "my husband has made progress, and it feels like he's been saved."

The second major discrepancy that occurred is that seven of the 12 participants reported their abuser to be an animal lover, while the other five participants reported that the abuser was not fond of pets. Even with this discrepancy in mind, all participants talked about their experiences of the abuser using the pet to control them, ultimately indicating that pet abuse does not relate to an abuser's affection for animals. This theme is consistent with existing research that has identified pet abuse in DV as a method of control rather than an expression of the abuser's feelings for an animal (Ascione et al., 2017; Flynn, 2000a, Hardesty et al., 2013; McDonald et al., 2015). This finding will be further discussed in the upcoming chapter. All in all, these discrepancies did not impact the thematic consensus of the major findings of this project.

Triangulation of the Findings

To evaluate the validity and saturation of the data, thematic analyses of secondary, qualitative data was triangulated against the emerging findings from the interview data (Denzin, 2009). The anonymous animal abuse surveys that were provided by the community partner group from previous clients allowed for the consideration of

themes in client's written responses to open-ended survey questions. A total of 20 existing surveys were considered. There are eight survey questions that ask respondents to describe their history of pet ownership, experiences of pet abuse at the hands of the abuser, and the ways in which pet abuse impacted their safety-seeking decisions. A full list of survey questions can be found in Appendix B. The surveys that were considered in this study varied in response length, but the average completed survey was one-two pages long, with about two-five sentences responses to most questions.

To analyze these surveys, I made notes of initial line-by-line coding on the right side of each survey (Smith et a., 2009). On the left side of the surveys, I developed codes that captured the experiences that were discussed by these anonymous community partner clients. I then created a codebook for the secondary data, listing and defining all codes from this data source (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, these codes were grouped into family codes, or themes, just as the interview data were analyzed for the purposes of this project. An example of the codes from the secondary data is provided in Table 5, and the full code book in provided in Appendix D.

Table 5

Sample of Secondary Data Codebook

Code:	Frequency	Surveys in which Code Appeared:
Deprivation of the pet: This code refers to the abuser depriving the victims' pet.	6	Survey 1, Survey 8 , Survey 10, Survey 14, Survey 15, Survey 20
Refusal to provide pet care: This code refers to the abuser refusing to allow the victim to secure vet care for her pet.	8	Survey 1, Survey 7, Survey 10 , Survey 15, Survey 17, Survey 20
Delayed safety: This code refers to the victim stating that fear for her pet being abused delayed her seeking safety from DV.	12	Survey 1, Survey 3, Survey 4, Survey 5, Survey 6, Survey 7, Survey 8, Survey 9, Survey 10, Survey 13, Survey 18, Survey 19

Once the codebook for the secondary data was created, I compared the themes from this data source to the codes and themes that were emerging from the interview data. Most of the codes that resulted from the secondary data were already represented in the interview data for this study. The following themes appeared in both the interview data and the secondary data: pet abuse (abuser killed, injured, or deprived pet), threats to pet, refusal to provide vet care, delayed seeking safety due to pets, abuse in front of children, yelling at pets, abuser loved pets, traumatic impact of pet abuse, abuser controlled participant's behavior by using the pet, and abuser brought new pets into home.

Only a few new codes came up in the secondary data that were not described in the interview data. For example, survey respondents had a great variety of pets, including dogs, cats, snakes, and fish. The only other code that appeared only in the survey data was that many survey respondents talked about having to give away pets in the past due to the abuser's demands. Because participants in the current study were not asked questions about their history of pet ownership, this code did not appear. However, in grouping the basic codes from the secondary data, the new codes that appeared only in the existing survey information were ultimately grouped into organizing and global themes that were consistent with the interview data. Noting the presence of persistent themes across both data sources, I realized that the themes that originated from this data remained true for a wide spectrum of survivors, and saturation had been reached for this project (Denzin, 2009).

Trustworthiness

It was my prerogative as a researcher to maintain the quality of this study all throughout the process of collecting and analyzing the data for this project. Prior to starting this project and as discussed in Chapter 3, I referenced the works of other researchers and scholars to determine the qualities of trustworthy IPA research (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). I not only became familiar with standards of quality for the specific type of qualitative investigation that was utilized in this project, but I also worked to demonstrate credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in this project.

Credibility

The credibility of this project was considered from the time that the methodological structure of this study was selected. The goal of this project as informed by both existing literature and the selected methodology was to understand unique survivor experiences that can speak to DV as a larger societal issue. In designing each step of this study in a way that allowed for participant's experiences to direct the findings of this study, both credibility and transferability were protected (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, several aspects of this project followed suggestions that came from the existing literature on the topics of DV and animal abuse, such as the formation of research questions and the creation of the interview schedule that intended to answer those questions. Frequently discussing the voluntary nature of this study during recruitment also enhanced this study's credibility so that any potential cohesion or bias would be minimized (Shenton, 2004). To ensure that all data accurately captured the participants' experiences in this study, I first listened back to each recording while reading the interview transcript to ensure accuracy in the written data. I then invited all participants to look over the transcriptions of their interviews so that they could review the data and suggest any corrections that they felt were necessary (Creswell, 2009). Finally, triangulating the findings of this study across multiple data sources strengthened the credibility of this project (Denzin, 2009).

Transferability

Along with the previously described strategies that impacted both the credibility and transferability of this project, it was especially important for me to describe the

unique aspects of each participant who was considered in this study so that other scholars and advocates working along this social justice issue can determine the resonance of this study's findings as applied to the individuals with whom they are working (Shenton, 2004). Information about each participant was collected in the interview process, and this information was also explained both in words and in figures so that readers can better understand the people who have shared these experiences. Throughout the data collection process, I paid careful attention to the context of the participant's experiences, and I also clarified with the participant any time I was struggling to understand the cultural and social context of her testimony. Through these efforts, I was able to obtain a thick description of the participant's experiences and promote the transferability of this study (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010).

Dependability

An academic research investigation should be clearly explained so that another scholar can replicate the study and find similar results (Guba, 1981). In an effort to increase this project's dependability, each step of this project was described in detail, and evidence of empirical support and researcher decision making was thoroughly provided. Throughout the process of data collection, a detailed audit trail was maintained so that all processes for this study were organized and accessible during analysis (Shenton, 2004). There was one deviation from the original data collection strategy that was explained both to the IRB and previously in this chapter. By explaining the reasoning for considering phone interviews as well as face-to-face interviews, it is my hope that future

studies on this topic will also make data collection considerations that allow a wider range of survivors to share their testimonies.

Confirmability

It was essential to the trustworthiness of this study's findings that I did all that I could to maintain objectivity in completing this project. The goal of this study was to empower survivors as the experts on their experiences, which called for various strategies that optimized this study's confirmability. I used the secondary data that were considered in this study to triangulate my interpretations of the interview data and to check for the presence of biased analysis (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Denzin, 2009). I also engaged in peer review in coding and analyzing the data, depending on feedback from the dissertation committee so that findings could be validated across interpreters (Krefting, 1991). I maintained a reflective stance in my role as a researcher in this investigation. At the end of each coding process, I kept researcher notes to track my feelings and interpretations about the data that I was considering. By being reflective at each step in the dissertation process, I worked to stay mindful of any potential bias that would challenge the objectivity of my role (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2009).

Study Results

This IPA research study was guided by the overarching prerogative of uncovering survivors' compounded experiences of DV and pet abuse. Within this enveloping question, sub questions were formulated to ask about pet abuse and abuser control, survivor attachment to pet(s), and the trajectory of DV recovery when pet abuse is

present. Ultimately, these research questions were answered through the emergence of two global themes, which are depicted in Table 6.

In this study, pets were consistently described as being important to the survivor. This global theme is associated with three organizing themes and a total of nine basic themes. The second global finding of this study is that the provision of pet care for DV survivors while escaping the abuse was experienced as a meaningful intervention. This global theme is also supported by three organizing themes, and there is a total of eight basic themes contributing to this finding. Table 6 lists each all the themes across their various levels of abstractions.

Table 6

Global Themes, Organizing Themes, and Basic Themes Derived from Data

Global Themes	Organizing Themes	Basic Themes
Theme I: Pets are Important to Consider in DV	a) Pet Used to Control Participant	• pet abuse • pets used to manipulate • abuser jealous of pet • abusers' feelings towards pets
	b) Pets as a Barrier to Escaping DV	• pet as a family member • survivor passionate about animal welfare • pet ownership impacted decisions about leaving
	c) Pet as Emotional Support	• sense of protection • emotional benefit of pet ownership
Theme II: Provision of Pet Care Meaningful for DV Survivors	a) Pet Care as a Relief to Participants	• feelings of alleviation • didn't worry about pets
	b) Reunification Becomes Tangible Recovery Goal	• reclaiming pets is a goal • difficult to be away from pets
	c) Recovery with Pets	• participant is recovering • pet behavior improving • desire to give back • knowledge of DV

Theme 1: Pets are Important to Consider in Domestic Violence

The first global theme to emerge in this data was the participants in this study frequently expressed the importance of their pets. This theme was expressed in many

different ways. Not only were pets described to be personally significant to the participants (thus bolstering their commitment to not leave unless their pet was taken care of), but pets were also intentionally selected by abusers to control participants to monopolize on that which was valuable to the participant. Throughout these dynamics, pets were found to be key for emotional support and recovery for participants.

Pets used to control participants. The first organizing theme to emerge in this data was present in all 12 interviews with participants. Across all participant accounts, pets were used by the abuser to maintain power and control within the context of DV, and codes related to this overarching theme appeared in the data a total of 68 times. Four basic themes were realized to make meaning of the ways in which abusers attempted to control participant with pets. The first basic theme involves survivors' descriptions of the ways in which pets were abused by the perpetrator to control the participant's actions. The second basic theme identifies the traumatic impact of that these experiences of pet abuse had on survivors. Third, participants noted that abusers tended to be jealous of personal bonds with pets. Finally, the fourth basic theme related to this overarching theme captures the abuser's feelings towards the survivors' pets, leading to important considerations about the nature of pet abuse within DV situations.

Pet abuse. The basic theme pet abuse refers to the abuser threatening or harming a pet to control the victim. There was a wide range of pet abuse experiences reported by participants in this study. Many participants discussed the ways in which the abuser would threaten pets if he found out that the survivor was planning to leave the relationship. In some instances, abusers threatened to take custody of the pets, scaring the

survivor into staying in the relationship longer than she wished. One such participant talked about how even though she had rescued her two dogs prior to entering a relationship with the abuser, he would often state that the dogs belonged to him if the relationship came to an end. Abusers also threatened to get rid of the participants' pets, either in somewhat obscure threats or by stating that the pets would be taken to animal control. Participant #2 said that her abuser would threaten to turn her dogs in every time she left the house, stating that "he used my love for them the same way he did for my children."

Across all interviews, participants reported an escalation in pet abuse during times of conflict. Participant #10 told a story about her and her boyfriend getting into an argument during a car ride home from dinner. As the argument became more heated, the abuser told her that, as soon as they were home, he was going to kill her beloved dog. Fear over an abusers' actions towards pets were extremely high for participants who were forced to escape their homes on an emergency basis, leaving the pets in the home with the abuser until it was safe to go back to reclaim them. In these cases, abusers would often tell participants that the only way they could save their pets was to come back to the home to take care of them. Participant #8 shared her experiences of finding out that the abuser was starving her dog after she had to leave the home due to her husband's drunken state of violence in the middle of the night. She was unable to take her dog with her when escaping, and she soon found out from family friends that her dog was being starved while in the abuser's care. Upon texting the abuser asking him to feed the dog, he said the

dog was not his responsibility. He told her "it was the kids' responsibility, and that if they all came home, he could make sure that the dog is taken care of."

In some sad cases, participants disclosed that the abuser had killed pets alongside the cycle of DV. Participant #1 shared a heartbreaking story of the abuser "making ten pets disappear" throughout their marriage.

