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Conceptualising domestic violence and abuse within Roma communities through a power and control lens

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Abstract

Although the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women calls for strengthened efforts to document and address how DVA is experienced across diverse global contexts, dominant theoretical models do not always capture the experiences and perspectives of Roma women. To address this gap, this study aims to critically examine the applicability of the Duluth Wheel and consider its relevance for Roma women in the United Kingdom. Drawing on a feminist understanding of domestic violence and abuse, integrated with the concept of antigypsyism, the study employed a two-phase interpretivist design, including focus groups and expert-by-experience interviews with Roma victim-survivors and specialist practitioners. Findings revealed that domestic violence and abuse are frequently embedded within extended family hierarchies, community expectations, and structural inequalities, challenging individualised understandings of domestic violence and abuse. The unique contribution of this paper reconceptualises our understanding of domestic violence and abuse by introducing an adapted Roma-specific Wheel and adaptation of the original wheel is approved by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (www.theduluthmodel.org).

Keywords: Roma; domestic violence and abuse; coercive control; antigypsyism

Key Practitioner Messages

- Domestic violence and abuse experienced by Roma women can be shaped by intersecting elements of gender inequality, antigypsyism, and structural exclusion.
- The Duluth Wheel insufficiently represents the Roma perspective.
- A specific wheel is needed to highlight cultural pressure, social isolation, financial control, and institutional mistrust.
- Practitioners can adopt the Roma-specific wheel to improve identification, intervention and safeguarding, promoting equitable access to support.

Introduction

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) constitutes a violation of international human rights that disproportionately affects women worldwide (World Health Organization, 2023). Indeed, there is consensus that DVA is gendered and a form of violence and subjugation that sustains gendered inequalities and stereotypes (Maher et al., 2021). Globally, DVA refers to patterns of abusive behaviour perpetrated by one individual against another within contexts of intimacy or family connection (United Nations, 2023). It encompasses physical, sexual,

economic, emotional, psychological, and cyber abuse, as well as coercive and controlling behaviours.

In 2011, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women called for strengthened efforts to document and address how DVA is experienced across diverse global contexts. Much scholarship, policy, and practice have been grounded in a paradigm that conceptualises intimate partner violence as a pattern of coercive control, perpetrated by men to gain or maintain dominance over female partners (Stark, 2007). Such frameworks have been instrumental in shaping policy and survivor support systems centred on victim safety and long-term recovery.

Despite global recognition of the devastating impact of DVA, Rogers et al. (2025) argue that the specific experiences of Roma women remain insufficiently theorised and understood. Consequently, dominant theoretical frameworks, including the Duluth Wheel, developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP, 2017), may not be able to capture the relational, cultural, and structural contexts that shape the lives of Roma women. According to Allen et al. (2025), weaknesses in current conceptualisations of DVA carry significant implications for public protection policy and safeguarding practice, which may inadvertently reproduce the inequalities they seek to address.

These concerns sit within broader Indigenous, decolonial, and culturally responsive perspectives that critique the dominance of Western frameworks for overlooking community-specific understandings of violence, care, and protection (Crichton-Hill, 2001; Donovan and Hester, 2015; Chavis and Hill, 2008). Other scholars, such as Fricker (2007), emphasise the importance of DVA research that promotes epistemic justice by centring voices that have historically been marginalised, recognising that experiences of violence and abuse are shaped by intersecting histories of racism, marginalisation, migration, and structural inequality. This is especially true for Roma victim-survivors as in direct contrast to other minority ethnic populations such as Asian, African and African-Caribbean communities, there has been an absence of internal community acknowledgement, campaigning and activism to address DVA within Roma communities (Hague, 2021).

Applying a research strategy that combines a feminist understanding of DVA with the concept of antigypsyism (explained in the next section), this paper responds to these debates by placing the Duluth Wheel (DAIP, 2017) at the centre of analysis, critically examining its applicability to the lived experiences of Roma women. In doing so, the article contributes to the development of culturally responsive approaches to DVA and to broader epistemological discussions concerning whose knowledge informs DVA intervention models. Drawing on a thematic analysis of focus group discussions and interviews with eleven victim-survivors living in the United Kingdom and two DVA practitioners, this article conceptualises a Roma perspective of DVA through an adapted Roma-specific wheel produced in English and Romanes. By foregrounding the voices and experiences of Roma women, the paper seeks to decolonise our conceptual understanding of DVA, challenge homogenising understandings of coercive control and contribute to more inclusive and contextually grounded approaches to policy, safeguarding, and practice.

Understanding the word Roma

Following the Council of Europe (CoE, 2020), the word 'Roma' is used in this article as an umbrella term to include the Lovari, Kalderash, and Boyash communities who moved to the UK from Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe in the late 1990s and early 2000s. They are a diverse population of communities who routinely encounter racism and structural inequalities linked to immigration status, language exclusion, and unequal access to public services (Briones-Vozmediano et al., 2021). The challenges faced by these communities often distinguish them from other ethnic populations in the UK, including British Gypsies (Romanichals) and Irish Travellers (Allen et al., 2025).

Despite important differences between Lovari, Kalderash, and Boyash living in the UK, Jupîneanţ (2023) notes that they share many common connections that unite them under the term 'Roma'. Similarities include a shared language, known as 'Romanes', a shared ancestry, with origins in the Northern Indian subcontinent, and direct experiences of antigypsyism, which the CoE (2020) defines as a specific form of racism targeting those stigmatised as 'Gypsies.' Other unifying factors are reflected in broadly shared values embodied in the concepts of 'Pachiv' and 'Romanipen.'

