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Case study:

An in-depth exploration of male survivors of female-perpetrated domestic violence

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Abstract

Male survivors of female-perpetrated violence are often overlooked within the academic, social, and judicial systems. The current thesis highlights this gap in research as well as provides readers with a deeper understanding of the difficulties faced by male survivors. Using a case-study based approach, and narrative inquiry a single participant was interviewed over multiple meetings. This allowed the researcher to get a more in-depth and complete picture of his experiences. His story was then told and analysed using the existing literature as a means of comparison and contrast. Unfortunately, it appears as though victims often feel re-victimized by the legal system and service providers to whom they turn for assistance. This was the case with the participant and was corroborated by participants in existing studies. The research revealed that extensive physical, social and mental supports are available for female victims of violence; in contrast, there is very little available to men. Despite growing recognition of male victimisation, it is still a difficult subject to discuss. The legitimacy and validity of men as victims of domestic violence are still feverishly debated amongst academics and mainstream media. The hope is, that with further research and attention, the same forms of assistance that are available to women will be created and offered to men. It is imperative that such supports are designed specifically for men, rather than simply adjusting those services already available to women. Gender differences in the perpetration of violence and the experiences with service providers must be taken into consideration. Throughout the interview and research processes, it was evident that the participant was searching for validation of his experiences and required services that support the gender specific needs of men.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my participant for trusting me with his story and allowing me to share it with the world. He hopes that the more people who are brave enough to come forward and share their stories, the more the system can change. I recognise that this was not an easy task, but I am grateful you took part so fully and honestly. To say that your story touched me is an understatement, it was clear throughout our discussions that the system requires urgent changes to better support any, and all victims of violence.

To my grandparents and family members who spent many long nights reading and rereading dozens of drafts, being my unofficial editors, with almost no complaints. I hope you truly understand how much that meant to me. My parents supported me through my undergraduate degree, without that I would not have been able to even apply for a master's, let alone consider writing this thesis; thank you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature

Introduction

Domestic violence is a societal and public health issue that affects many people around the globe (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). For decades, the available research has focused primarily on the victimisation of women at the hands of men. Male victims of domestic violence have been systematically overlooked within academia and mainstream media (Hines & Douglas, 2009; Huntley et al., 2019). The current study is a qualitative, case-study based approach to understanding the complex issue of domestic violence (DV), also referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV) or domestic violence and abuse (DVA). In particular, this thesis focuses on the experiences of a male victim of female-perpetrated violence, within a heterosexual relationship. This method was chosen as it offers the opportunity to explore in a more in-depth manner, what is frequently considered a taboo subject: male victimisation in a domestic relationship (Steinmetz, 1977-78). A focus on male victims of domestic violence was chosen as they are often overlooked and under resourced, in part due to a lack of understanding or acknowledgement (Brooks et al., 2020; Malihi et al., 2021). A single participant was interviewed on multiple occasions with each meeting lasting between two and three hours. The discussions with the participant ranged across topics including his upbringing, to the years before and after the relationship in which he experienced a range of violence.

This thesis aims to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of male victims. According to statistics completed in the United Kingdom, it is estimated that nearly 757,000 males 16 years to 74 years of age, have been victims of domestic violence in 2019/2020 (ManKind Initiative, 2021). In a country consisting of

approximately 33,000,000 men (Statista, 2022), this is a high percentage, nearly 43% of the male population and is indicative of the potential problem worldwide. In New Zealand, it was found that around 29 % of men and women in the country experienced at least one act of physical violence in their relationship over their lifetime (Fanslow et al., 2022). It is also important to note, “existing figures of adult male survivors who experience IPV represent an underestimate, both in the literature and in national statistics” (Richardson & Kloess, 2022, p. 2). This is in part due to a well-documented reluctance of male survivors to report their abuse (Drijber et al., 2013; Huntley et al., 2019; Richardson & Kloess, 2022). This issue will be discussed throughout this thesis.