> I've always had a passion for animals, and that is just his way of getting back at me is to make my pets disappear. He'd bring the pet home and say 'ok well here is a new pet. That one is gone, and now here's another one.' And then you'd get attached, and that one would disappear. And so you know, that was his thing. To make the pets disappear. And you'd have that connection. And then get mad, and then you go out to eat or just go to school. And you get back and the pet is gone. And that is emotional. (Participant #1)

Finally, many pets whose owners were interviewed for this project were subjected to neglect as imposed by the abuser. Survivors reported not being allowed to provide vet care for injured animals, let alone provide routine vet care and grooming. In discussing her concern for her sick dog, Participant #8 said that her abuser threatened to harm her if she took the pet for medical attention. She said, "he was like 'no, I'm not going to fit the bill for a dog that's going to die anyways.'" Several participants said that there were many times in which the pets would go hungry, as they were not given the resources to purchase pet food. Unable to provide care for their beloved animals, participants reported that they would "do whatever was needed to provide care for my pet, even if it meant

making the abuser happy" (Participant #12). These findings were also highlighted in the secondary data that was considered for this project.

> He collects animals then expects me to take care of them. This has been extremely difficult because he was spending excessive amounts of money on alcohol, leaving none for vet care. Or think threatening me he would not buy pet food. (Survey Respondent #8)

Pet used to manipulate. Even in cases in which pets were not threatened or harmed by the abuser, participants discussed the ways in which pets would be used by the abuser to manipulate them. Two participants talked about how pets were presented to them as gifts from the abuser to try to repair relationship problems in the past. In remembering the time that her abuser presented her with two brown labrador retriever puppies, Participant #1 reported her abuser saying, "ok, I brought you these dogs, and they're chocolate like you." Participant #2 had a similar experience, realizing that her dog had been presented to her by the abuser during a period of conflict related to the couples' ideas on marriage. She said, "I got the puppy from him, so, it was almost like I didn't have the ring, but at least I had the puppy."

Abuser jealous of pet. Over 80% (10/12) participants talked about how the abuser seemed to be jealous of pets. For Participant #7, expression of this jealousy would show up in the abuser teasing her about the nature of her bond with her dog: "He would say that me and my dog are going together…that I must be sleeping with my dog. He'd try to get me to stop giving him attention like that." Many participants talked about how the abuser would be disgusted by any demonstrations of affection that they had for the dogs,

or how they would then get mad because they didn't feel that they received the same level of affection as the pets did. In realizing this propensity in her abuser, Participant #8 said:

> I had already caught on to the fact to that it was something that could be used against me, so I tried not to show too much and I felt like if there was too much of a bond, even to the point to where I had more control over the dog than my abuser did, then it might cause an issue. And the last thing that I needed was him to try to flex the power over a helpless animal that had nothing to do with the situation.

When asked about how the abuser responded to her connection with her pets, survivors frequently stated that the abuser seemed to have a heightened awareness of her bond with her pets. "He knew that me and my dog was close," said Participant #7. She went on to talk about how the abuser seemed to always be watching her interactions with her dog at the start of their relationship, often making remarks about how he could see that she really loved her dog. Participants shared their beliefs that pets were selectively used by the abusers given the fact that they were of high personal value to them. In explaining her thoughts as to why the abuser would threaten to harm the cats that he also claimed to love, Participant #3 doubted that the batterer would actually ever cause physical harm to the animals. She said, "he never touched the cats, but he threatened to just enough to scare me. He knew that would get to me."

Abuser's feelings towards pets. One key aspect of discrepancy across the data was that participants reported a spectrum of abuser attitudes towards pets. Some participants identified the abuser as an animal-lover, while some participants said that the

abuser never liked animals. For example, when asked about the abuser's relationship with her pets, Participant #2 said, "he is a bigger dog lover than I was. He's had these pets for seven generations." However, when asked the same question, Participant #10 reported "he never wanted the cat, and he always hated her." For one participant, the abuser was the one who brought pets into the family, but he did not obtain new pets out of love for the animals. "His focal point was on breeding the dogs," she said (Participant #7). Participants were not all clear about the abuser's feelings towards the pets, but they still reported being uncomfortable with the ways in which the pet was handled while in the abuser's care. Participant #9 said:

> I was uncomfortable with how he was handling her, even though he wasn't like hitting her or doing anything violent. I was just like 'hey, I think that's a little too rough.' And he would be like 'no, no, it's fine.' So those little things. And he would just be, like, very possessive towards her.

In some cases, when asked about the abusers' relationship with the survivors' pets, participants talked about how they believed that the abuser was only pretending to like her pets at the start of their relationship. Participant #7 said, "he didn't like my dog, but in the beginning, he pretended to. He wanted to trick me with it." Participants often described a quick progression from the abuser initially acting fond of the pets to responding to the pets in a harsh manner. "He starts out as though he likes the pets, and then towards the ends it's always 'I'm getting rid of this fucking dog' or I'm sick of this cat smelling in the house'," reported Participant #1.

Despite the various levels of affinity that the participants described the abusers having towards their pets, all pets represented in this study were reportedly used to control the participants in instances of DV. Whether an abuser seemed to like the pets or not, he still threatened, harmed, and sometimes even killed animals to manipulate his victim and maintain power in the relationship. This finding will be further explored and related to existing literature on DV and pet abuse in Chapter 5.

Pets as a barrier to escaping. In addition to every participant talking about how their pets were used to maintain control over them, every participant also talked about how their pet was an unfortunate barrier when they were seeking safety from DV. In describing this barrier, three organizing theme were identified. Participants talked about how their pets were a part of their family, and about how they were passionate about the welfare of animals. With these qualities in mind, it was therefore not an option to survivors to leave the pets behind when escaping DV.

Pet as a family member. The code of a pet being a part of the family appeared 69 times in the data. When prompted with the statement, "tell me about your pet(s)", animals were described in the following ways:

Participant #3 stated: "They are just my babies."

Participant #4: "My dogs are like my children."

Participant #7: "My dog is kind of like my child."

Participant #8 stated: "He was just one of the kids."

Participant #10: "I consider my pets family."

Participant #11: "He's part of the family."

In follow-up questions regarding these statements that were made by so many of the study's participants, survivors went on to talk about how their family would not be complete if it did not have pets in it. This subtheme appeared across all different kinds of family structures. Participants who did not have children, such as Participant #7, said that her dog took the place of a human child. Participants with children described complex bonds between kids and the pets. Even though Participant #8 doubted her ability to take care of her children and a dog after escaping DV, she knew that her kids considered the puppy to be one of their siblings. "If we weren't going to heal as a family with the dog included, we weren't going to heal at all," she said.

Survivor passionate about animal welfare. It was very common among the participants who were included in this study for survivors to have strong feelings towards their pets and towards animal welfare in general. Thirty percent of the people who were interviewed for this project talked about how one would have to be an animal lover to truly understand experiences of DV and pet abuse. As stated by Participant #1:

> You'd have to be a pet owner and a pet lover to truly understand what that means to be in love with your pet one day and then have your pet ripped away the next day and you not know.

Every single participant who was interviewed for this study described a level of affection towards pets, with expressions of pride over pet ownership and the desire to be a responsible pet parent being commonly discussed. Of the 12 participants included in this study, nine people reported having rescued their pets. In discussing her involvement in horse rescue, Participant #10 said:

> We do a good bit of rescuing and re-homing. It's not really a business because really you may get them for free because you're rescuing them, but you end up putting the money in them. It's definitely a work of the heart. Because you get to see them flourish afterwards. Through the years I think we've rescued about ten horses."

Pet ownership impacted decisions about leaving. Having communicated their love for animals along with the fact that their pets were an integral part of the family, participants also discussed the ways in which pet ownership impacted their ability to escape the abusive relationship. Even though all the participants who were interviewed for this project ended up securing pet care given the organization from which participants were recruited from, many survivors discussed having a hard time initially finding a safe place for pets to stay. As stated by Participant #8, "when you go to a shelter, nobody thinks to ask, 'did you get your fur-baby? How's your fur-baby doing? Do you even have any pets?'" Shelters were not the only places that limited participants' ability to care for their pets while escaping DV. Participant #9 said, "I think that having a pet made it more unsafe for me in this situation unfortunately. I didn't have any friends that would take both me and an animal. They would only take me." For many participant, boarding pets while escaping DV was not an option. Participant #10 said:

> I will tell you very upfront that it was the biggest… it was one of the biggest issues as far as leaving. Trying to find a place to stay with at that time we had two dogs and two cats and two horses. Trying to find a place to stay that is pet-

friendly, and then trying to find a place where you can board them affordably, it's extremely, extremely difficult.

Throughout all the struggles that came with trying to find a safe place for pets while participants were attempting to escape abuse, survivors were committed to their pets and were not willing to give up on them. When asked how pets impacted participants' decisions to leave or to stay in the abusive relationship, Participant #4 said, "I would have stayed. I would not have left them." Participant # 7 had a similar experience, and she said, "no matter what, I was not going to leave my dog." Many survivors had to go to extreme measures to include their pets in their plan to achieve safety from DV. Three people who were interviewed for this project shared stories of staying in their cars with their pets because there was no other place for them to go. Participant #6 was forced to temporarily live at a local park. In talking about her experiences, she said, "so I'm sitting in the middle of this field with the dogs with us, eating crackers, because we had nowhere else to go."

Pets as emotional support. The interview questions formulated for this project attempted to delve into participant's experiences of pet ownership at each stage of their DV experiences. Questions were asked about the participants' relationship before, during, and after DV escape. In addressing each of these prompts, conversations about the emotional impact of pet ownership came up. Two basic themes emerged in these conversations. For DV survivors, pets offered a mutual sense of protection, and the emotional benefit of having companion animals was discussed in detail across numerous participant interviews.

Sense of protection. Participants frequently described the emotional benefit of sharing a mutual sense of protection with their pets in experiences of DV survivorship. Some participants (n = 7) described their pet protecting them from the abuser, and other participants (n = 7) talked about their protection of their pets as being one of the motivators for them leaving the abusive relationship. When asked about how the pets responded during times of conflict with the abuser, the following responses were generated:

Participant #2 stated: "She is very, very protective."

Participant #4 said: "Perry was a very protective pet."

Participant #6: "She's very protective of both me and my daughter."

Participant #7: "He's very watchful of me. He's protective."

Participant #10: "My cocker spaniel has always been very protective of my daughter. And he never laid hands, well, I can't say that, because he did. But he never laid hands on my daughter with the dog in the room."

For many of these participants, pets not only offered protection to them, but they also protected the survivors' children. Many participants discussed the actions that they took to return protection to their pets. Participant #6 said "he would act like he was going to smack at her. But I would give him a look like 'do it and see what happens.'" When talking about how her abuser once threatened to kill her dog while they were driving home, Participant #10 said, "I slammed on the breaks and pulled the car over to the side of the road and told him to get the hell out of the car. And I left him about two miles from the house." Participants talked about safety planning with their pets in mind, secretly

storing dog food away in the car when the abuser was not watching. This was an experience that was also mentioned in two of the secondary data surveys, indicating that DV survivors start planning for their pets' safety early on in the process of escaping. When talking about how she couldn't always get out of the house safely with her pets, Participant #5 said, "I would hide myself with the dogs in the bathroom. I wasn't going to let anything happen to them." All in all, participants took the violence that was directed towards their pets very seriously. When discussing her abuser's relationship with her pets, Participant #4 said, "I probably would have killed him if he hurt my dogs."

For many survivors, the presence of pet abuse signaled a dangerous shift in their relationship that let them know that they needed to escape as soon as possible. Participant #1 said, "it gave me that final nail in the coffin to say, 'you're never going back. You're never turning back. This relationship will never be. This is the last pet that you will make disappear." Participant #2 talked about how her feelings of motivation for leaving the relationship came secondary to her motivation to finding a safe place for her dogs. "The dogs got safe before we did. And it showed me that I needed to get safe, too," she said. For seven of the participants, a sense of protection over the abuser's interactions with pets lead to some of the first red flags telling them that the relationship was not a healthy one. As Participant #9 said, "If somebody is going to be joking around that hitting a defenseless animal with a car is funny, you run away. You run far, far away."

Emotional benefit of pet ownership. Frequently throughout the data collection process (in eight interviews), pets were described as crucial for the emotional support of participants. Some of these pets even had official roles of emotional support, with 30% of

the participants reporting that their pets were therapy or service animals. Participants felt that the bond that they had with their pets helped them to not only survive their experiences of abuse, but to heal once they had successfully gotten away from the abuser. When asked about how her pet responded to her during times of conflict, Participant #7 said, “she really helped me out.” Even when a pet was not outright protective over a participant, many survivors said that pets would come to comfort them once a violent episode had ended. Participant #4 describes her pets being there for her in the aftermath of physical altercations:

> Sarah and Lady, once it would all die over, they were really on top of me. She would get up on the bed. She would sleep in the bed the whole night, pressed up against me like you wouldn’t believe.