According to Pierlejewski and Vamosi (2021), Pachiv is a term deeply rooted in the shared culture of many Roma people, signifying the importance of respect, family reputation, and conduct. Romanipen functions as a social framework that places strong value on language preservation, solidarity with and respect for family and community hierarchies, and the application of mores designed to limit the influence of Westernised cultures on family life. While antigypsyism has often been used to frame behaviours associated with Pachiv and Romanipen as a preference for self-imposed isolation (Kapralski, 2018), Pierlejewski and Vamosi (2021) emphasise the need to understand instead that these values exist to enable cultural and linguistic survival, protecting Roma communities from centuries of persecution, marginalisation, and forced assimilation.

Roma women's experiences of DVA

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence recognises that DVA is a significant human rights concern (CoE, 2011). However, its prevalence and impact are not experienced uniformly across populations. Whilst research shows that Roma women experience widespread marginalisation, social stigma, and economic disadvantage (Vrăbiescu & Kalir, 2018), the conceptualisation of how such conditions intersect with gender inequality to create environments in which DVA can occur is underreported and insufficiently addressed (Rogers et al., 2025). Addressing this gap is important for several reasons.

Measuring the frequency and experience of intimate partner violence in Roma communities, Kareva et al. (2022) found that 96 per cent (n = 192) of Roma women who responded to a survey reported experiencing some form of physical violence, verbal and psychological abuse, coercive or financial control. While 76 per cent (n = 146) identified intimate partner physical, psychological, and economic violence as the primary characteristic of DVA, 14 per cent (n = 27) described abuse perpetrated by another family member, most commonly a father-in-law or mother-in-law, illustrating the presence of family violence alongside partner

abuse. Economic dependence also emerged as a significant concern, with 76 per cent (n = 21) stating that their finances were controlled by husbands or other relatives.

According to Briones-Vozmediano et al. (2021), the long-term impacts of DVA on Roma women are wide-ranging. In contexts where safeguarding and support systems are inadequate, Kozubik et al. (2020) found that Roma victim-survivors frequently experience psychological harm, including anxiety and depression. These mental health impacts are often compounded by experiences of shame and dishonour, alongside fears that disclosure of abuse could result in the forced removal of their children (Briones-Vozmediano et al., 2021). Research demonstrates how the intersecting consequences of DVA, psychological distress, social stigma, and institutional mistrust can operate to silence Roma women and entrench them in harmful situations (Kareva et al., 2022).

Other research identifies additional risk factors linked to antigypsyism, particularly where DVA services reproduce discriminatory practices, blame Roma women, or fail to recognise the intersecting dynamics of gender-based violence, structural inequality, and community control described by survivors (Vives-Cases et al., 2021). To provide better support to Roma women, Kareva et al. (2022) recommend the urgent expansion of the theoretical conceptualisation of DVA, including efforts to deepen understanding of how antigypsyism can be challenged and how equitable access to protection and justice can be promoted.

One of the most widely used frameworks is the Duluth Wheel (2017). While the wheel has played a significant role in shaping professional practice and improving recognition of coercive control, described by Stark (2007) as a sustained campaign to control someone's life, its relevance for Roma women has received limited scholarly attention. Without such consideration, there is a risk that universalised conceptualisations of coercive control and abuse may obscure the specific barriers that Roma women living with DVA face (Rogers et al., 2025).

The Power and Control Wheel: A tool to describe DVA

Published by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP), the Duluth Wheel (2017) is an eight-spoke wheel that conceptualises patterns of DVA through which perpetrators exert dominance over their partners (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Original Power and Control Wheel



Drawing on the experiences of more than 200 American women who had survived domestic violence and abuse (DVA) from their partners, the wheel conceptualises abuse as a pattern of behaviours rooted in the perpetrator's entitlement and desire to have both gain and sustain power and control over his partner. The eight spokes represent the distinct tactics through which control is enacted across emotional, psychological, social, and physical domains.

Today, the Duluth Wheel (DAIP, 2017) is widely used as a therapeutic and educational tool to support survivors of DVA in recognising and articulating abusive behaviours. By making patterns of coercion and control more visible, it enables individuals to identify abusive dynamics more clearly and seek support or intervention (Allen, 2013). The wheel has also informed psychoeducational, community-based programmes for men identified as perpetrators of abuse (see Butters et al., 2021), and in recent years, it has been adapted to address DVA in a range of contexts, including same-sex relationships (Donovan and Hester, 2015) and Samoan communities (Crichton-Hill, 2001).

Although Pope and Ferraro (2006) argue that the Power and Control Wheel has transformed our theoretical understanding of DVA, critics such as Chavis and Hill (2008) contend that it continues to reflect a majority-world perspective. To date, limited research has examined

the applicability of the wheel to Roma women's experiences of abuse. Considering the obligations articulated in the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (CoE, 2011), critically examining the applicability of the Power and Control wheel for Roma women is both timely and necessary. By interrogating the assumptions embedded within existing frameworks, this article seeks to contribute to a more inclusive conceptualisation of DVA through addressing the following research question: *How can the original Power and Control Wheel be adapted to reflect Roma perspectives and lived experiences?*

Theoretical Framework

To answer the research question, the study adopted a theoretical framework that combined a feminist understanding of DVA with the concept of antigypsyism. From a feminist perspective, DVA is both caused by and constitutive of gendered patterns of power and privilege within society (Bjørnholt, 2021). Feminist research has long called for a critical interrogation of how intersecting systems of oppression shape experiences of violence, marginalisation, and access to support. As Rogers and Brown (2023: 3) explain feminist research also:

‘...requires an acknowledgement of the tensions in epistemologies highlighted through these three recurring questions: ‘who can be a knower?’, ‘what can be known?’ and ‘how do we know what we know?’

Applying these feminist epistemological concerns to the examination of the original Power and Control Wheel (DAIP, 2017), while simultaneously seeking to minimise antigypsyism, informed the development of a critical interpretive paradigm. Within this framework, feminism explains the gendered power relations that underpin DVA (Bjørnholt, 2021), while antigypsyism highlights the racialised and structural inequalities experienced by Roma communities (CoE, 2020). Together, these perspectives provide a lens for understanding how coercive control may operate not only through intimate relationships, but also through wider institutional and structural systems of power.