The existing literature surrounding domestic violence, while not in its entirety, is predominantly focused on the victimisation of females, while there is less focus or minimisation of the experiences of male counterparts (Allen et al., 2009; Espinoza & Warner, 2016; Huntley et al., 2019). Consequently, the limited availability of services and professional gender biases were among the most common external barriers for males seeking support. This was noted across: Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the four countries that were examined for this particular study (Dixon et al, 2022). The internal barriers of shame, embarrassment, and an inability to acknowledge their own victimisation are prevalent for men who experience violence and are issues that were noted in several studies (Dixon et al., 2022; Drijber et al., 2012; Hine et al., 2022; Machado et al., 2020).

During the interview process, the participant made it clear he did not like to refer to himself as a ‘victim’ as it held such a negative connotation. With this comment in mind, the interviews focused, as much as possible, on lived experiences,

and the researcher avoided using the term 'victim' during conversations. The different language used when working with male and female victims was an important point noted in the existing literature (Brooks et al., 2020; Dixon et al., 2022) and will be discussed in more detail in chapter three. While terms such as 'victim' or 'fear' may be appropriate when working with females, these terms are not suitable when interacting with males who have suffered through violence (Williamson et al., 2018). A suggestion from a male participant in a Dixon and colleagues (2022) study was to use the term 'survivor' to replace 'victim'. This is because the men, "preferred terms that acknowledged the harm they experienced and held their partner accountable for that behaviour, while also capturing their strength and independence" (p.1328). Where appropriate in this thesis, the term survivor will be used in place of victim. This deviation from the typical DV terminology is intended to show respect for the way in which some men, including the participant of the current study, have requested their experiences be framed.

Throughout the existing research that has been written with a focus on male victimisation, there were several notable themes that pertain to the experiences of male survivors. Prominent topics include using children as a means of control (Corbally, 2015; Hines & Dunning, 2007), fear of not being believed (Machado et al., 2020), and the overall social stigma of being a male survivor (Dixon et al., 2022). A further recurrent issue noted in the published literature, which was also relevant to my participant, was the lack of services available to men (Malihi et al., 2021; Muller et al., 2009; Richardson & Kloes, 2022). Each of these topics will be discussed in detail as part of the findings in chapters three and four. As the present research was conducted within the New Zealand context, a review of the cultural norms and expectations surrounding men in New Zealand will also be discussed. The damage

to the father-child relationships played a significant part in the domestic violence suffered by the participant; this will be discussed in further detail in chapter four. Additionally, the emotional and psychological effects these collective barriers had on the participant were immense. Such consequences were mentioned in the existing literature (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Scott-Storey et al., 2022); however, they require further exploration and will be discussed in chapter five.

The intended outcome for this study is to assist in raising awareness of this issue and to cultivate an understanding of the difficult situation in which many men can find themselves. It is only by bringing this issue into the mainstream of public consciousness that change can occur. In the near future, it is my hope that there is a space to develop domestic violence screening tools and interventions that are specific to men, tools and supports that acknowledge their worldviews, social norms and experiences.

Each chapter in this thesis is linked to a theme that is apparent in the existing literature involving DV and social norms. The participant's story and experiences will be expressed and included within each chapter or theme. The findings from the current study will be discussed throughout these chapters in their relevant sections. These discussions or findings are found in chapters three to six, followed by a concluding chapter that will outline the findings, outcomes, and suggestions. By using the existing literature as reference, the current participant's story can be used to further explore and identify modern society's missing pieces regarding male survivors of DV.

A Summary of Literature

Throughout history, in many parts of the Western world, domestic violence has typically been viewed as a male upon female act, which takes place within the privacy of the home (Hague, 2021). The dominant view held by society influences the legal system, and many other professions. Consequently, violence that occurs between a man and a woman is typically recognised and understood as an act perpetrated mainly by a male abuser (Hague, 2021; Muller et al., 2009). Due to such assumptions being made about this type of violence, and the associated gender norms, the majority of support services that exist to assist survivors of domestic violence are put in place for female survivors (Dutton & White, 2013; Richardson & Kloess, 2022). Many existing support systems have failed to recognise that DV is not solely perpetrated by men, indeed, males may also be mistreated by their female partners. Provision of current support services is applauded and recognises the struggles and barriers that women face as victims of violence. While there is no intent to diminish female's experiences it is important to acknowledge that both sexes should be offered support, regardless of gender-based assumptions of guilt. One explanation for the lack of recognition could be that research has shown that women are typically physically smaller than men; due to this difference, women would need to exert significantly more effort to repel an assailant (Allen et al., 2009). For example, a man could possibly knock a woman to the ground with one blow, whereas his female counterpart may need to hit and push him several times to either fend off an attack, or to cause similar bodily harm.