Pets also provided emotional support to participants once they could reclaim them from the community partner group. An excerpt from Participant #2 describes the way that pet ownership kept her un a schedule, helped her to heal, and gave her reason and purpose:

> Those dogs are such a big part of me being able to handle stuff. And keeping me on a schedule. And making me feel needed and nurtured and loved. Such a big part of my family and my therapy. Having them back was worth knowing how much they are worth. It increased their value. I knew I loved my dogs. But having to go without them, and then getting reunited with them, and knowing that there’s people who feel the same way. It made all of it worth it. Having them back feels like maybe all of the mistakes that I made weren’t all in vain. And all of the

> struggling that I did to get back. And that I did build something enough before all of that happened that was worth saving.

Other participants shared similar feelings, describing the way that pet care calls for a valuable routine for DV survivors. Themes of reason, purpose, and routine were common in these discussions, and participants also talked about the physical comfort of having a pet to be affectionate with.

> I have a reason when I'm not, when it's just me, I have a reason for going home every day. I have a reason to get up at a certain time. I have responsibilities. Those are things that are valuable to a victim. It's a routine. You have to have some routine, some routine, some stability, or you feel like you're in chaos all of the time. My pets provide me that reason. (Participant #4)

> Just having him back I think really settled a lot of that emotional tide pool. You know. Where the water is swelling up and coming in. just the physical reaction of him like wanting to cuddle and lick and playtime. It actually causes a lot of that anxiety to just dissipate. Like I know it's going to seem scary and you're going to keep questioning yourself. You know. "how am I supposed to do this?" but the how is right there. Just to keep trying. And once you've got him in your arms again, trust me, it's going to feel better. (Participant #8)

Finally, participants talked about how they felt as though having their pets back after escaping DV made it easier for their entire family to heal. Participant #8 said, "having our dog back made the transition into a new home easier, especially for my boys." These findings relate to another basic theme that emerged in this data, noting that

survivors in this study considered pets to be an integral part of the family unit. Because "escaping without the pets wasn't an option, neither was healing without them. I just wouldn't have been able to do it all without my pets" (Participant #12).

Theme 2: Provision of Pet Care Meaningful for Domestic Violence Survivors

Along with the first overarching theme that was uncovered in this study's data, a second global theme emerged, ultimately speaking to the personal significance and meaningfulness that the provision of pet care had for DV survivors. Within this global theme, three organizing themes and eight basic themes were identified. The first organizing theme to support the meaningfulness of pet care for DV survivors can be noted in realizing the feelings of relief that participants felt upon receiving specialized care for their pets during their time of DV escape.

Pet care was a relief to participants. When asked questions about the participants' provision of pet care through the community partner group, 100% of the participants discussed feelings of alleviation upon securing a safe place for their pet to go. These feelings of relief are unpacked in two basic themes: participants' feelings of alleviation and participants' feelings that they did not have to worry about their pet(s) during its time in the community partner program.

Feeling alleviated. Every one of the participants' accounts in this study involved shared feelings of relief at having found a safe place for pets to be while survivors were escaping DV. As Participant #3 stated, "knowing that they were well taken care, that was a relief. A weight off your shoulders. So that you can concentrate on getting your life back together." When asked what it was like to have to separate from their pets while

escaping, participants admitted being sad over having to temporarily leave their pets, but they mention of relief far exceeded reports of any negative feelings that they may have been struggling with. Participant #9 said:

> I was so grateful that I did, you know, seek help so that I could get her safe, and I could get myself safe, too. It was just a huge relief. Putting her in that program was a huge relief too, because I know that she was going to be safe even though it was hard.

Many of these participants (30%) also described the ability to focus on themselves while recovering given the fact that their pet was being taken care of. As Participant #4 said, "I knew at the juncture when I dropped them off at that participating vet, they were ok. I could focus on me. I could focus in on me. I could focus on my daughter. I didn't worry about them."

Finally, several participants reported feeling less stress knowing that their pets had been provided for medically. Many of the pets who were represented in this study entered the community partner program having recently been abused or neglected by the batterer. In these cases, participants expressed relief knowing that their pets would be taken care of and would have the opportunity to physically heal from their experiences. Even when pets had not been harmed, participants communicated feelings of empowerment in response to the provision of vet care. As stated by Participant #9:

> They had given them baths, they had clipped their nails, they had given them all of their shots. They had done everything. And I was just like, 'Oh my goodness.' Do you know how that makes somebody feel? That has gone through what I've

gone through, doesn't have any money, and was already worried about thinking about how I'm going to get their shots. And they did all of that.

Participants didn't have to worry about pets. Along with feelings of relief, DV survivors whose pets entered the care of an organization specifically designed to aid animal victims of DV knew that they did not have to worry about their pets during their DV escape. "With the community partner group, I knew that we didn't have to worry about the dogs while we were there," said Participant #6. Participants did not question the quality of care that their pets were receiving, and several survivors mentioned being encouraged by the apparent quality of the veterinary clinic where pets are dropped off for initial intake into the program. Because the abuser had intentionally let her dog out of the house while she was attempting to escape, Participant #1 needed veterinary assistance for her puppy whose leg was broken after being hit by a car. This participant spent several minutes discussing how impressed she was with the veterinary partner who healed the puppy's leg using natural measures that required daily treatments and bandage changes. Upon being asked about her feelings when dropping her pets off for intake in the community partner group, Participant #3 said, "it was a nice place. There would have been some concerns if it was some shady thing, you know? It makes a big difference that it was a nice place." Participant #11 echoed these sentiments, stating, "it was great to know that he was well taken care of."

Given the structure of the community partner organization from which participants were recruited for involvement in this project, all people who were interviewed for this study were provided with frequent updates on their pets during their

time away from them. Participants described being assured by the provision of these updates. Participant #4 said, “I was able to check in on them and stuff, and that relieved my concerns when I had them.” Participant #7 was also assured by the ability to get updates on her pet. “I called and checked in on him to make sure he was ok, but I knew they would call me if something was up,” she said.

Participants also found comfort in knowing that their time away from their pets was only temporary, and that they would be able to get their pets back at the end of the program. “There was this outlook there that this was temporary. It was temporary, and I would get my babies back,” said Participant #4. Participant #5 was sad when having to say a goodbye to her pets upon dropping them off with the community partner, but she said, “I reminded myself that it was just a temporary location.”

Although participants talked about how they did miss their pets during their time of temporary separation from them, they also expressed that there is already so much to worry about during the process of rebuilding a life after escape from abuse. Participant #10 said:

> Knowing that they were safe was ten times better than worrying about them being there with him and not there. There’s enough things that you’re having to worry about in that process. To know that they’re safe and taken care of and you can think about something else for a minute… it is so nice. It is just…it literally gives you a minute to breath.

Reunification becomes tangible recovery goal. Many of the subquestions that were used in data collection were created to examine participants’ experiences of being

away from their pets during their time in the community partner program, as well as their feelings about reuniting with the pets once the program came to an end. In answering these questions, 30% of the participants described how their objective to reunify with their pets became a meaningful goal for them in terms of overall DV recovery. Participant #5 said, "I was making damn sure that I was going to take them back at two months." Similarly, Participant #2 stated, "I had no doubt in my mind that I was going to get my dogs back, because I had to get my dogs back."

Having set the goal to reclaim their pets once their time in the community partner organization had ended, participants described feelings of joy during their reunification meetings with their pets. When asked how it felt to reunite with the pets at the end of their escape process, Participant #3 said "It's like a new lease on life. It really is. And it's not complete until they're with you." For Participant #2, being able to take her pets home felt like finally reaching the light at the end of the tunnel of DV recovery:

> It was the reward that…it was getting the light that was your light at the end of the tunnel. Or knowing that, you know, you look up hill and you know 'I got to make it there, or I have to make it there.' And you look back up and you gauge, 'Ok, I have to make it there.' The dogs were always sort of my gauge. Because I had my babies and I knew that we were going to be ok.

Participants felt ready and prepared to take their pets home and provide for their needs after their time in the community partner program. As Participant #4 shared:

> Oh, my God. When I went and got Lady, it was the most amazing feeling. And to be able to take them to a secure home. Like, we're good. They have a home now. They have a place to go.

Difficult to be away from pet. While participants in this study consistently reported that they were relieved by the provision of pet care and did not feel as though they needed to worry about their pets during their time in the community partner program, they did say that they missed their pets while they were away from them. A few participants reported thinking about their pets at night or when they were struggling emotionally with the challenges that come with starting a new life after abuse. Discussing her time away from her pets, Participant #4 said:

> It was a relief. It was a double-edged sword, but it was really a relief. And my pets were a lot of source of comfort for me, so a lot of times at night, at the shelter when they weren't there. And when we weren't settling down, that was hard. But I would always reach out.

Participants also noted how different life was without having pets. When asked what it was like to be away from her pets, Participant #2 stated:

> It's the simple things that you forget about of them being so happy when you come back home. Like not having somebody celebrate your arrival is something you take for granted until you don't have it anymore. Like where are my trumpets?

Although it was difficult for participants to temporarily be away from their pets during their time in the community partner program, the degree to which survivors

missed their pets seemed to motivate them to work even harder to find stable housing and jobs so that they would be ready to reclaim their pets as soon as possible. Many participants named their desire to be reunited with their pets as one of the prime motivating factors to push through feeling overwhelmed in response to the unfair uprooting of their lives. Participant #12 stated:

> It was kind of like a fire under my butt, for lack of better terms. I was away from my pets so I had to deal with my own problems, but I also worked harder than ever before because I just couldn't wait to have a home to take them back to.

Recovery with pets. As suggested by existing literature on the topic, one of focuses of this study was to inquire about the experiences of recovery for DV survivors who owned pets. Conversations related to this topic lead to the emergence of a salient organizing theme, which was ultimately supported by four basic themes related to the trajectory of recovery for DV survivors, human and animal alike.

Participant is recovering. Every participant who was interviewed in this study reported feeling as though they were recovering from their experiences of DV. I asked participants to talk about how they felt that they were doing now. Along with improved states of wellness, many participants felt as though they were a stronger woman due to their survivorship. Participant #2 stated:

> I'm really, really happy. I don't wish to ever go through it again. And I don't say that I'm glad that I did. But I know the strength that I have. And I know the boundaries have finally been set.

Nine of the participants mentioned an enhanced ability to set healthy boundaries in relationships moving forward. As Participant #8 said, "I'm not going to let somebody put me or my kids or my fur-baby back in that situation again. I am confident to know that there is help out there."

Some participants even described being more inclined to give and receive love because of the difficult life lessons they were forced to learn alongside DV survivorship. Participant #3 said:

> It made me want to love more. It didn't taint me or anything like that. You think it might do that. And maybe for some people it does. I don't know. But it didn't make me want to withdraw. In fact, it made me want to go out more and just spread the love.

All in all, participants expressed an appreciation for the fact that the worst of the abuse was now behind them, and hopes and dreams for the future were frequently shared. Some participants desired new romantic relationship, and some participants described being happy as an individual moving forward. Regardless of the unique dreams that were ahead of these survivors, participants ultimately communicated the belief that the future would be a more nonviolent place. As stated by Participant #11, "I'm great. I'm doing ok. And so is he. We're really doing good. The worst is behind us now."

Pet behavior is improving. Seventy five percent of the participants in this study reported that their pet(s) demonstrated behavioral changes due to their experiences of pet abuse and exposure to DV. During times of conflict, many pets hid, demonstrated aggression, or acted up due to the stress in the home. In discussing how her pets

responded to her during the time of the abuse, Participant #2 said, “It was just an instinct they had of ‘ok, you're acting scary. I'm staying right here with momma.’” Participant #3 said, “they would run and hide,” and Participant #4 stated, “my dogs did things that they never would have done. They were all stressed.” Participant #11 said, “he would just act up, because it really stressed him out.” These behavioral changes were common across the data for this project, with some of the behavioral side effects of abuse being reported to be long-lasting. “He would hide behind the sofa all of the time. Even now, if I speak loud, he will sometimes pee himself,” said Participant #5. In talking about her pet, Participant #6 shared, “she doesn't really like men either now. She doesn't show any aggression towards them, but she won't just openly go towards them unless they're around her for a while.”