Central to this paradigm was the inclusion of Roma women's voices, which have historically been marginalised within dominant systems of knowledge production. By foregrounding these epistemological concerns, the study sought to avoid reproducing the very power hierarchies it aimed to critique. Instead, the experiences of Roma victim-survivors were positioned as foundational to reassessing the applicability of the original wheel and developing a more responsive adaptation that recognises the intersection of gender-based violence, structural influences, and the specificities of Roma victim-survivors.

Methods

Built upon feminist foundations, an interpretivist research strategy was used to answer the research question. An interpretivist strategy aligns with feminist methodology because it prioritises subjectivity and reflexivity whilst also challenging hierarchical researcher-

participant relationships and seeks to centre Roma women as legitimate producers of knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2021). As shown by Rogers and Brown (2023), feminist research can be applied to most qualitative research activities irrespective of the methodology but is more likely to be found in in-depth, detailed analyses of individual experiences.

Interpretivist approaches informed the design of methods intended to create space for Roma women to articulate their experiences in their own terms, recognising them as legitimate knowers rather than subjects of inquiry (Ahmed et al., 2017). Rather than positioning Roma women as subjects of inquiry, an interpretivist approach positions them as knowledge producers whose insights are indispensable for understanding the historical and ongoing determining factors and characteristics of DVA.

Applied in this study, an interpretivist strategy was used in a sequential two-phase data collection design. In Phase One, focus groups were conducted with relevant professionals and women to explore their narratives and lived experiences of DVA. This phase aimed to evaluate the current wheel and generate rich, contextual insights on ways it might be adapted. Once new headings and statements were identified, Phase Two aimed to use key informant interviewing to validate an adapted Roma-specific wheel through consensus-building expert interviews with Roma victim-survivors (Akhter, 2022). Consistent with feminist interpretivist research, both phases recognised Roma women as co-constructors of knowledge who could help develop a valid theoretical explanation and conceptualisation of DVA.

Data collection and analysis

Phase One Focus Group

In 2025, two focus groups (total n=8) were held online in Google Meet with the intention that Roma women could be recruited from across the United Kingdom, rather than being site-specific. This decision was rooted in the need to provide a safe, confidential space where women could contribute while maintaining their anonymity and privacy. A convenience and purposive sampling strategy was used, enabling the women to be recruited through the research team's networks and via social media (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). The modest sample size reflects the challenges associated with accessing marginalised populations, combined with the sensitivities of discussing a taboo and emotionally difficult topic such as DVA (Ahmed et al., 2017).

Whilst the focus group method can be subject to critique for facilitating dominant personalities and groupthink (Rogers & Brown, 2023), it can also offer insights into the beliefs, attitudes, values, experiences and shared practices of a group or community (Ahmed et al., 2017). In this case, the women shared a common identity and experiences or interest in DVA. The data generated in these discussions reflected a blend of individual and collective experiences, shaped by individual positionalities, as well as the social and cultural contexts in which they lived and worked. This is of value in research that is concerned with conceptual understanding and differential framings of a phenomenon.

Before the focus group, the women were provided with a participant information sheet and consent form and invited to ask questions before providing written consent. The sample consisted of six Roma victim survivors and two practitioners who shared experiences and perspectives on DVA (see Table 1). Before each focus group, the women were asked to complete a short questionnaire, providing standardised demographic data. All identified as women, including one person who identified as a trans woman. Six were victim-survivors, and two were DVA practitioners who were employed in supportive roles (one social worker, one in the voluntary sector). All had children; one was married and one identified as single. Ages ranged from 29 to 59 years old. Missing data is indicated by a hyphen.

Each group discussion lasted approximately 60 minutes. Both sessions were recorded and transcribed for analysis by Rogers and Allen. In line with feminist theory and the interpretivist research strategy, the focus group schedule was organised into five themes: perspectives and understandings of DVA; the distinctiveness of DVA in Roma communities; the role of family and community; services and help-seeking; and barriers to leaving. Throughout the focus group, researchers shared and referred to the Power and Control Wheel to help develop eight new spoke headings and statements.

Phase Two Verification

Ensuring rigour in the process of validating the new draft eight-spoke headings and statements through consensus, key informant interviewing (KII) was adopted (Akhter, 2022). KII is a qualitative method that provides in-depth insights from individuals, including experts-by-experience, with specialised knowledge or experience and is used by researchers to draw from existing contacts and networks.

In line with feminist principles, Phase Two positioned lived experience as specialised 'expert' knowledge (Pattadath, 2016; Rogers & Allen, 2024). To ensure fully informed consent, the participant information sheet and the consent forms were translated into Hungarian and Romanes, the women's native languages. The eight spoke headings and statements were also translated into these languages to promote research inclusion and facilitate rich, in-depth discussion and reflection during the expert interviews.

Following the advice of Ahmad & Wilkins (2025), five women were recruited through convenience sampling via existing networks. During each interview, the women were asked to complete a short questionnaire, providing standardised demographic data. All identified as women, and as victim-survivors. Four had children; three were married and two had separated from their former partner. Ages ranged from 29 to 59 years old (see Table 1).

Four of the interviews were conducted in Romanes, and one interview was conducted in Hungarian. Palmai conducted all interviews in the women's preferred languages to support inclusive research, ensure understanding, support cultural meaning, and enable fuller expression of sensitive experiences. The task was to assess whether the statements in each segment of the wheel were reflected in the women's lived experiences and in what they have observed within their communities, identifying where the wheel is representative and authentic, and where Roma women's experiences add additional dimensions or diverge from the general framing.