Even though there is increasing awareness within academia and mainstream media of the fact that female upon male violence can also occur, (Espinoza & Warner, 2016) the degree and prevalence of such violence is still largely unknown,

as it has not been thoroughly examined or reported (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). The dominant narrative within academic literature is overwhelmingly focused on the victimisation of females (Allen et al., 2009; Espinoza & Warner, 2016; Huntley et al., 2019; Muller et al., 2009). As Espinoza and Warner (2016) state in their research, “recognition and study of battered males has existed since the 1960s, but such research has been overwhelmingly ignored...the paucity of research and action remains disproportionately vast” (p. 959). There are common themes that are recurrent throughout the literature on female perpetrated DV, despite the authors occupying varying positions in the debates on the legitimacy of female perpetrated violence (Magdol et al., 1997). These recurrent themes that are present in various research articles are: the use of children as a means to gain power and control (Dixon et al., 2020; Hine et al., 2022), social norms and fear of not being believed as well as a lack of appropriate services (Dutton & White, 2013; Machado et al., 2020).

There are a variety of terms and definitions used to discuss the issues central to this thesis. For clarity, throughout this paper, the World Health Organization’s (WHO) definition of violence is primarily used. WHO states that violence is the: “intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” (World Health Organization, 2021). While the WHO definition of violence is gender-neutral, unfortunately, the information provided on the website does not encompass all genders equally. The website displays an abundance of helpful fact sheets and statistics for women, children, and the elderly, whereas there is no notable information pertaining to male survivors of violence.

Figure 1

Screenshot of WHO Website



Note. The above photo is a screenshot taken of the WHO website (2022) to illustrate the fact sheets availability, and notably that a fact sheet for violence against men is missing.

For such a globally relevant institution to feel that this information is not required for men, illustrates the lack of acknowledgment, and supports. These are difficulties that male survivors are forced to navigate when they are seeking help or validation for their experiences (Muller et al., 2009; Scott-Storey et al., 2022). In the future, it would be good to see the WHO include fact sheets and advice for male victims of DV.

When considering domestic violence, it is important to recognise that this also includes the use of sexual aggression. While the participant in this study did not

encounter this type of DV, it is important to mention as both men and women may experience this form of abuse. While sexual violence in the traditional sense was not expressed by the participant, he did disclose the use of sex by his ex-wife as a subtle way to control him. After an argument, when he returned home, having thought about ending the relationship he stated "...well...you know what they say about make up sex..."; this use of sex as a tool to coerce or illicit a desired response from one's partner can also be considered sexual abuse (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2002). According to William, he often felt that his ex-wife would use sex to manipulate him or shift the focus from her outbursts. Despite their ongoing issues, he commented that it was sometimes easier to just give in and move forward, rather than continue to defend himself in an argument. As can be seen in the WHO definition below, sexual violence can be more than rape or forced sex (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). The use of coercion or guilt can also be viewed as a form of abuse and in the case of the participant, appeared to have had an effect on maintaining the relationship with his abusive partner. In a study completed in New Zealand (Catton & Dorahy, 2022), the authors found that gender norms strongly influence social judgments regarding male victims of sexual coercion. The WHO definition pertaining to the commission of sexual violence which Garcia-Moreno et al. (2002) define as, "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the survivor" (p.149). When presented with this more detailed definition it is perhaps easier to identify how a man could be a victim of sexual violence. As women are typically less physically imposing than men, it can be difficult to identify a man as a victim of rape or forced sex, as those terms imply the use of physical force (Scott-Storey et al., 2022).