While participants did describe changes in their pets’ behaviors at the time of experiencing and escaping DV, they also talked about their pets improving as they recovered together from their experiences. Eleven of the twelve participants said that their pets are now doing well, and all 12 of the participants said that they are now doing better in comparison to how they felt that they were doing at the time of entering the community partner program. When asked the question, “how are you are your pets doing now?”, participants responded in the following ways:

Participant # 2 said: “My dogs are happy and healthy.”

Participant #3: “Great. We’re doing great. Life is so much better.”

Participant #5: “Very, very good. Like the black dog went back to his, ‘I’m safe, we’re good, we’re happy’ self.”

Participant #6: “Things aren’t 100 percent better because we’re still not stable completely, but we have it better than it was when we were with him.”

Participant #7: “We’re doing quite fine. We’re doing fine. He’s healthy and happy.”

Participant #9: “I’m great. It feels really good to have my own life back now without the weight of the abuser. Sandy is still around. She sleeps on the pillow every night now.”

> After a couple of days, he started getting used to the fact that ‘ok, at least I know they’re going to come here in the morning’. And he would sleep a little better at night. And he wouldn’t be so shaky when we’re fumbling to get the cage open for him and everything. (Participant #8)

Participant #10: “Everybody is doing fantastic.”

Participant #9: “She is really good now. She just turned nine. She’s really happy.”

Desire to give back. In conversations about recovery, five of the participants talked about how they now have the desire to give back to the community. Three participants wanted to give back to community partner group who assisted with their pets, four participants desired to give back using therapy animals, and five participants felt that it was important for them to share their stories. These survivors felt good knowing that they could potentially help other people heal. Participant #2 said, “I just know that there’s joy from helping other people. It’s what I want to do.” These feelings seemed to be particularly impassioned when it came to the opportunity to help other DV victims. Participant # 4 said, “I really want to help people to recognize how they can get help.”

Participant #5 agreed, stating, “I've been trying to get a foundation to give money to domestic violence survivors.”

Survivors also felt the desire to give back to the community partner organization that provided them with pet care at the time of their escape from DV. Participant #6 said, “if they (community partner group) ever do anything in my area, I would love to help and volunteer. Even if it’s just putting stamps on flyers or working on emails”. Along with the desire to directly assist the community partner group, participants often described feeling called to sharing their story so that other victims would know that there is help available for DV survivors with pets. Participant #9 said, “I make sure to tell other people about the community partner group because I want people to know it exists.”

One survivor aimed to start a program like the community partner group, but the focus of her program would be assisting people with drug addiction. This participant said:

> What I want to do is buy condos and redo them and have either, like work with drug court, and have either like a half-way house or some sort of thing where people come live with you while they're recovering. And we would have pets there. (Participant #6)

Knowledge of DV. Finally, in dialogue related to DV recovery, many participants (nine) discussed an enhanced knowledge of DV, both as a social issue and in terms of their personal awareness of its warning signs and cyclical nature. A few participants described involvement in DV support groups, therapy, and community awareness campaigns. Participant #5 talked about her experiences with support groups, saying “I go

to the survivor meetings, and I hear all of stories. It keeps me inclined to be an advocate for this cause."

Several participants also disclosed being conscious of the fact that DV is a cycle that often repeats itself across generations of interpersonal relationships if there is not appropriate intervention. "It takes even more therapy not to fall back into an abusive situation with someone new. You've got to learn to recognize the signs, and it's not easy," shared Participant #4. Participant #1 shared concerns about her children being exposed to DV:

> I really hope more than anything, out of the whole situation, is that my children know that it wasn't ok, that there is a right way to handle it, you know? I hate that they saw it all, and that was my biggest concern…the damage being done to them.

Participant #2 reasoned, "people don't hurt people unless their hurting."

Survivors not only demonstrated high levels of awareness about DV, but they were also committed to ending the cycle of violence in their families as a part of their recovery process. Participant #2 said, "all of the hand-me-down stops now. All of it. The dog abuse, the wife beating, it stops now."

Addressing Research Questions

All in all, the themes that originated from this data provided rich answers to the research questions that were central to this investigation. The overarching question that guided this study asked, "What are the experiences of survivors whose pets were abused within a context of DV?" The testimonies that were shared in response to this question lead to the emergence of both global themes in this study. In discussing their experiences

of pet ownership in DV escape and recovery, participants shared how their pets were used by the batterer to control them, thus creating a barrier to leaving the relationship. However, as participants went on to talk about their experiences with their pets upon securing pet care during DV escape, they described many different feelings of relief and support. As basic and organizing themes around these two concepts developed, the experiences of survivors in this study ultimately suggested that pets are crucial to consider in providing DV services, and that pet care programs for survivors at this intersection are experienced as meaningful to survivors.

The first subquestion in this study aimed to delve deeper into the ways in which abusers use pets to maintain power and control within the cycle of DV. Survivors' responses to this question lead to one of the organizing themes in this study, which was supported by four commonly occurring basic themes. In discussing the ways in which abusers used pets, reports of devastating instances of pet abuse started to emerge. Even when the abuser was not physically violent towards the animal, survivors still shared experiences of the pets being used for the sake of manipulation since they were of so much personal value to the survivor. This subquestion also lead to many discussions about the abusers' relationship with the pets that were represented in this study. While participants differed in their descriptions of the abuser's affinity towards pets, many survivors talked about abusers being jealous of pets, ultimately fueling the use of pet abuse to maintain power and control within the cycle of DV.

The second subquestion that directed this study was concerned with participants' attachment to pets before, during, and after experiences of DV. Data that came from

participants' responses to this question are weaved all throughout this study's findings. With a focus on pet attachment, participants first talked about the various ways in which pets provided emotional support to them during their shared experiences of abuse and into their time of shared recovery. In unpacking discussions about pet attachment during times of DV recovery, another organizing theme was realized. For many participants in this study, the objective to reunify with pets at the end of the pets' time in the DV-specific animal care program became an important and tangible goal. Although participants described being benefitted by temporary separation from their pets, they also described missing their companions and the emotional support that pet ownership offers. Fueled by a love for their pet and the desire to reclaim them, recovery from DV experiences took on a new and meaningful goal for survivors who were interviewed for this study.

Finally, the 4th subquestion in this study was, "How do survivors make meaning of their relationship with their pet(s) during the trajectory of DV recovery?" Although this question was touched on when participants were describing their attachment to their pets, experiences and perceptions specific to recovery shed light on many aspects of survivors' journeys towards reestablishment after DV. Participants not only said that they felt as though they were recovering from their experiences, but they also reported that their pets were demonstrating improved behaviors after DV escape. Again, participants referenced the emotional benefit of pet ownership in DV recovery, and many survivors even credited much of their healing process to the support that came from their pets. Participants in this study reported that they were doing very well in their experiences of

DV recovery, and many of the women who were interviewed now serve as knowledgeable advocates in the fight against interpersonal violence.

Summary

The flexible nature of the interview schedule that guided the data collection process in this study yielded a large amount of data in which participants described many similar experiences about the intersection of DV and pet abuse. These findings were also congruent with the secondary qualitative data that was examined in this project. Along with pertinent demographical information about participants, this chapter discussed data collection, analysis, and trustworthiness of the findings. All in all, participants talked about the importance of considering pets in DV situations. The complex ways in which abusers attempted to use pets to control survivors during the perpetuation of DV was discussed. Although emotionally beneficial, owning a pet complicated the process of escaping DV for the participants. Having established the importance of pets in these circumstances, the provision of pet care services for survivors who were escaping DV was meaningful across many levels of personal testimony. All participants described feeling a sense of relief when they found a community partner group that could provide temporary care for their pets while escaping the abusive relationship. Participants were determined to reclaim their pets at the end of their time with the community partner group, and participants reported that they, along with their pets, are now doing well in terms of recovery from DV experiences. The themes that emerged from this project echo findings from existing studies while also addressing gaps in the literature that prompted

this investigation. In the upcoming chapter, the findings of the study are interpreted, limitations are noted, and implications for future research are presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

By conducting a thorough review of the existing literature on the intersection of DV and pet ownership, I found that there was a need for further investigation on the unique experiences of DV survivors whose pets were also impacted by exposure to DV (see Collins et al., 2017; Hardesty et al., 2013; Komorosky et al., 2015; Krienert et al., 2012; Long & Kulkarni, 2013; McDonald et al., 2015). From this gap in the literature, I developed this study to determine the experiences of pet-owning DV survivors, and I was especially interested in realizing experiences related to pet abuse used to maintain control, pet attachment, and DV recovery. To uncover these experiences, a qualitative, IPA research design was selected.

Two global themes emerged from the data in this study. First, pets were determined to be important to consider in conceptualizing and responding to DV. This global theme was supported by three organizing themes and a multitude of basic themes. Second, the provision of pet care for women escaping DV was experienced as a meaningful intervention, a finding that was supported by three additional organizing themes and eight basic themes that were realized in the data. In this chapter, I will interpret these findings as they relate to the existing literature on the topics of DV and pet abuse as well as provide limitations and recommendations for future study.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study both confirmed and extended empirical knowledge about the intersection of DV and pet abuse. All themes that originated from this project

are supported by findings in the existing literature. By comparing the findings from this study to the foundational understanding of DV and pet ownership in the field, future directions for research and practice can best be informed.

Pets are Important to Consider in Domestic Violence

The foundational literature on the intersection of pets and DV has clearly established the prevalence of pet ownership among survivors and empirically demonstrated the co-occurrence of DV and pet abuse (Carlisle-Frank et al., 2004; DeGue& DiLilo, 2009; Kreinert et al., 2012; Simmons & Lehmann, 2007). However, the existing literature also called for an enhanced understanding of how these co-occurring issues are uniquely experienced by victims at all stages of DV (Collins et al., 2017), which was one of the primary objectives of this project. The organizing themes that contributed to the first major finding of this study build upon the results of previous studies and ultimately extend the empirical appreciation of the importance of pet care in DV services.

Pets used to control victims. One of the most prevalent themes from this study was that survivors of DV reported that their pets were used as a method of control in the perpetuation of violence and abuse. This theme is also well-represented in the existing literature on DV and pet abuse (Collins et al., 2017; Flynn, 2000a; Hardesty et al., 2013; McDonald et al., 2015; Tiplady et al., 2012). Simmons and Lehmann (2007) found that DV batterers who used pets to control their victims also tended to use high rates of other forms of violence and controlling behavior outside of pet abuse. Data from the current study yielded a similar correlation because all participants not only reported pet abuse as

a means of control, but other forms of abusive control were cited 152 times in the collective data. Similar to findings in Hardesty et al.'s (2013) study, participants in this project reported that their pets were not only used to control them but that they had a lack of control over their pets in general. Participants often discussed that they were unable to provide routine care for their pets given rules imposed by the abuser. In response to a survivor making plans to leave the abusive relationship, participants reported that their abusers would threaten, harm, or even kill her pet(s). The use of pets to threaten DV victims frequently appears in the literature, with similar findings reported in studies by Flynn (2000a), Simmons and Lehmann, DeGue and DiLillo (2009), Hardesty et al. , McDonald et al. (2015), Tiplady et al. (2015), and Collins et al. (2017).

In discussing the ways that abusers used pets to control their victims, many participants (75%) in the current study talked about how the abuser seemed to be jealous of her bond with pets. In these instances, participants would discuss how the abuser would use pet abuse to curb and control the participant's expression of love for her pet. Experiences of abuser jealousy and subsequent control of pets also came up in a mixed-methods study by Collins et al. (2017). These findings highlight the importance of considering a survivor's bond with her pet and how this bond is perceived by the abuser as he inflicts violence and abuse (Allen et al., 2006; Collins et al., 2017, Tiplady et al., 2015).