Table 1: Participant characteristics

Pseudonym	Language	Age range	Gender	Relationship	Children	Survivor/ practitioner
Phase 1 Focus groups						
Marta	English	-	Female	Single	Yes	S
Ana	English	30-39	Female	Married	Yes	S
Elena	English	30-39	Female	Single	Yes	S
Cristina	English	20-29	Trans woman	Single	Yes	S
Teena	English	20-29	-	Single	Yes	S
Ruth	English	30-39	Female	Married	Yes	P
Gina	English	50-59	Female	Lives with partner	No	P
Marie	English	-	-	-	-	S
Phase 2 Expert by Experience interviews						
Judit	Hungarian	50-59	Female	Married	Yes	S
Lina	Romanes	20-29	Female	Separated	No	S
Petra	Romanes	20-29	Female	Separated	Yes	S
Lilla	Romanes	30-40	Female	Married	Yes	S
Sara	Romanes	30-40	Female	Married	Yes	S

Data Analysis

All Phase One and Phase Two transcripts were analysed by the research team using reflexive thematic analysis (Bruan & Clarke, 2021). The analytic process consisted of six stages: familiarisation with the data; code formulation; theme generation; theme review; defining and naming themes; and report writing. This method enabled researchers to explore deeper insights and reflect on the lived realities of the women who took part in the study (Rogers & Allen, 2024).

In Phase One, after several readings of both transcripts, Rogers and Allen developed an initial list of codes, which were themed before translating into a matrix to underpin the development of the eight spoke headings and statements that could constitute the adapted Power and Control Wheel. The headings and statements were then shared with the team for critical review, analysis, and refinement. The eight spoke headings and statements were written in plain English and in Romanes and Phase Two enabled consensus to be reached on the final wheel.

Reflexivity and Positionality

Two authors (Palmai and Vamosi) are Roma and two (Rogers and Allen) are British. As such, the identity and positionality of the research team span several terrains such as social, political and value systems, as well as integrating multiple social categories (relating to, for example, ethnicity and gender identity) and social roles (including, for instance, social worker,

researcher, and community member). Throughout this project, the team were able to support each other in a reflexive approach that treated subjectivity as a valuable analytic resource rather than a bias to be eliminated (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Rogers and Allen conducted the focus group in Phase One and whilst acknowledging that identity is multifaceted, dynamic and intersectional, they reflected how their 'outsider' identities lack of Roma heritage. Whilst outsider researchers can hold methodological advantage and objectivity due to their detachment (Savvides et al., 2014), the potential challenges faced in relation to access, negotiating with gatekeepers, establishing rapport, overcoming suspicion and fear of judgement or stigmatisation are widely recognised (Ryan et al., 2011; Wallengen, 2021). These are not insurmountable, but in this sensitive research with the most marginalised ethnic population in the UK (FRA, 2020), it was recognised that the consensus and verification stage would be more rigorous and ethical if conducted by a peer researcher of the same gender and ethnic identity as the population of interest.

Whilst an 'insider' positionality also attracts critique (including the potential for unrealistically high expectations and criticisms of subjectivity and bias), it is argued that insider research can lead to better research design, more meaningful and relevant research questions, more honest and accurate responses, and more reliable interpretations (Corbin-Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Insider research has been positioned as more ethical and argued to enhance research with populations that have been underserved in current research, and who are more exposed to vulnerabilities, marginalisation and inequalities (Wallengen, 2021).

In Phase Two, Palmai, in addition to their ethnic and gender identity, shared cultural and linguistic proximity with the Roma women who took part in the study. Palmai remained attentive to distinguishing her own interpretations from the women's accounts, focusing on patterns identified across interviews rather than individual narratives. It was important that Palmai and Vamosi undertake the initial analysis of expert interview data as part of the coproduction of the wheel to neutralise critiques of 'outsider' research practice including those concerning 'moral tensions in interpretation and representation' (Riach, 2009, p. 367).

Ethics

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Committee (no. 059248). Informed consent was obtained from each woman who took part in the study before the focus group discussion or expert interview. Every effort was made to ensure that the women were approached and included in a culturally sensitive manner. For Phase One, focus groups were held online so that the women were able to contribute to the discussion with cameras turned off to maintain privacy and confidentiality. The research team is experienced in sensitive, trauma-informed research, which underpinned decision-making in terms of the method (Rogers & Allen, 2024). All women who took part in the study were informed about their right to withdraw, but that this was not possible after discussions had been transcribed and analysed. The confidentiality and privacy of the women who took part were continually ensured and identifying information has been removed. Pseudonyms and quotes are used judiciously to preserve anonymity.

Findings

The following section presents a thematic analysis of Phase One and Phase Two discussions which explored how DVA is understood, experienced, and responded to within familial, community, and structural contexts.

The role of extended family and community

Each woman highlighted how DVA can become normalised within some Roma families and communities, particularly where traditional, gendered expectations of women's roles are strongly upheld. Most victim-survivors described how norms surrounding gender, marriage, and family life may reflect patriarchal structures that position women as subordinate to men and frame certain forms of abuse as inevitable or simply part of married life (Vives-Cases et al., 2021). These accounts suggest that when such beliefs become deeply embedded within family and community structures, DVA may be minimised, excused, or overlooked. In turn, this normalisation can make it more difficult for women to identify their experiences as abusive, seek support, or challenge coercive and controlling behaviours within intimate relationships:

"This is just what it's like in our community, you don't say anything about this, and it's just what's expected to happen." (Ana)

Ana's claim illustrates how patriarchal expectations can position DVA as a tolerated or anticipated feature of intimate relationships. This finding reflects the limited but growing evidence base on DVA within Roma communities (Rogers et al., 2025) and begins to shed some light on the way that such pressures can intersect with collective family structures, cultural identity, and wider experiences of marginalisation.