Furthermore, as noted in the introduction to this thesis, there are several terms used interchangeably to discuss DV. The WHO definition for intimate partner violence (IPV) is “Intimate partner violence refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship” (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2002, p.89). For the New Zealand context, the term IPV seems to be the most widely accepted and used within the existing literature, particularly in the last few decades. This use of terminology was noted during the research and data collection phase of the current study where IPV was used more regularly within articles when compared to the term DV. Perhaps this is because IPV is specific to a couple involved in an intimate relationship (Ali & Naylor, 2013), rather than just a domestic relationship, which could include family members. This development in terminology can be seen throughout Western history, with the term ‘wife beater’ being used initially (Ali & Naylor, 2013) next this type of abuse was referred to as domestic violence. Presently, there are several terms, often used interchangeably to describe violence between a couple: “domestic abuse, intrafamily violence, wife abuse, spousal abuse, wife battering, courtship violence, battering, violence against women, and intimate partner abuse” (Ali & Naylor, 2013, p. 612). Perhaps the differing use of language is simply due to preference of the researcher, rather than a specific rationale. As there does not appear to be any defining reason for the difference in terminology and as was mentioned above, these terms are often used interchangeably.

Within the scope of domestic violence or IPV, there are several notable barriers that men face when seeking support. In a study completed in the United Kingdom (Hine et al., 2022), the inability of men to recognise and express their victimisation has been linked to societal norms and gendered expectations of what it

means to be a man. Brooks et al. (2020) posit that hegemonic masculinity and societal expectations contribute to the barriers that prevent men from seeking help. Hegemonic masculinity is a term used to describe a societal pattern in which stereotypically masculine traits are idealized, explaining how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women or other groups who are perceived to be feminine (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The topic of hegemonic masculinity and its effects will be discussed again in chapter two. The idea or ideology of the patriarchy reinforces hegemonic masculinity and by default the social norms that place women in the role of victim (Drijber et al., 2012). Those who adhere to the ideology can “see the use of IPV is an acceptable way of maintaining and exhibiting male dominance” (Ali & Naylor, 2013, p.614), which perpetuates and accepts the use of violence towards women. Historically, men have been stereotyped as needing to be dominant, aggressive, and powerful; hence, reaching out for help breaks away from these accepted social norms (Huntley et al., 2019). These masculine ideals tend to be more rigid when compared to the gender norms for women (Scarduzio et al., 2017), and non-conformity to these expected behaviours could have social and personal consequences (Nielson et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2009). For example, in many social situations in Aotearoa New Zealand, if a female friend kisses her female friend at a party, most people will not think twice, some might even comment that this is attractive. In the reverse, if a male kisses his male friend, this could be thought to be a joke or could make people uncomfortable, some individuals might even argue that such behaviour is simply not acceptable for men. Interactions such as these have the potential to reinforce to men that straying from societal expectations can have harsh social consequences.

There is less public awareness of men's lived experiences as victims of violence, which are often assumed to be less severe than those that affect women. However, men can become victims, and when they do, they experience significant psychological, social, and cultural complications (Machado et al., 2020). In their paper, Machado et al. (2020), explained the potential and actual consequences faced by men who are victims of violence, when compared to women. These include posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, suicidal ideation as well as cardiovascular disease and job loss (Machado et al., 2020). While the qualitative nature of the Machado et al. (2020) research does provide a richness and depth that is typically lacking in this area of study, there are some notable limitations. Namely a shortage of cultural acknowledgment or understanding, an issue that was commented on throughout the available literature (Allen et al., 2009; Brooks et al., 2020; Machado et al., 2020). This lack of cultural diversity was also noted in a meta-analysis done by Huntley et al. (2019).

A 2009 study completed by Allen and colleagues (2009), corroborated the fact that violence in an intimate setting appears to have a strong cultural component. Cultural values can affect the rate and acceptance of violence, and in this diverse study, the results differed from similar studies that were completed with a mostly "white population" (Allen et al., 2009). These findings illustrate the importance of taking culture into account when performing research or examining social issues. It would be interesting to have research completed in a culture or society that has less rigid gender roles and where the hyper-masculinity seen in the Western world is less of a factor. In a study done by Nielson et al. (2020), it was noted that gender stereotypes and how strongly people in a society adhere to these frameworks, can vary across racial, cultural, and ethnic groups. Further exploration of culture and how

this term is used for the purpose of this thesis is discussed in more detail in chapter three.