Another interesting interpretation of the findings of this study both extends and challenges some existing research on abusers using pets to control DV victims. Research by Hardesty et al. (2013) found that an abuser's bond with the pets in the family may

impact his willingness to abuse the animal in DV perpetuation. However, based on the theoretical underpinnings of this study, pet abuse is an action that is not a responsive behavior that originates in how an abuser feels about the pet or even the human victim (Adams, 1995; Beirne, 2002; Lembke, 1999; Quinlisk, 1999). Instead, all acts of DV are used for the sole purpose of maintaining control, and thus it does not matter how a batterer feels about his pet(s; Lembke, 1999; Quinlisk, 1999). The findings of my study echo this conceptualization of DV because participants reported that their abusers had various levels of connectedness and affection for their pets, but all abusers still threatened or harmed the pets during the cycle of DV.

Pets as barrier to escaping. As the prevalence of co-occurring pet abuse and DV has become more empirically appreciated, so has the realization that pet ownership is often a barrier to people who are escaping abuse (Allen et al., 2006; Ascione et al., 2007; Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Hardesty et al., 2013; Krienert et al., 2012). Creating a safety plan in escaping the relationship is a process that is complicated when a person must consider her pets (Collins et al., 2017). The participants in this study discussed the difficulty of hiding away pet food, finding pet-friendly hotels, and planning to leave the home with pets at a time when the abuser would not notice their departure.

Not only was it more difficult for participants to make plans to leave, but the participants also struggled to find a place that would allow for their pets to stay with them in shelter. Only one of the participants interviewed in my project could find a DV shelter that allowed pets on the property, and as existing studies have noted, on-care shelter for pets is often limited in availability and even in type of animal allowed (Kienert et al.,

2012; Kogan et al., 2004). Participants in this study and in other existing research projects have talked about the important roles of pets in the family, with many people considering their pets to be like a child (Hardesty et al., 2013). If a person is unable to find care for their pet while escaping an abusive relationship, they are often not willing to leave because ensuring a pet's safety is a top priority for people in these situations (Ascione et al., 2007; Hardesty et al., 2013; Krienert et al., 2012). This fact remained true in the present study, with many participants sharing that they made the decision to leave after they had secured a safe option for their pet.

Pets as emotional support. Throughout all parts of the interview process, participants in this study described the many ways that their pets provided them with emotional support. Participants described leaning on their pets while being abused, and they felt as though they had a special bond with the pet due to these shared experiences. Tiplady et al. (2015) also came to this finding in investigating the on-going impact of DV on pets. Participants in the current study further discussed how their pets provided them with unconditional love, which was a common theme in existing literature on DV and pet ownership (Flynn, 2000a, 2000b; Girardi & Pozzulo, 2015; Hardesty et al., 2013; Tiplady et al., 2015).

Hardesty et al. (2013) noted that survivors of DV often want to either reclaim their existing pets or get more pets after escaping abusive relationships so that they can benefit from the emotional support of an animal while rebuilding their lives. Participants in my study also talked about the crucial role of pet ownership in life after abuse. They

said that they needed the routine that pet care provides and that pets gave them hope and a reason to come home at the end of a hard day.

In discussing the emotional impact that pet ownership has for DV victims, the notion of protection frequently appears both in the existing literature and in this current study (Hardesty et al., 2013; McDonald et al., 2015; Tiplady et al., 2012). In one way, a victim being protective of her pet may result in a delayed seeking of safety given the lack of access to pet care for DV survivors (Allen et al., 2006; Ascione et al., 2007; Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Hardesty et al., 2013; Krienert et al., 2012). However, a survivor's desire to protect her pet may also motivate her to leave her abuser (Faver & Strand, 2003a). I witnessed both ends of this spectrum in the data for this study. While survivors reported having a harder time leaving the abusive relationship, they discussed feeling more motivated to set firm boundaries with the abuser during the healing process given their protectiveness of their pet. Participants in this study and in existing studies also described feeling a sense of comfort in knowing that their pets were protective of them during their experiences of DV (Flynn, 2000a). All in all, the complex relationships that survivors have with their companion animals seems to promote wellness in different ways at each juncture in experiencing and recovering from DV.

Provision of Pet Care is Meaningful for Domestic Violence Survivors

The second global finding to emerge in this project was that the provision of pet care for victims of DV was a service that was meaningful to those who received it. Participants discussed feeling relieved upon receiving pet care services, which was a finding that is unique to this study given the fact that the participants were all recruited

specifically from an organization that exists solely to provide this kind of care. The particular structure of the design of this study also allowed for insight into participants' goals of reclaiming their pets from a pet care program of this nature, suggesting a finding that is new to the existing body of literature on the intersection of DV and pet abuse. Finally, participants' discussion of recovery in my study both confirmed and added to themes in existing literature on surviving DV with a pet (see Collins et al., 2017).

Pet care as a relief to survivors. A unique aspect of this study was that all participants who were interviewed entered their pets into a community-based program specifically designed to provide pet care for victims who are escaping DV. Given this shared fact, each participant was ultimately able to secure safe housing for their pets and could report on their experiences surrounding the provision of pet care. Across all data considered in this study, participants expressed feelings of relief upon entering their pet(s) into the community partner program. This is a theme that has not been thoroughly considered in existing studies because it is not common for many survivors to find a safe place for their pets to go while escaping DV (Hardesty et al., 2013). While many studies have worked together to establish a numerical appreciation for the kinds of pet shelter programs that exist for DV victims (Ascione et al., 2007; Kreinert et al., 2012; Kogan et al., 2004), participants have not extensively been asked about how it felt to enter their pets into these programs. Furthermore, much of the existing literature probes staff at both DV shelters and pet care shelters about their experiences of providing pet care for DV victims, but again, the individuals who own the pets are not interviewed in studies of this nature (Krienert et al., 2012; Kogan et al., 2004). Interviewees in this project reported

feeling as though they had a way out of the abuse once they knew about the community partner group, and many of the participants (50%) had a plan for their pets prior to having a personal plan for themselves. One existing finding in Hardesty et al.'s (2013) study was that survivors who do find placement for their pets while escaping tend to feel a sense of regained control over their life. Participants who were interviewed in this project shared similar testimonies, expressing feelings of empowerment from learning that they would be given the tools to offer continued care for their pets.

Beyond extending upon the existing state of the literature on this topic, findings from this study were discrepant from hypotheses presented in an existing study on pet abuse and DV. Based on the findings of a large mixed-methods investigation on DV service providers, Kreinert et al. (2012) predicted that on-site care for pets would be favored by DV victims. It has also been predicted that survivors would worry about their pets if they were separated from them while escaping DV (Flynn, 2000; Kreinert et al., 2012). However, in the current study, participants reported trusting that the community partner site was the safest place for their pets and that they were in turn not worried about their pets during their time in the program. They reported receiving frequent updates on their pets' wellbeing, and participants even expressed being relieved with the opportunity to focus solely on their personal recovery prior to reclaiming their pets.

Reclaiming pets is a tangible goal. Reunification with pets became a key goal for many of the survivors who were interviewed in this study. However, this is a theme that is not commonly discussed in the existing literature. As previously mentioned, the sample that was considered in this study was unique in that all participants had entered

their pets into a program that offers care specifically designated for people escaping DV. For this reason, the notion of reunification could be investigated in this study to a degree that it has not been considered in the existing research on this topic. However, Hardesty et al. (2013) found that survivors were determined to reclaim their pets if they temporarily surrendered care of their pet while escaping DV, which became a well-supported theme in the current data. Furthermore, Hardesty et al. noted that survivors are often persistent in their claims that owning a pet is good for their mental wellness, and even victims who were unable to keep their pets in escaping DV were determined to get new pets once they reached safety.

Recovery with pets. One of the major gaps in the existing literature that suggested this study was that little is known about how the provision of pet care for DV victims impacts the long-term recovery of survivors and their pets (Tiplady et al., 2015). Findings from research on DV and pet abuse show that these compounded experiences of abuse are traumatic for victims (Hardesty et al., 2012; Krienert et al., 2012; McDonald et al., 2015: Tiplady et al., 2015), and that finding was echoed by participants in this study. Participants reported losing sleep, experiencing high levels of emotional distress, and feeling isolated in response to their experiences of pet abuse within the cycle of DV. However, all participants who were interviewed for this study also reported that they are now doing much better, and that they considered themselves to be healing from their experiences of DV and pet abuse.

While the nature of this study cannot lead to prediction of causation between the provision of pet care and improved recovery from DV, it is encouraging to see that all 12

participants who entered their pets into the pet care program report that they are recovering from their traumatic experiences. McDonald et al. (2015) suggested research on how children who have pets who were impacted by DV cope with their experiences. According to two of the participants in my study, the ability to reclaim an animal who had been physically healed from their pet abuse injuries greatly enhanced the recovery of their children. These participants described the joy that their children had when reclaiming the pets, describing the feelings of happiness as overshadowing many of the challenges that come with starting over as a family after escaping DV.

Human victims of DV are not the only victims whose behavior is impacted by the trauma of abuse (Tiplady et al., 2015). Survivors often report behavioral changes in their pets due to DV exposure and pet abuse (Tiplady et al., 2015). In the current study, participants reported aggression, fear, hiding, and avoidance demonstrated by pets in response to DV victimization. However, participants also reported that their pets' behavioral changes dissipated upon being rid of the abuser and achieving a new life of nonviolence. This finding answers Tiplady et al.'s (2015) call for further investigation on whether or not pets are able recover behaviorally in the trajectory of recovery from DV and pet abuse.

Theoretical Framework

Because this study looked at two topics that each have their own set of corresponding literature (DV and human-animal relationships), there were three theoretical orientations that were used to support the design of this project. First, control balance theory was used given its application of conceptualizing DV as violence related

to control (Tittle, 1995). Control balance theory hypothesizes that a person who experiencing a control imbalance is more likely to both perpetuate and/or experience deviant behaviors (Tittle, 1995). The data from this study were consistent with this theory, as participants frequently reported that their abusers would respond aggressively when they felt as though they were losing power in the relationship. Control balance theory also explains why so many of the participants had a hard time leaving and staying away from the abuser, as a person who feels a lack of control might also be prone to deviant behavior according to this orientation. Many survivors discussed feeling worried about the sudden control that they had over their lives after escaping the abuser. They questioned their ability to make decisions since they for so long did not have the ability to execute power over their lives. The application of control balance theory was key in conceptualizing these survivors' thought process.

In addition to control balance theory, a feminist framework was chosen for this project given its focus on the concepts of power and control in DV (Adams, 1995; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Kurz, 1989; Lawson, 2012; Yllo, 1993). The feminist approach also stresses the impact of a patriarchal societal structure and its influence on gender norms and relational dominance (Adams, 1995, Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yllo, 1993). In applying the feminist approach, women, children, and animals have long been subjected to domination according to an unhealthy societal standard (Adams, 1995; Flynn, 2000a). The findings of this study echo the views of this framework given the fact that participants often referenced their abuser's beliefs that they were supposed to be the man of the household, and especially that they were entitled to domination over the pets. In

cases in which these beliefs were referenced, ideas about inherently deserved control lead to violence and abuse for the participants and their pets.

Finally, attachment theory was used as a secondary theoretical foundation to understand the human-animal bond in this study. Bowlby's (1969) ideas about the importance of attachment have been adapted to include pets as significant attachment figures for many people (Knapp, 1998; Sable, 2013). Each of this study's key findings assume a meaningful relationship between a person and her pet. For example, abusers use pets to manipulate victims because the pets are of great value to the survivor. Pets are a barrier in escaping because survivors consider them to be a part of the family, and they are thus unwilling to leave them behind. Pet care is experienced as a relief to participants, and they are determined to reclaim their pets at the end of their time in the program because their attachment to their pets provides emotional support and ultimately fosters DV recovery. Although each participant described unique attachments to their pets, survivors' relationships with companion animals were important to all people who were interviewed for this study.

Limitations of the Study

There are some notable limitations of this study that can be used to inform future research projects on the intersection of DV and pet ownership. First and foremost, this study was intended to capture the experiences of a homogenous sample of female DV survivors who utilized a pet care program while escaping DV. Given this intention, the transferability of this study's findings is limited. For example, the results of this study may not be transferred to victims of DV who were not able to find a program that would

provide care for their pets. In addition to this limitation, there were some qualities of the participants that lacked diversity. Most participants in this project owned cats or dogs, as the only other kind of pet represented in the sample of interviewees was from a woman who owned two horses. Future research is suggested on the experiences of DV escape for woman who own more farm animals and more exotic pets. An additional homogenous factor for all participants in this study was that each person interviewed was ultimately able to secure safe housing for their pets while escaping abuse. Although this commonality was intended in the recruitment procedures for this study, more research is called for so that questions about experiences, attachment, and recovery can be assessed for survivors who were not able to keep their pets in escaping DV.