In each focus group and during interviews, women described growing up in environments where control, intimidation, and punishment were routine, shaping expectations of adult relationships. Exposure to coercive behaviours contributed to the perception that abuse was "normal" or unavoidable, creating barriers to recognising and challenging DVA. These accounts illustrate how abuse may become embedded within wider social and cultural systems rather than operating solely through the actions of an individual perpetrator.

When comparing their experiences to the representations within the new Power and Control Wheel, women agreed that the primary focus on intimate partner relationships was insufficient to capture the broader relational and collective dimensions of abuse they described. Women explained that the current wheel required expansion to account for familial and community-based forms of control, including economic, psychological, physical, and social abuse enacted not only by intimate partners but also, at times, by extended family and community members:

"If I define domestic violence, I see it as family violence, including economic, physical and psychological abuse." (Ana)

"It is a serious problem... and violence from family and broader community." (Elena)

These accounts suggest that, for some Roma women, coercive control may operate through wider networks of social regulation and collective decision-making that operate through intergenerational and community norms, surveillance, and the regulation of women's behaviour. Importantly, however, the women did not portray Roma communities as uniformly oppressive. Two victim-survivors and two professionals described how family and community networks could also function as important sources of protection and accountability. These accounts challenge descriptions of rigid patriarchal control within Roma communities and instead reveal the fluid and relational nature of power across family networks:

"The wider community and extended family actually bring their full resources as an extended family to take some kind of action...and the fact that there's been domestic abuse is a matter of shame for the perpetrator's family." (Gina)

Gina's account suggests that shame can operate not only as an individual emotional response, but also as a form of accountability directed at both perpetrators and their wider families. Reports of social disapproval from extended family and community members, directed not only at perpetrators but also at their relatives, indicate that individual behaviour is often understood as reflecting on the whole family. Each woman agreed that if a new Power and Control Wheel were able to represent community mechanisms of moral accountability, including concepts of Romanipen, interventions may be better positioned to engage community-level perpetrator programmes, challenging the normalisation of DVA that has been described.

Social Isolation, Family and Cultural Pressure

When reviewing the original wheel, all eight women suggested that the significance of cultural belonging and community membership, as both a source of identity and a mechanism of control, was largely absent. The women described how threats of shame, exclusion, surveillance, gossip and threats of social exclusion functioned to silence Roma women living with DVA:

"There would be stalking and threats of isolation to be outside of my culture, what would I do? I would not want to be excluded from my community." (Marta)

Marta's account highlights how the threat of exclusion can exploit women's attachment to family, culture, and community identity. For each victim-survivor, the emotional impact of escaping DVA was described as producing internalised shame and feelings of self-blame:

*"They would make me feel guilty. [I have] never committed anything, but by leaving, they would make me feel like I've committed a crime."
(Cristina)*

Control was not only exercised through direct violence and abuse but also through the anticipated loss of cultural belonging, shame, threats of deportation and the erosion of

social support networks. Such dynamics suggest that coercive control may be intensified where Roma community identity is highly valued and socially regulated through concepts such as Pachiv and Romanipen. Within these contexts, shame was described as a mechanism of social regulation that structures expectations around behaviour, responsibility, and communal belonging. Consequently, each woman discussed the need for an expanded conceptual framework should account for identity abuse and culturally mediated coercive control.

Structural barriers

Reflecting on the wheel and its potential use, participants explained that Roma women often live with a profound mistrust of child welfare services, rooted in historical, lived, and intergenerational experiences of antigypsyism:

"People know that domestic violence equals child welfare services being involved." (Marie)

As Marie illustrates, fear of child removal and punitive intervention shaped decisions about disclosure and engagement with services. Avoidance of police, hospitals, and child welfare agencies was frequently described as a protective strategy intended to minimise state intervention. The women also explained that DVA services in the UK are often organised around majority British assumptions and norms, which could inadvertently make services feel inaccessible or unsafe:

"The [DVA services] see our people as less important because of educational background, legal status, and our original concerns of discrimination." (Teena)

"They [DVA services] don't identify as [Roma] so they take DVA as minor...they see it as a cultural problem." (Cristina)

Taken together, these accounts suggest that institutional responses may be shaped by bias, racism, cultural misunderstanding, and insufficient awareness of Roma experiences. However, the women also acknowledged that mistrust operates in multiple directions. Some women described withdrawing from formal support systems because of previous experiences of antigypsyism or fears of intervention, reinforcing separation from services intended to provide support. Reflecting on the original Power and Control Wheel, the women emphasised that vulnerability can also be reproduced by DVA services. In line with broader Indigenous, decolonial, and culturally responsive perspectives, including Fricker's (2007) conceptualisation of epistemic injustice, they agreed that models of intervention designed by non-Roma women would always fail to account for the lived experiences of Roma women.