Another common problem with research that has been conducted with male survivors is a tendency by researchers and other professionals to minimize the severity of the issue and to provide some sort of justification for the actions of the female perpetrators (Johnson, 2005; Swan et al., 2008). This tendency to conclude that women often offend only in retaliation for their own abuse, was consistent throughout the accessed literature (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; Kellerman & Mercy, 1992), even in research claiming to examine the experiences of males. An example of this is the study by Swan and colleagues (2008). This research was titled a review of women's violence with male intimate partners. The paper focused on women using violence solely in retaliation and suggested that they should be treated as victims, even where they are the perpetrators. The conclusion and recommendations from this research (Swan et al., 2008) are that service providers should assess all types of violence that the woman has perpetrated and that her partner may have perpetrated against her. These recommendations can lead to placing the victim in the role of perpetrator. This is a damaging narrative to use and further devalues the hurt and pain that male victims experience.

Certain procedural documents from government departments in New Zealand state that health care professionals should routinely ask women about domestic violence; however, it is not recommended or common practice to ask the same questions of males (Ministry of Health, 2016). The explanation given for the different requirements with routine enquiry between genders is that "routine enquiry is not recommended because of the differences in prevalence and severity of violence against men" (Ministry of Health, 2016). Standards of practice such as these lead to

men feeling mistreated and under-acknowledged (Machado et al., 2020). In fact, when the issue surrounding standards of practice was examined by Coker et al. (2002) in the USA, they stated that “to our knowledge, published treatment and referral recommendations for males who are IPV victims do not exist” (pp. 266-267). Despite Coker et al. (2002) also noting that male victims are more likely to be the perpetrator of violence, it is worth acknowledging that as human beings we do not all share the same experiences. The human experience is vast and complicated and what may be true for some, will not be true for all. When dealing with cases of victimisation and violence it is important to understand the individuals’ circumstances before making any judgments. Regardless of perceived prevalence rates, there should be support services available to all members of a society.

Official statements, standards of practice and outdated attitudes that fail to acknowledge that men can be victims of violence from female partners perpetuate an already harmful narrative. This narrative portrays men as being the sole perpetrators of violence toward women (Dutton & Corvo, 2006). As this is currently the dominant narrative, it is also a key reason why ‘victims of violence’ are rarely considered to be men (Seelau et al., 2003). This entrenched attitude is a major reason why those men who do come forward to report the violence and seek assistance, ultimately are left with feelings of anxiety, intimidation, and discrimination. Feelings of persecution and fear around seeking help were described in research by Hine et al. (2020), who noted men who have come forward have been, “ridiculed and have described how services were mocking their experiences” (p.5). Some services even suggested the men were somehow responsible for the violence they sustained (Hine et al., 2022). Such experiences and responses, reflecting the lack of sensitivity, and overall


negative experiences of men who reach out, have been noted in other studies (Huntley et al., 2019; Machado et al., 2020).


Throughout the literature on men's experiences of violence and abuse, engaging with services, such as police or other support services, appears to be a consistent barrier for male survivors (Dixon et al., 2022; Hine et al., 2022; Huntley et al., 2019). These barriers are noted in the literature as being internal and external in nature (Dixon et al., 2022; Hine et al., 2022; Machado, 2020). Dixon et al., 2022). The limited availability of services and professional gender biases was observed by Dixon et al. (2022) as being among the most common external barriers, while the internal barriers of shame and an inability to acknowledge their own victimisation are just as prevalent. A comment from a participant in the Machado et al. (2020) study illustrates the difficulty male victims can experience. For instance, one participant in this study stated: "I was not a stereotypical victim of domestic violence, pursuant to the criteria of most organizations and agencies. When I sought relief from abuse as a man, I was ridiculed and portrayed as the abuser" (p.616). Services such as 24/7 access to safe houses, counsellors experienced in DV and various 24/7 help lines are all readily available for women (Waikato Women's Refuge. (n. d). Access to and meeting with services, as well as the initial fear of engagement, are the most discussed issues along with men simply wanting validation for their experiences (Hines et al., 2007). This was a sentiment that was also true for, and clearly expressed by, the participant in the current study. My participant expressed his frustration with attempting to find a support group that was designed to help men, as he was not able to access support from the 'female' DV support groups.