As discussed in Chapter 3, this study was expected to be limited geographically given the fact that the community partner program in which participants were recruited from serves one state in the southeastern United Stated. Although this limitation remains in considering the findings of this project, geographical limitations were somewhat alleviated by the change in procedures that was executed half-way through the process of data collections. Noticing that many survivors were eager to tell their stories but were unable to travel to the location of the community partner site, I applied for a revision to my research plan so that people could participate in this study on the phone. With this change to the data collection plan, I was able to consider two participants who now live outside of the state where the community partner group is located. I also expected that I may be limited in finding participants who were willing to be involved in this study. Although recruitment did take about three months, I was surprised by the enthusiasm of

many participants who agreed to be interviewed for this project. Over half of the participants not only willingly participated in this study, but they also shared that it was a healing experience for them to be able to tell their stories and hopefully inform the empirical understanding of DV and pet abuse.

Finally, I expected that potential for personal bias might be a limitation of this study. As an advocate both in DV intervention and animal welfare, I have personal passions about the topics of investigation. I am also employed by the community partner organization from which participants for this study were recruited. However, by only interviewing participants who entered the community partner program prior to my employment, I found that I was open and curious to make meaning based solely on the participants' shared testimonies for this project. I also kept copious researcher notes throughout this project so that I could check myself for potential bias that would influence the study's findings. Having the opportunity to triangulate the data with existing secondary survey information was helpful for this process.

Recommendations

More research needs to be done about DV and pet ownership so that these issues can be understood and responded to in a survivor-informed capacity (Collins et al., 2017; Faver & Strand, 2003a; Hardesty et al., 2013; Newberry, 2016; Tiplady et al., 2015). Although this study did in some ways respond to Tiplady et al.'s (2015) suggestion for consideration of long-term impact on DV for both victims and their pets, more research is needed to determine the recovery process for DV survivors (human and animals) years into reestablishment after abuse. Insight from studies of this nature would improve

services for survivor's healing beyond the point of immediate intervention (Tiplady et al., 2015).

As previously discussed, this study was also limited given the fact that only participants who found shelter for their pets were considered. Furthermore, all participants in this project entered their pets into the same pet care organization. These homogenous traits impact the transferability of this study's findings. To verify the transferability of the themes that emerged from this investigation, more research needs to be done to examine the experiences of survivors who do not find pet shelter or who entered their pets into a different kind of care program upon escaping DV. Some of the findings of this study were discrepant from existing findings in the empirical literature. One such discrepancy that is crucial to address in order to inform pet care services for DV survivors moving forward relates to whether it is better for survivors to be able to keep their pets with them on-site at DV shelters. While existing literature paired with the theoretical application of attachment theory might assume that survivors would experience less trauma if afforded the chance to keep pets with them in shelter (Krienert et al., 2012), the findings of this study suggest that participants were benefitted by the fact that their pets were temporarily cared for away from them during their escape. This is a topic worthy of future investigation.

Implications

Within the goal to better understand the lived experiences of pet-owning survivors of DV, there is the assumption that these testimonies should shape and inform advocacy for these social issues. The themes that resulted from participants' shared accounts in this

project should be used to improve the ways in which survivors are reacted to upon first seeking safety from DV. This study echoes the findings of previous investigations in that survivors often consider their pets to be an integral part of their family, and unless pets are considered in safety planning around DV escape, many people will not leave an abusive situation (Hardesty et al., 2013). Beyond the initial response to survivors, this study's findings suggest that the provision of pet care for people in these situations is essential, and there subsequently needs to be more programs of this nature in existence to better assist survivors all across the world. The nature of this study allowed for examination of the ways in which one specific programmatic structure is experienced by the survivors who have utilized the program. As the themes related to this program's unique structure (provision of off-site pet care, reunification with pets, etc.) are more thoroughly investigated in the future, empirical findings should inform structural considerations for all organizations that provide pet care to DV victims.

The fact that this study focused on the trajectory of recovery for DV survivors and their pets also has many implications for improving advocacy services. Through this project and others like it, pets have been found to be critical in providing emotional support for individuals who are recovering from traumatic experiences (Hardesty et al., 2013; Tiplady et al., 2015). With this finding in mind, treatment plans for pet-owning survivors should intentionally consider the role of pets, and humane education about the mental health benefits of animal companionship should be further developed (Hardesty et al., 2013;) The current study not only focused on healing for human survivors, but pets who were exposed to DV and abuse were also reported to demonstrate fewer signs of

behavioral distress throughout their recovery from DV. This consideration is important to keep in mind when advocates are responding to pets who have recently escaped from DV and who may be demonstrating behavioral concerns due to their experiences. Knowing that behavioral rehabilitation is possible, pets in these circumstances should not be viewed without hope for recovery.

In viewing the issues of DV and pet abuse on a societal level, there is a vital reward in empirically understanding the gravity of these concerns. The current study confirmed existing research that has noted higher levels of interpersonal violence in homes in which pet abuse is also taking place (Faver & Strand, 2003b; McPhedran, 2009; Quinslisk, 1999; Simmons & Lehmann, 2007; Volant et al., 2008). These abusers tend to be more controlling in nature, and levels of lethality are increased in situations in which both humans and animals are being harmed (Simmons & Lehman, 2007). With awareness of the interconnectedness of these issues, cross-reporting and prevention of violence is enhanced across various social issues (DeGue & DiLillo, 2009). As stated by Simmons and Lehmann (2007), “men who abuse pets should be considered more dangerous”, an indication that is valuable for all of society to recognize (p. 1218).

Finally, the theoretical support for this study was confirmed to be an effective lens in which to view the topics of DV and pet abuse. The combined orientations of control balance theory, a feminist approach, and attachment theory not only aligned with the purpose of this investigation, but they also ended up aligning with the findings. Given the successful application of these outlooks in this project, these orientations might

effectively be applied in future studies and in practical training for advocates who work to provide services at the intersection of DV and pet abuse.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to empower DV survivors to have a voice not only for themselves, but also for their pets, so that the empirical understanding of these issues would be informed by those who have lived experiences at the intersection of DV and pet abuse. In having the opportunity to speak on their experiences, survivors clearly explained the importance of considering pets in DV services, and the provision of care for pets in these circumstances was described as meaningful upon escape and well into recovery. In boldly sharing their experiences and owning their survivorship, the women who were interviewed for this study demonstrated their personal empowerment while also passing the torch to other advocates who serve at the junction of these two societal issues. Realizing the healing potential of the human-animal bond alongside experiences of DV trauma, intervention can be enhanced. Through the improved accessibility of pet care services for people escaping DV, pets can evolve from their status as an unfortunate barrier in escape, and become, instead, a valuable asset in a survivor's path to recovery. As so eloquently stated by one of the participants in this project, "we experienced the trauma together, and together we rose up." May the findings of this study help other survivors, human and animals, do the same.

References

Adams, C. J. (1995). Woman-battering and harm to animals. In C. J. Adams & J. Donovan (Eds.), *Animals and women: Feminist theoretical explorations* (pp. 55-84). Durham: Duke University Press.

Allen, M., Gallagher, B., & Jones, B. (2006). Domestic violence and the abuse of pets: Researching the link and its implications in Ireland. *Practice*, *18*(3), 167-181. doi:10.1080/09503150600904060

Ascione, F. R. (1997). Battered women's reports of their partners' and their children's cruelty to animals. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, *1*(1), 119-133. doi:10.1300/J135v01n01_06

Ascione, F. R. (2000). *Safe havens for pets: Guidelines for programs sheltering pets for women who are battered.* Retrieved from http://www.vachss.com/guestdispatches/safe_havens.html

Ascione, F. R., Weber, C. V., Thompson, T. M., Heath, J., Maruyama, M., & Hayashi, K. (2007). Battered pets and domestic violence: Animal abuse reported by women experiencing intimate violence and by nonabused women. *Violence Against Women*, *13*(4), 354-373. doi:10.1177/1077801207299201

Ascione, F. R., Weber, C., & Wood, D. (1997). The abuse of animals and domestic violence: A national survey of shelters for women who are battered. *Society and Animals*, *5*, 205-218.

Becker, F., & French, L. (2004). Making the links: Child abuse, animal cruelty and domestic violence. *Child Abuse Review*, *13*(6), 399-414. doi:10.1002/car.878

Becker, K. D., Mathis, G., Mueller, C. W., Issari, K., & Atta, S. S. (2008). Community-based treatment outcomes for parents and children exposed to domestic violence. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, *8*(1-2), 187-204. doi:10.1080/10926790801986122

Bekhet, A. K., & Zauszniewski, J. A. (2012). Methodological triangulation: An approach to understanding data. *Nurse Researcher*, *20*(2), 40-43. Retrieved from http://www.nursing-standard.co.uk

Blazina, C., Boyra, G., & Shen-Miller, D. S. (2011). *The psychology of the human-animal bond*. New York, NY: Springer.

Bowlby, J. (2006). *Attachment and loss*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Carlisle-Frank, P., Frank, J. M., & Nielsen, L. (2004). Selective battering of the family pet. *Anthrozoös*, *17*(1), 26-42. doi:10.2752/089279304786991864

Carlson, B. E., & Worden, A. P. (2005). Attitudes and beliefs about domestic violence: Results of a public opinion survey: I. Definitions of domestic violence, criminal domestic violence, and prevalence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *20*(10), 1197-1218. doi:10.1177/0886260505278530

Castro, E. D., Nobles, M. R., & Zavala, E. (2017). Assessing intimate partner violence in a control balance theory framework. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-23. doi: 10.1177/0886260516689776

Chan, K. L., & Cho, E. Y. (2010). A review of cost measures for the economic impact of domestic violence. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *11*(3), 129-143. doi:10.1177/1524838010374371

Chandler, C. (2012). *Animal assisted therapy in counseling* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Center for Disease Control. (2017). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/injury/index.html

Collins, E. A., Cody, A. M., McDonald, S. E., Nicotera, N., Ascione, F. R., & Williams, J. H. (2018). A template analysis of intimate partner violence survivors' experiences of animal maltreatment: Implications for safety planning and intervention. *Violence against women*, *24*(4), 452-476.

Currie, C. L. (2006). Animal cruelty by children exposed to domestic violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *30*(4), 425-435.

DeGue, S. (2011). A triad of family violence: Examining overlap. In C. Blazina, G. Boyraz, D. Shen-Miller, C. Blazina, G. Boyraz, & D. Shen-Miller (Eds.), *The psychology of the human–animal bond: A resource for clinicians and researchers* (pp. 245-262). New York, NY: Springer Science + Business Media. doi:10.1007/978-1-4419-9761-6_14

DeGue, S., & DiLillo, D. (2009). Is animal cruelty a 'red flag' for family violence?: Investigating co-occurring violence toward children, partners, and pets. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *24*(6), 1036-1056. doi:10.1177/0886260508319362

Denzin, N. K. (2009). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods.* New York, NY: Aldine Transaction.

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, *40*(4), 314-321.

Dutton, D. G., & Corvo, K. (2007). The Duluth model: A data-impervious paradigm and a failed strategy. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *12*(6), 658-667. doi:10.1016/j.avb.2007.03.002

Dobash, R. P., & Dobash, R. E. (1979). *Violence against wives: A case against the patriarchy.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Dobash, R. P., Dobash, R. E., Wilson, M., & Daly, M. (1992). The myth of sexual symmetry in marital violence. *Social Problems*, *39*(1), 71-91.

Faver, C. A., & Cavazos, A. M. (2007). Animal abuse and domestic violence: A view from the border. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, *7*(3), 59-81.

Faver, C. A., & Strand, E. B. (2003a). To leave or to stay? Battered women's concern for vulnerable pets. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *18*(12), 1367-1377. doi:10.1177/0886260503258028

Faver, C. A., & Strand, E. B. (2003b). Domestic violence and animal cruelty: Untangling the web of abuse. *Journal of Social Work Education*, *39*(2), 237-253.

Faver, C. A., & Strand, E. B. (2007). Fear, guilt, and grief: Harm to pets and the emotional abuse of women. *Journal of Emotional Abuse, 7*(1), 51-70.