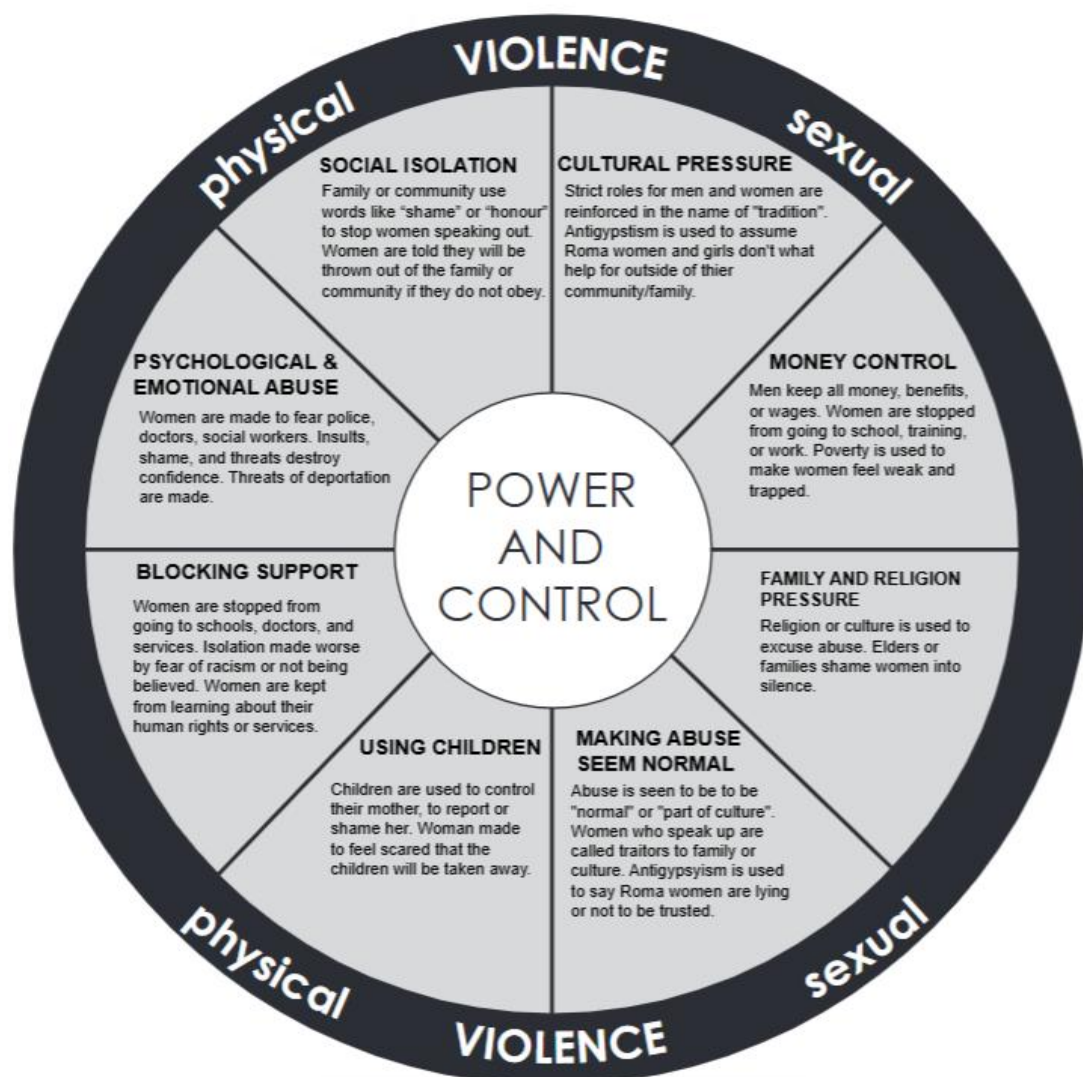
Adapting the Wheel

While the women recognised aspects of their experiences within the original wheel, they also identified limitations in its ability to account for family violence, community-level control, identity-based abuse, and the influence of structural inequality. Rather than

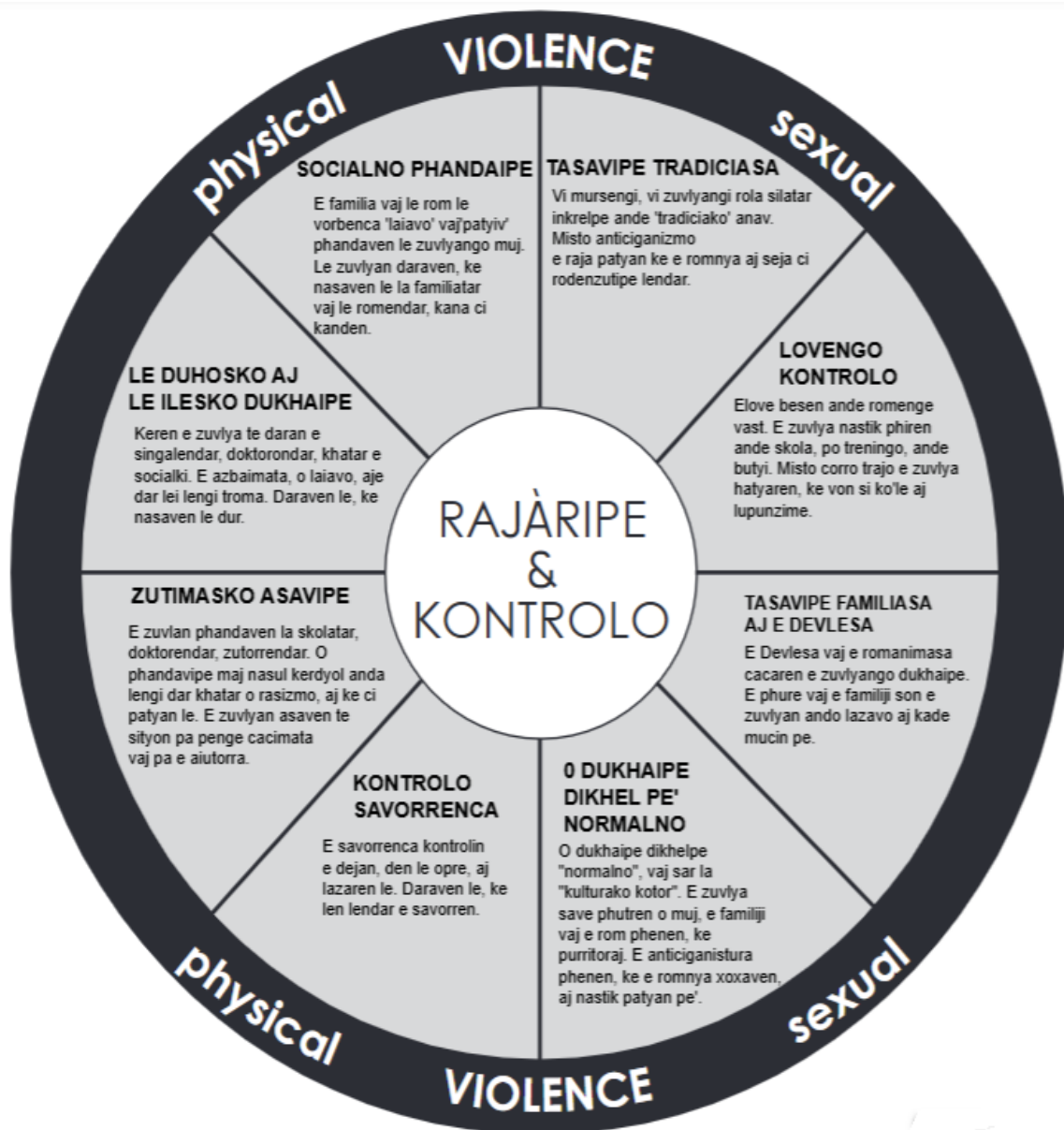
rejecting the original framework entirely, participants described the need for a more culturally and structurally responsive wheel that could better reflect the broader contexts shaping their experiences of DVA. The narratives of each woman informed the adaptation of the original wheel to incorporate these wider relational, community, and structural dimensions.