Figure 2.

Screenshot from Internet Search

Service specifically for male victims

If you have experienced sexual trauma either historically or recently, [Male Survivors Aotearoa](#)  coordinates a network of relevant services for men. Details of individual services can be found on their website.

If you live in the central Auckland and North Shore areas, you can call [Shine](#) 's Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0508 744 633 to talk to a male advocate.

Note. The above photo illustrates what support is available for men in New Zealand with a quick Google search (Citizens Advice Bureau, 2019).

Unfortunately, there is a very limited selection for men to choose from when seeking support (Citizens Advice Bureau, 2019). However, a similar Google search for women generates pages of options for women and their children (Ministry for Women, 2023). While the number of male to female victims remains disproportionate, this should not mean that those men who are struggling cannot access the help they are needing.

The international literature seems to be split between two distinct schools of thought. The first cites gender symmetry and posits that women and men offend at equal rates (Espinoza & Warner, 2016; Machado et al., 2020). There has also been research that suggests when the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) is used that the results consistently show gender symmetry among victims of DV (Bagshaw & Chung, 2000). This tool was developed specifically for use within domestic violence research. This

scale is a widely used tool created to measure violent acts perpetrated by an intimate partner (Flood et al., 2022). It is important however, to remain critical when using the CTS as this is a self-reporting tool and as was mentioned earlier in this thesis; men and women do not necessarily define or interpret behaviours in the same manner. Feminists have also criticised the CTS for not querying motivational factors or the individual's context or circumstances (Ali & Naylor, 2013). These factors would also be relevant when examining male victimisation. The CTS has also been criticised by the wider academic community due to its failure to gather,

“information about the intensity, context, consequences or meaning of violent acts between intimate partners...does not tell us whether violent acts were a single incident or part of a pattern of violence, ignores who initiates the violence, neglects whether the violent acts were in self-defence, and ignores the history of violence in the relationship” (Flood et al., 2022, p. 70).

This thesis is in line with the premise of gender symmetry and has been written in alignment with this school of thought. Further explanation for choosing to align with this stance is provided later in this chapter under my personal statement. The other strand stands firm on the premise that domestic violence is solely a matter of men attacking women or women using violence as a means of self-defence (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; Kellerman & Mercy, 1992; Swan et al., 2008). Hine and colleagues (2020) and Dixon et al. (2022) were among the few authors who focused fully on male survivors of abuse. They did so without appearing to make excuses for the female perpetrator or suggesting leniency due to their potential prior experiences as survivors themselves (Swan et al., 2008). Despite the research by Hine et al.

(2020) being rich and detailed, it unfortunately lacked first-hand accounts.

Throughout the paper, these authors discussed how domestic violence affects men in a variety of ways. Yet, none of the participants were actually abused men, as only the service providers were interviewed. While such research can help us to understand what it is like for a service provider working with this cohort, it does not provide first-hand knowledge of the survivors or how they felt engaging with the service providers. Given that first-hand accounts are sparse, this is a further example of why it is important for the current research to be completed.

Barocas and colleagues (2016) also note the importance of more customised treatments for domestic violence. A common issue documented with research done in larger countries is that there are different laws and regulations around domestic violence depending on the state or province in which a person resides (Barocas et al., 2016). In some larger countries, the United States for example, the political frameworks are frequently such that, state and federal laws may work in contradiction with each other. This disparity between legal definitions was a noted issue in the research completed by Barocas and colleagues (2016). In contrast, New Zealand is fortunate to have a small population and therefore most laws are made at a national level. This cohesion in definitions and legal requirements assist in eliminating potential conflicts in law and standards of practice.