Febres, J., Shorey, R. C., Brasfield, H., Zucosky, H. C., Ninnemann, A., Elmquist, J.,... Stuart, G. L. (2012). Adulthood animal abuse among women court-referred to batterer intervention programs. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *27*(15), 3115-3126.

Feroz, U., Jami, H., & Masood, S. (2015). Role of early exposure to domestic violence in display of aggression among university students. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, *30*(2), 323-342.

Fielding, W. J., & Plumridge, S. (2010). The association between pet care and deviant household behaviors in an Afro-Caribbean, college student community in New Providence, the Bahamas. *Anthrozoös*, *23*(1), 69-78. doi:10.2752/175303710X12627079939224

Fishman, P. A., Bonomi, A. E., Anderson, M. L., Reid, R. J., & Rivara, F. P. (2010). Changes in health care costs over time following the cessation of intimate partner violence. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, *25*(9), 920-925. doi:10.1007/s11606-010-1359-0

Flynn, C. P. (2000a). Battered women and their animal companions: Symbolic interaction between human and nonhuman animals. *Society & Animals: Journal of Human-Animal Studies*, *8*(2), 99-127. doi:10.1163/156853000511032

Flynn, C. P. (2000b). Why family professionals can no longer ignore violence toward animals. *Family Relations: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*, *49*(1), 87-95. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2000.00087.x

Flynn, C. P. (2000c). Woman's best friend: Pet abuse and the role of companion animals in the lives of battered women. *Violence Against Women*, *6*(2), 162-177. doi:10.1177/10778010022181778.

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, *20*(9), 1408.

Girardi, A., & Pozzulo, J. D. (2015). Childhood experiences with family pets and internalizing symptoms in early adulthood. *Anthrozoös*, *28*(3), 421-436.

Gondolf, E. W. (2007). Theoretical and research support for the Duluth model: A reply to Dutton and Corvo. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *12*(6), 644-657. doi:10.1016/j.avb.2007.03.001

Goodman, L. A., & Epstein, D. (2008). *Listening to battered women: A survivor-centered approach to advocacy, mental health, and justice*. American Psychological Association.

Grose, R. G., & Grabe, S. (2014). The explanatory role of relationship power and control in domestic violence against women in Nicaragua: A feminist psychology analysis. *Violence Against Women*, *20*(8), 972-993. doi:10.1177/1077801214546231

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Resources Information Center Annual Review Paper, 29*, 75-91.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, *18*(1), 59-82.

Hardesty, J. L., Khaw, L., Ridgway, M. D., Weber, C., & Miles, T. (2013). Coercive control and abused women's decisions about their pets when seeking shelter. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *28*(13), 2617-2639. doi:10.1177/0886260513487994

Harris, W. W., Lieberman, A. F., & Marans, S. (2007). In the best interests of society. *Journal of Child Psychology And Psychiatry*, *48*(3-4), 392-411.

Hartman, C. A., Hageman, T., Williams, J. H., & Ascione, F. R. (2018). Intimate partner violence and animal abuse in an immigrant-rich sample of mother–child dyads recruited from domestic violence programs. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, *33*(6), 1030-1047.

Haverkamp, B. E. (2005). Ethical perspectives on qualitative research in applied psychology. *Journal Of Counseling Psychology*, *52*(2), 146-155. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.146

Humphreys, C., & Thiara, R. (2003). Mental health and domestic violence:'I call it symptoms of abuse'. *British journal of social work*, *33*(2), 209-226.

Jarecki, J. (2014). Review of domestic violence and mental health. *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, *17*(4), 339-341. doi:10.1007/s00737-014-0430-y

Jasinski, J. L. (2001). Theoretical explanations for violence against women. *Sourcebook on violence against women*, 5-21.

Knapp, C. (1998). *Pack of two: The intricate bond between people and dogs.* New York: The Dial Press.

Kogan, L. R., McConnell, S., Schoenfeld-Tacher, R., & Jansen-Lock, P. (2004). Crosstrails: A unique foster program to provide safety for pets of women in safehouses. *Violence Against Women*, *10*(4), 418-434. doi:10.1177/1077801204263198

Komorosky, D., Woods, D. R., & Empie, K. (2015). Considering companion animals. *Society & Animals*, *23*(3), 298-315.

Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *45*(3), 214-222.

Krienert, J. L., Walsh, J. A., Matthews, K., & McConkey, K. (2012). Examining the nexus between domestic violence and animal abuse in a national sample of service providers. *Violence and Victims*, *27*(2), 280-295. doi:10.1891/0886-6708.27.2.280

Kurz, D. (1989). Social science perspectives on wife abuse: Current debates and future directions. *Gender & Society*, *3*(4), 489-505.

Larkin, M., & Thompson, A. R. (2012). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in mental health and psychotherapy research. In D. Harper & A. R. Thompson (Eds.), Qualitative research method in mental health and psychotherapy: A guide for students and practitioners (pp. 101–116). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Lawson, J. (2012). Sociological theories of intimate partner violence. *Journal of Human Behavior In The Social Environment*, *22*(5), 572-590. doi:10.1080/10911359.2011.598748

Long, D. D., & Kulkarni, S. J. (2013). Cross-reporting of interpersonal violence and animal cruelty: The Charlotte Project. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, *40*, 131.

Loring, M. T., & Bolden-Hines, T. A. (2004). Pet abuse by batterers as a means of coercing battered women into committing illegal behavior. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, *4*(1), 27-37.

Marques, J. F., & McCall, C. (2005). The application of interrater reliability as a solidification instrument in a phenomenological study. *The Qualitative Report*, *10*(3), 439-462.

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 11*(3). Retrieved from file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/Owner/My%20Documents/Pat/NCU/Di sser tation%20Proposal/Mason%20saturation%20article.htm

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (Vol. 41). Sage publications.

McDonald, S. E., Collins, E. A., Nicotera, N., Hageman, T. O., Ascione, F. R., Williams, J. H., & Graham-Bermann, S. A. (2015). Children's experiences of companion animal maltreatment in households characterized by intimate partner violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *50,* 116-127. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.10.005

McPhedran, S. (2009). Animal abuse, family violence, and child wellbeing: A review. *Journal of Family Violence*, *24*(1), 41-52. doi:10.1007/s10896-008-9206-3

Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2010). *Encyclopedia of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi: 10.4135/9781412957397

Modi, M. N., Palmer, S., & Armstrong, A. (2014). The role of Violence Against Women Act in addressing intimate partner violence: A public health issue. *Journal Of Women's Health*, *23*(3), 253-259. doi:10.1089/jwh.2013.4387

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (n.d.). What is domestic violence? Retrieved July, 2017 from http://ncadv.org/learn-more/what-is-domestic-violence

Newberry, M. (2016). Pets in danger: Exploring the link between domestic violence and animal abuse. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *34*(1), 273-281. doi: 10.1016/j.avb.2016.11.007

Onyskiw, J. E. (2007). The link between family violence and cruelty to family pets. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, *7*(3), 7-30.

Peace, C. (2009). The impact of domestic violence on society. *Politics, Bureaucracy & Justice*, *1*(1), 22-26.

Pence, E. & Paymar, M. (1993). *Education groups for men who batter: The Duluth model*. New York, NY: Springer.

Petersen, M. L., & Farrington, D. P. (2007). Cruelty to animals and violence to people. *Victims & Offenders*, *2*(1), 21-43. doi:10.1080/15564880600934187

Piquero, A. R., & Hickman, M. (2003). Extending Tittles control balance theory to account for victimization. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *30*(3), 282-301. doi:10.1177/0093854803030003002

Priest, H. (2002). An approach to the phenomenological analysis of data. *Nurse Researcher*, *10*(2), 50-63.

Quinlisk, J. A. (1999). Animal abuse and family violence. In F. R. Ascione & P. Arkow (Eds.), *Child abuse, domestic violence, and animal abuse: Linking the circles of compassion for prevention and intervention* (pp. 168-175). West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

Quinn, C., & Clare, L. (2008). Interpretive phenomenological analysis. *Nursing research: Designs and methods*, 375-384.

Ridge, E. (2008). Protecting animals: Domestic abuse and animal abuse linked. *Animal legal & historical Center. Michigan State University College of Law http://www. animallaw. info/articles/ddusdomesticviolence. htm*.

Roguski, M. (2012). Pets as pawns: The co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence. *Report prepared for Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and The National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges*.

Sable, P. (2013). The pet connection: An attachment perspective. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, *41*(1), 93-99. doi:10.1007/s10615-012-0405-2

Salcioglu, E., Urhan, S., Pirinccioglu, T., & Aydin, S. (2017). Anticipatory fear and helplessness predict PTSD and depression in domestic violence survivors. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, And Policy*, *9*(1), 117-125. doi:10.1037/tra0000200

Seale, C. (1999). Quality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *5*(4), 465-478.

Simmons, C. A., & Lehmann, P. (2007). Exploring the link between pet abuse and controlling behaviors in violent relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *22*(9), 1211-1222. doi:10.1177/0886260507303734

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, *22*(2), 63-75.

Smith, J. A. (2011). Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis: A reply to the commentaries and further development of criteria. *Health Psychology Review*, *5*(1), 55-61. doi:10.1080/17437199.2010.541743

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. London: Sage.

Straka, S. M., & Montminy, L. (2008). Family violence: Through the lens of power and control. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, *8*(3), 255-279. doi:10.1080/10926790802262499

Szűcs, E., Geers, R., Jezierski, T., Sossidou, E. N., & Broom, D. M. (2012). Animal welfare in different human cultures, traditions and religious faiths. *Asian-Australasian Journal of Animal Sciences*, *25*(11), 1499.

Tiplady, C. M., Walsh, D. B., & Phillips, C. J. C. (2012). Intimate partner violence and companion animal welfare. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, *90*(1-2), 48-53.

Tiplady, C. M., Walsh, D. B., & Phillips, J. C. (2015). The ongoing impact of domestic violence on animal welfare. *Animal Studies Journal*, *4*(2), 116-139.

Thornton, V. v. (2014). Understanding the emotional impact of domestic violence on young children. *Educational & Child Psychology*, *31*(1), 90-100.

Tittle, C. R. (1995). *Control balance: Toward a general theory of deviance*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Tittle, C. R. (1997). Thoughts stimulated by Braithwaite's analysis of control balance theory. *Theoretical Criminology*, *1*, 99-110.

Tittle, C. R. (2004). Refining control balance theory. *Theoretical Criminology*, *8*(4), 395-428. doi:10.1177/1362480604046657

Upadhya, V. (2013). Abuse of animals as a method of domestic violence: The need for criminalization. The Emory Law Journal, 63, 1163.

Volant, A. M., Johnson, J. A., Gullone, E., & Coleman, G. J. (2008). The relationship between domestic violence and animal abuse: An Australian study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *23*(9), 1277-1295.

Wagers, S. M. (2015). Deconstructing the power and control motive: Moving beyond a unidimensional view of power in domestic violence theory. *Partner Abuse, 6*(2), 230-242. doi:10.1891/1946-6560.6.2.230

Wilson, J. M., Fauci, J. E., & Goodman, L. A. (2015). Bringing trauma-informed practice to domestic violence programs: A qualitative analysis of current approaches. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *85*(6), 586-599. doi:10.1037/ort0000098

Yllo, K. A. (1993). Through a feminist lens: Gender, power, and violence. In R. J. Gelles & D. R. Loseke (Eds.), *Current controversies on family violence* (pp. 47-62). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Zilcha-Mano, S., Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2011). An attachment perspective on human–pet relationships: Conceptualization and assessment of pet attachment orientations. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *45*(4), 345-357. doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2011.04.001

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Demographic Questions:

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me today about the intersection of pet ownership and domestic violence. Are you ready to start the interview? [Yes or No]. Wonderful. Thank you. Before we get started with the interview questions, there is some demographic information I would like to clarify with you. Please tell me your age. Gender. Sexual Orientation. Marital Status.

I appreciate that. Now I have a couple of questions about your pet(s). How many do you have? What type are they?

Ok, great. My last questions of this sort are about the relationship that you were escaping when you entered your pet into the program. How long were you in that relationship? How long ago was your escape?

Thank you for sharing that with me. Now we're ready to get started with the interview.

Interview Questions:

[$RQ_{Primary}$ What are the experiences of DV survivors whose pets were abused within the cycle of DV?