The revised wheel identified eight interconnected forms of control: ‘Social Isolation’, ‘Cultural Pressure’, ‘Money Control’, ‘Family and Religious Pressure’, ‘Making Abuse Seem Normal’, ‘Using Children’, ‘Blocking Support’, and ‘Psychological and Emotional Abuse’. Drawing directly on the women’s testimonies, these themes were used to co-produce a Roma-specific Power and Control Wheel in both English and Romanes (see Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2: Power and Control Wheel for Roma Women (English)



INSERT Figure 3: Power and Control Wheel for Roma Women (Romanes)



Following its development, the women agreed that the adapted Roma-specific wheel provided a practical framework that could be used to inform survivor support, perpetrator interventions, service design, and professional training. The women also agreed that the Roma-specific wheel had the potential to shift practice away from individualised understandings of abuse towards a more holistic recognition of the collective, relational, and structural dimensions shaping the lives of Roma women living with DVA. Once finalised, both adaptations were approved by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (www.theduluthmodel.org).

Discussion

Although the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women calls for strengthened efforts to document and address how DVA is experienced across diverse global contexts, dominant theoretical frameworks have often failed to adequately capture the experiences of Roma women. Addressing the research question, 'How can the

original Power and Control Wheel be adapted to reflect Roma perspectives and lived experiences?’, this study has identified the importance of culturally responsive frameworks and the urgent need to review the original wheel to better account for the wider social and structural dimensions of domestic violence and abuse originally outlined by Pence and Paymar (1993).

A central finding to emerge from the focus group and interviews concerns the role of family, community, and collective decision-making structures in shaping experiences of coercive control. Each woman described how abuse was not always confined to an intimate partner but could also involve mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, extended family members, and community elders who influenced women’s behaviour, finances, movement, relationships, and communication. In this sense, the adapted wheel should be understood not as a replacement of the original wheel, but as an expansion that incorporates relational, community, and structural dimensions of coercive control.

At the same time, these findings require careful interpretation. Community pressure, family surveillance, and expectations surrounding marriage, honour, and gender roles are not unique to Roma communities. Similar dynamics have been documented across a range of cultural, religious, and collectivist contexts (Femi-Ajao et al., 2020). The significance of the findings presented in this paper demonstrate how these mechanisms intersect with experiences of migration, poverty, social exclusion, and antigypsyism to shape Roma women’s experiences of DVA in very specific ways. Without such understanding, there is a risk that emphasising “community control” may inadvertently essentialise Roma culture and reproduce antigypsyism.

One particularly important mechanism identified by those who took part in the study was shame. Women described how gossip, surveillance and threats of exclusion could operate as forms of social regulation that discouraged disclosure and reinforced silence around DVA. For some women, the fear of “bringing shame” upon their family carried significant emotional and social consequences, particularly where external support services were mistrusted or perceived as unsafe. Under these conditions, shame functioned not only as an emotional response but also as a structural constraint limiting pathways to support and protection.

The women also challenged simplistic interpretations of shame as solely oppressive. When viewed through the lens of *Pachiv* (respect) and *Romanipen* (the moral and cultural code governing Roma identity and conduct) (Pierlejewski & Vamosi, 2021), shame was also described as part of a broader moral and relational system governing responsibility, respect, and collective wellbeing. Women explained that community mechanisms could also be mobilised against perpetrators, with abusive behaviour viewed as dishonourable and damaging to family reputation. In these instances, shame functioned less as a mechanism of silencing women and more as a form of collective accountability capable of reinforcing protection and care within communities.

The findings therefore complicate binary representations of Roma communities as either oppressive or protective. Instead, they support the findings of Donovan and Hester (2015) and Crichton-Hill (2001) and their argument that power operates relationally and unevenly

across family and community structures. Although community expectations may affect men and women alike, the study highlighted how younger Roma women, particularly daughters-in-law, often occupied more vulnerable positions within extended family hierarchies where DVA could become normalised and difficult to escape.