There are still comparatively few research articles that examine the issue of female perpetrators against male survivors (Malihi et al., 2021; Scott-Storey et al., 2022). This lack of research and empirical evidence coupled with only a cursory glance at the severity of the problem is challenging. Together, they form the most difficult part of trying to understand how practitioners can best help this group. In a systematic review completed by Huntley et al. (2019) examining the literature

available focusing on male survivors of abuse, there were only twelve relevant articles found. Having so few articles available for a systematic review serves to highlight the urgent need for further exploration around this important topic.

Future studies must focus on the experiences of the male survivors and provide validation for their trauma. Interestingly, previous research highlighted the fact that men are more likely to disclose their experiences of DV when it is framed in the context of interpersonal conflict (Muller et al., 2009), rather than criminality. This could in part be due to the way some male victims feel they have been treated by the legal system. These experiences were noted in another study that explores the victimisation of males; “the majority of the participants stated that they felt treated unfairly by the police due to false allegations or administrative, legal, or personal biases” (Machado et al., 2020, p.616). When men are offered the opportunity for a more complete disclosure, such as was offered by the use of narrative inquiry and a case study approach in this thesis, there are no significant differences in perpetration of low-level violence based on sex (Muller et al., 2009). This illustrates the need to adjust not only the language we use when working with these survivors, but also how we frame the situation and the support (Dixon et al., 2022). There is also a need to have specifically designed programmes and tools to help male survivors, rather than simply adjusting the existing programmes that were created for female victims (Dutton & White, 2013; Scott-Storey et al., 2022). Failing to create gender specific assistance options and merely adjusting female-based support services, will inevitably lead to inadequate male gender-based assistance. This is an area that has been under-funded and resourced, particularly when compared to the array of services available to women (Malihi et al., 2021). Not only is there a lack of gender specific tools for professionals to use (Magdol et al., 1997), but there is also a severe

lack of social services available to men worldwide and this was noted by several researchers (Drijber et al., 2013; Malihi et al., 2021; Muller et al., 2009).

Finally, throughout the limited existing research, it was apparent that gender, societal and cultural norms play a pivotal role in how domestic violence is viewed, understood, and treated (Allen et al., 2009; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Dixon et al., 2022; Nielson et al., 2020). Future studies must ensure that there is an acknowledgement of this and explore various methods, some differing from traditional models of research (Drijber et al., 2013). The inconsistency throughout the research and across countries in the arguments and even the definitions around what domestic violence/abuse is, or is not, highlights a need for consistency (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). The issue surrounding the lack of a cohesive definition, and how it can negatively impact victims, was also mentioned in a study completed in the United States (Nicholson & Lutz, 2017). When there are more consistent definitions around DV the focus can then shift towards eradicating the problem, as opposed to arguing the terminology or its validity. Such studies must also acknowledge the important role cultural and social norms play in the development, maintenance, and treatment of domestic violence against men.

Personal Statement

Before delving into the current research, it is important to provide context and a reasoning behind why this topic was chosen. This topic is important to me and has been on my mind for several years. Throughout my professional life, I have worked in the public and private sector in a variety of roles all relating to social services. During my time at the Department of Corrections, I worked with a number of men who disclosed to me a history of violence. Despite these men being incarcerated for

their own offences, of which they were clearly the perpetrator, it was evident that many of them had also been victims. These men discussed the shame around having a female partner who was violent towards them. Many of the men were not even able to vocalise that it was actually domestic violence they were living with. A select few explained how these relationships had been the catalyst for their incarceration. Even in situations where they had not been the instigator, they were the ones the police had taken into custody. These interactions sparked my interest, and I began to talk with various individuals in different disciplines about the subject of male victimisation. I also became interested in learning about what supports, or tools were available to men in these situations. For women that are victims of DV, I was aware of women's shelters, support groups, women's health care centres and so on; however, I could not think of, nor easily find, any readily available or advertised services designed for males.