[RQ_1: How are pets used to maintain power and control within the context of DV?

1. Please describe the kind of violence that was taking place in your home.
2. How was your pet (insert name) involved in the abuse that took place in your home?
3. Did your abuser ever use your pet to try to maintain control over you? Tell me more about that.

4. Did concern for your pets safety ever stand in the way of you escaping the relationship? If so, please tell me more about that.

[RQ_2: How do survivors relate their type of attachment to their pets with the ways in which the pets are included in the abuse?

1. Tell me about your relationship with your pet (insert pet's name).
2. How did you pet respond to you during the time of the abuse?
3. How did you partner respond to the bond that you had with your pet?

[RQ_3: How do survivors relate the outcome of their long-term relationship with their pets to their trajectory of recovery from DV?

1. Can you tell me about how you came to hear about the animal care program that provided shelter for your pet while you were escaping DV?
2. What was it like for you to separate from your pet while you were seeking safety from the abuse?
3. Can you tell me about how it felt to reunite with your pets at the end of all of this?
4. How are you and your pets doing now?
5. In terms of recovering from the experiences of DV, how do you feel that you're doing now?

Appendix B: Survey Questions from Community Partner Site

1. How many pets have you had in the last 12 months (including your current pets)?
2. What happened to your previous pets?
3. How has your abuser threatened to hurt your pets?
4. Did the abuser threaten to hurt your pet if you tried to leave or tell anyone about the abuse?
5. How has the abuser mistreated your pet?
6. Did your pet ever require vet treatment as a result from the abuse?
7. How often did the abuser mistreat your pet?
8. How long has fear that abuser will harm your pet delayed you from going to a shelter or any other safe place away from your partner?

Appendix C: Interview Data Codebook

Code:	# of Times This Code Appears in the Data:	Interviews Which Contain This Code:
1. ABUSER USES PETS TO MANIPULATE SURVIVOR: This overarching theme refers to the many instances in which the abuser controlled the victim/participant through pet abuse.	68	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12
2. ABUSER'S DONT CHANGE: This overarching theme refers to the participant's expressed beliefs that imply that an abuser is incapable of recovering.	7	Interview 1, Interview 3
3. FAMILY DYNAMICS: This overarching theme refers to the participant's expressions of family dynamics that are being explored in DV recovery.	67	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12
4. TRAUMATIC IMPACT OF DOMETSIC VIOLENCE ON SURVIVOR: This overarching theme refers to the traumatic impact that domestic violence had on the participant.	38	Interview 1, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11,
5. PET AS FAMILY MEMBER: This overarching theme refers to the participant's various expressions that her pet(s) are included as complex and valuable members of the family unit.	38	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12
6. POWER AND CONTROL (not pet abuse): This overarching theme refers to the tactics of the abuser to maintain power and control in	141	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8,

the relationship (outside of the use of pet abuse).		Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12
7. SURVIVOR AS AN ANIMAL LOVER: This overarching theme refers to the participant's various expressions of identifying herself as an animal lover.	75	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12
8. RELATIONSHIP WITH ABUSER SEEMED GOOD IN THE BEGINNING: This overarching theme refers to the participant's expressions of the relationship with the abuser seeming good in the beginning.	25	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 10, Interview 11
9. THE PROGRESSION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: This overarching theme refers to the ways in which domestic violence progressed according to the participant's accounts.	37	Interview 1, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12
10. SURVIVOR AS PROTECTOR: This overarching theme refers to the participant being protective of her family (pets included).	13	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 4, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 10
11. PET AS PROTECTOR: This overarching theme refers to the participant's pet being protective of her family.	11	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 4, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 10
12. ABUSER JEALOUS OF PET: This overarching theme refers to the abuser's expression of jealousy of the participant's relationship with her pet.	19	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 12
13. USE OF LEGAL SERVICES: This overarching theme refers to the participant's use of the legal	5	Interview 1, Interview 2

system in attempting to escape domestic violence.		
14. PET CARE WAS A RELIEF: This overarching theme refers to the participant's expressions of relief in response to the provision of pet care in escaping domestic violence.	57	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12
15. PARTICIPANT IS RECOVERING FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: This overarching theme refers to the participant's descriptions of feeling as if she is recovering from her experiences of domestic violence.	86	Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12
16. SPIRITUAL BELIEFS: This overarching theme refers to the participant having spiritual beliefs.	11	Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6
17. ABUSERS CAN RECOVER: This overarching theme refers to the participant expressing beliefs that an abuser can recover from domestic violence tendencies.	8	Interview 2
18. CYCLE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: This overarching theme refers to the participant demonstrating knowledge of the cycle of domestic violence.	21	Interview 2, Interview 4, Interview 6, Interview 12
19. PARTICIPANT SUSCEPTIBLE TO ENTERING ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP: This overarching theme refers to the participant's life circumstances that lead to her being susceptible to entering into an abusive relationship.	16	Interview 2, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 8, Interview 10

20. PERSONAL BARRIERS IN ESCAPING: This overarching theme refers to the participant's accounts of personal struggles that come with attempting to leave an abuser.	44	Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11
21. ABUSER LOVED PETS: This overarching theme refers to the survivor's descriptions of the abuser as being someone who loves pets.	20	Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 5, Interview 10, Interview 11
22. LOGISTICAL BARRIERS IN ESCAPING: This overarching theme refers to the participant's experience of logistical barriers in attempting to escape domestic violence.	25	Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 6, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11
23. PET OWNERSHIP IMPACTED DECISIONS WHEN ESCAPING: This overarching theme refers to the participant's considerations of her pet(s) when making the decision to leave or stay in the abusive relationship.	32	Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12
24. SURVIVOR THOUGHT PROCESSES: This overarching theme refers to the thought processes of the survivor during her experiences of domestic violent.	39	Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 9, Interview 10
25. PETS BEHAVIOR IMPACTED BY ABUSE: This overarching theme refers to the reported changes in the participant's pet's behaviors due to experiences of abuse.	31	Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12

26. PETS AS EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: This overarching theme refers to the participant's reported reliance on her pets for emotional support.	41	Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 12
27. RECLAIMING PETS BECAME RECOVERY GOAL: This overarching theme refers to the ways in which the participant's desire to reclaim her pet(s) became an important goal for her recovery.	17	Interview 2, Interview 5, Interview 8, Interview 12
28. RECLAIMING PETS WAS TIME OF JOY: This overarching theme refers to the ways in which the participant describes her feelings of joy upon reclaiming her pet(s).	20	Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12
29. PARTICIPANT'S DESIRE TO GIVE BACK: This overarching theme refers to the participant's desires to give back to the community now that she's recovering from experiences of domestic violence.	8	Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 6, Interview 9, Interview 11, Interview 12
30. IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT: This overarching theme refers to the participant's utilizing social ties in recovering from domestic violence.	27	Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11
31. ABUSER NOT AN ANIMAL LOVER: This overarching theme refers to the abuser's negative attitudes towards pets.	19	Interview 4, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8, Interview 9, Interview 12
32. POLICE PRESENCE: This overarching theme refers to the presence of police	2	Interview 4

during the survivor's escape from domestic violence.		
33. KNOWLEDGE OF DV: This overarching theme refers to the participant's knowledge of domestic violence as a social issue.	21	Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 9, Interview 12
34. DIFFICULT TO BE AWAY FROM PETS: This overarching theme refers to the participant's struggles in being separated from her pet(s) during their time in the community partner program.	10	Interview 5, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11
35. RED FLAGS: This overarching theme refers to the participant's description of red flag in her relationship with the abuser.	3	Interview 6, Interview 10

Appendix D: Survey Data Codebook

Code:	Frequency:	Surveys in which code appeared:
Abuser killed pets: This code refers to the fact that the participant's abuser killed her pets.	8	Survey 1, Survey 3, Survey 10, Survey 15, Survey 20
Deprivation of the pet: This code refers to the abuser depriving the participant's pet.	7	Survey 1, Survey 8, Survey 10, Survey 14, Survey 15, Survey 20
Pet abuse: This code refers to the abuser physically harming the participant's pet.	19	Survey 1, Survey 2, Survey 3, Survey 5, Survey 8, Survey 10, Survey 12, Survey 15, Survey 17, Survey 18, Survey 20
Refusal to provide vet care: This code refers to the abuser refusing to allow the participant to secure vet care for her pet.	8	Survey 1, Survey 7, Survey 10, Survey 15, Survey 17, Survey 20
Abused pet daily: This code refers to the fact that the abuser engaged in pet abuse on a daily basis.	12	Survey 1, Survey 15
Delayed safety: This code refers to the participant stating that fear for her pet being abused delayed her seeking safety from DV.	13	Survey 1, Survey 3, Survey 4, Survey 5, Survey 6, Survey 7, Survey 8, Survey 9, Survey 10, Survey 13, Survey 18, Survey 19
Delayed calling for help: This code refers to the participant stating that fear of her pet being abused delayed her calling the police for help.	11	Survey 1, Survey 4, Survey 5, Survey 6, Survey 7, Survey 8, Survey 12, Survey 15, Survey 20
Delayed filing charges: This code refers to the participant delaying pressing charges against the abuser given her fear of pet abuse.	8	Survey 1, Survey 4, Survey 5, Survey 7, Survey 8, Survey 15, Survey 19, Survey 20

Abuse in front of kids: This code refers to the participant reporting that pet abuse took place in front of her children.	6	Survey 1, Survey 2, Survey 5, Survey 9, Survey 17, Survey 18
Owned dogs: This code refers to the kind of pets that the participant owned.	29	Survey 1, Survey 2, Survey 3, Survey 4, Survey 6, Survey 7, Survey 8, Survey 9, Survey 10, Survey 11, Survey 12, Survey 15, Survey 18 , Survey 19, Survey 20
Owned cats: This code refers to the kind of pets that the participant owned.	16	Survey 2, Survey 5, Survey 7, Survey 10, Survey 11, Survey 13, Survey 14, Survey 16, Survey 17, Survey 19, Survey 20
Owned snakes: This code refers to the kind of pets that the participant owned.	1	Survey 2
Had to give pets away: This code refers to the participant being forced by the abuser to give her pets away.	4	Survey 2, Survey 10, Survey 11, Survey 19
Excessive punishing: This code refers to the abuser excessively punishing the participant's pets given minor mistakes.	1	Survey 2
Yelling at pets: This code refers to the abuser yelling at the participant's pets.	3	Survey 2, Survey 4, Survey 8
Occasional pet abuse: This code refers to the abuser harming the participant's pets on an occasional basis.	5	Survey 2, Survey 10, Survey 17 , Survey 18, Survey 20
Abuser threatened pets: This code refers to the abuser threatening the survivor's pets.	14	Survey 1, Survey 3, Survey 4, Survey 5, Survey 6, Survey 7, Survey 8, Survey

		9, Survey 12, Survey 13, Survey 18, Survey 20
Abuser locked pets outside: This code refers to the abuser locking the participant's pets outside.	5	Survey 4, Survey 7, Survey 15, Survey 17, Survey 20
Not allowing walks: This code refers to the abuser not allowing the participant to walk her dogs on a regular basis.	1	Survey 4
Owns fish: This code refers to the type of pets the participant owns	2	Survey 6, Survey 20
Abuser loves pet: This code refers to the participant stating that the abuser loved the pets.	1	Survey 6
Threated participant if she cared for pet: This code refers to the abuser threatening the participant if she took care of her pet.	1	Survey 7
Survivor lost sleep: This code refers to the survivor losing sleep over her experiences of pet abuse.	1	Survey 7
Threatened to take pets away: This code refers to the abuser threatening to take the participant's pets away.	2	Survey 8, Survey 18
Abuser rarely abused pet: This code refers to the rare presence of pet abuse for the participant.	2	Survey 8, Survey 12,
Abuser brought many pets to home: This code refers to the abuser bringing many pets into the home so	1	Survey 10

that the survivor would have to care for them.		
Refused to give food: This code refers to the abuser refusing to give the survivor pet food.	1	Survey 10
Pet behavior impacted by abuse: This code refers to the participant's pet demonstrating behavioral changes due to pet abuse.	1	Survey 13
Couldn't afford pet care when escaping: This code refers to the participant not being able to afford pet care when escaping DV.	1	Survey 14
Refused access to pet: This code refers to the abuser refusing the participant access to her cat.	4	Survey 15