This unique adapted Roma-specific Power and Control Wheel is of critical significance as, we argue, its development draws sharply into focus the long-term neglect of policy and practice that specifically addresses DVA in Roma communities. Whilst DVA has been documented across a range of cultural, religious, and collectivist contexts (Femi-Ajao et al., 2020) and this is visible in research, policy and practice, this has not occurred equally for ALL ethnic minority women. Roma victim-survivors have not been considered in research, policy or practice, or their experiences theorised, to the same extent as women from, for example, Asian, African and African-Caribbean communities. Moreover, the ongoing lack of wider community recognition of DVA and absent history of campaigning and intra-community activism and mobilisation sets Roma women aside in comparison with other ethnic minority victim-survivors. This absence of community mobilisation around DVA means that Roma victim-survivors have not had access to the resources, such as refuge accommodation and other forms of support, which has developed for both White victim-survivors and those from Asian, African and African-Caribbean throughout the expansion of the DVA movement which began in the 1970s (Hague, 2021). Consequently, Roma victim-survivors remain largely invisible in DVA research, policy and practice contexts (Rogers et al., 2025).

Other significant structural dimensions of abuse and control are not adequately captured within the original wheel. The women who took part in the study consistently described profound mistrust of statutory and safeguarding services, rooted in both historical and contemporary experiences of discrimination and antigypsyism. Fear of child removal, perceived institutional bias, and the expectation of not being believed were repeatedly identified as key factors shaping decisions around disclosure and help-seeking. Several women also recounted instances in which professionals minimised abuse as “normal for Roma” or interpreted DVA through cultural stereotypes rather than recognising it as violence and coercive control. Importantly, these accounts suggest that institutional responses to DVA can unintentionally reproduce harm by reinforcing women’s isolation, mistrust, and reluctance to seek support, thereby becoming part of the wider structural environment in which coercive control is sustained.

Implications for Practice

The adapted wheel should not be understood as a replacement for the original Power and Control Wheel, but rather as an expansion that incorporates dimensions of coercive control that are insufficiently represented within existing frameworks. The implications of this are particularly significant for practice. The adapted Roma-specific wheel offers a framework to support practitioners across safeguarding, health, social care, policing, and domestic abuse services in recognising how coercive control may operate across interpersonal, familial, community, and structural domains. Rather than replacing existing tools, it should be understood as an additional lens that enables more contextually informed assessment, intervention, and service design, particularly where abuse extends beyond the intimate partner relationship. The following implications are rooted in the voices of the women who

took part in this study and who viewed the Roma-specific Power and Control as an important tool to inform sensitive, ethical and anti-racist practice.

Working to support Roma women

When working with Roma women, practitioners should be attentive to the ways DVA may be embedded within wider family and community networks. This includes the influence of extended relatives and community elders on women's autonomy, mobility, finances, education, and communication, as well as the role of identity-based pressures such as shame, honour, and social exclusion. Risk assessment and safety planning that focus solely on the intimate partner may therefore miss significant dimensions of control that shape women's everyday lives and decision-making.

Effective support for Roma women requires approaches that are trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and explicitly anti-racist. Practitioners should avoid interpreting community dynamics through reductive cultural explanations and instead consider how these dynamics are shaped by intersecting experiences of marginalisation, poverty, migration, and antigypsyism. Building safety and trust depends on recognising these structural conditions and responding in ways that do not reproduce stereotyping or further exclusion.

Working with perpetrators

The findings also have implications for work with those who use abuse and coercive control. Interventions should consider how perpetrators may draw upon family networks, community expectations, and reputational norms to reinforce control. Psychoeducational and community-based programmes for men who use violence and abuse need to address not only individual attitudes and actions but also the broader social contexts that can legitimise or sustain abusive practices. Where appropriate, engagement with family and wider community may also be considered, while ensuring that this does not increase risk for victims.

Service design, training, and delivery

The adapted wheel highlights the need for services to be designed in ways that recognise both interpersonal and structural dimensions of abuse. This includes ensuring accessibility for Roma women, embedding anti-racist principles within organisational practice, and developing pathways that reduce fear of statutory intervention. Services should be co-produced where possible with Roma communities to improve relevance, trust, and engagement.

Training for practitioners, designed and delivered by Roma people, should seek to develop a deeper understanding of how coercive control, institutional mistrust, and structural inequality interact. This includes recognising how fear of child removal, previous discriminatory experiences, and perceptions of being disbelieved can shape disclosure and help-seeking, and how services may reinforce these barriers and reproduce the very vulnerabilities they seek to address.

Limitations

This study does not claim that the Roma-specific wheel is representative of all Roma women or Roma communities. Rather, the wheel should be understood as an exploratory and heuristic framework developed from the accounts of 11 Roma women and two DVA professionals working with Roma communities in the UK. Its purpose is not to establish prevalence or produce universal claims, but to identify patterns, themes, and dimensions of DVA that were insufficiently captured within the original wheel.

While the findings emerged within specific relational, cultural, and migration contexts, the women who took part in the study consistently identified experiences relating to community pressure, shame, family control, social isolation, and institutional mistrust. The adapted wheel therefore offers a conceptual tool that may assist practitioners and researchers in recognising how coercive control can operate within some Roma contexts, while remaining attentive to variation across Roma communities and individual experiences.

The framework is intended as a starting point for further research, refinement, and empirical testing rather than a fixed or exhaustive representation of Roma experiences of DVA. Although some findings may resonate with women from Lovari, Kalderash, and Boyash communities living in the UK, their transferability should be considered cautiously in relation to local histories, migration experiences, socioeconomic conditions, and community-specific practices.

Conclusion

A key contribution of this study is its extension of abuse and control beyond the intimate partner relationship to include the influence of extended family, community networks, and wider structural conditions. The findings also contribute to existing scholarship by conceptualising shame not only as a mechanism of oppression and silence, but also, at times, as a form of collective accountability and protection within Roma communities. The study advances understanding of how institutional mistrust, shaped by experiences of antigypsyism, discrimination, and fear of intervention, may itself become part of the coercive environment surrounding Roma women experiencing DVA. Together, these findings broaden dominant understandings of coercive control and highlight the importance of culturally and structurally responsive approaches to DVA theory, policy, and practice. as required by the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (CoE, 2011).

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