This journey has been a long one, and one that has been met with praise, excitement, suspicion and even anger. As a woman discussing the topic of male victimisation, I have had interactions with female colleagues who were disgusted that I would be advocating for such a topic. To some people, this research appeared to be attempting to minimise the violence that is done to women. That is not the case. I chose to undertake this research in the hope that, as a society, we can work together to end domestic violence, this includes ending both male and female perpetration.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Qualitative Inquiry

Before selecting a form of inquiry, it is important to understand the difference between quantitative and qualitative research. The research approach is the most prominent difference separating these two methodologies. Quantitative research uses a deductive approach while qualitative is employed using an inductive approach (Barczack, 2015). Simply put, inductive reasoning means that the researcher starts with a specific idea or observation and works towards creating a general conclusion.

The current study utilised a qualitative approach toward understanding the experiences of male survivors of female perpetrated violence. There is a lack of qualitative studies that focus on the male experience of IPV; this lack of research, therefore, has a significant impact on policies and availability of supports (Brooks et al., 2020). By utilising a qualitative method of enquiry, it is possible to obtain a deeper understanding of the topic and transcend statistical data and explore the nuances of the human experience. Typically, psychology has focused more on quantitative research methods and experimental designs, as this has been regarded as a more valid form of inquiry. Qualitative and quantitative designs were seen as competitive and even contradictory approaches, leading to separate research communities (Madill & Brendan, 2016). In recent decades, this tension has been under scrutiny, and qualitative research has become more commonly used not only in psychology, but also across the social sciences (Madill & Brendan, 2016). Qualitative and mixed methods approaches provide a deeper level of understanding. Domestic violence of any form is a complex and multidimensional issue; thus, it is not something that can be easily explained. Gelo and Benetka (2008) argue that

statistical analysis in quantitative work may not allow for meaningful theoretical interpretation; this is due to the ambiguity of information in variables, as well as the intrinsic limitation of statistical procedures. While quantitative data and statistics are useful to help grasp the overall severity of an issue suffered in a particular population, such methods do little to understand the causes or effects of the problem. For this reason, a case study approach was used to obtain the nuanced information pertaining to the complexities of social life (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012).

Case Study

For the purposes of this research, a case study-based method was used. One of the goals of this type of enquiry is to provide the opportunity to build rapport and trust with the participant. Personal communication in a one-on-one conversational manner allows for a more relaxed interaction and has the potential to enable the participant to communicate more freely. By focusing on this goal of building rapport and trust, it is possible to produce a coherent and detailed description and perspective on a situation (Marks & Yardley, 2004). Case studies are one of the most misunderstood research approaches within the social sciences (Marks & Yardley, 2004). This critique of case studies is based on the assumption that the results are not able to be generalised; however, it is important to note that the intention of a case study is not to produce numerical or deductive generalisations (Hodgetts, & Stolte., 2012). Case studies allow the researcher to explore the idiosyncrasies, anomalies and exceptions to the rules that are common within the social sciences (Thomas, 2010). The purpose of this thesis, and the intended outcome, is to provide representation for this specific group, not to generalise these results to the population as a whole.

The experiences of the participant were also linked and discussed within the current social and political context. It is important when examining a complex issue, such as DV, that the current social and political environment are acknowledged. The current environment can have an effect on how social issues are perceived, treated and understood. The existing social movements and use of social media were used in conjunction with the participant's own experiences. These comparisons explored the participant's experiences and added some validity and support to his comments and opinions. These links provided a deeper understanding of the current state of support for abused men and how society has contributed to these lived experiences. Through this research process, it was also possible to identify gaps in knowledge and where services can be improved for male survivors.

Theoretical Frameworks

The following sections outline the theoretical considerations that were used in the creation of this thesis. These frameworks are a key aspect of qualitative research and, as Lysaght (2011) states "a researcher's choice of framework is not arbitrary but reflects important personal beliefs and understandings about the nature of knowledge" (p. 572). It is important that researchers acknowledge their own potential biases and world views when conducting research. Despite ensuring every effort is made to reduce bias and conflict of interest, it is inevitable as a human being that situations will be interpreted based on our own personal lens. By expressing the various frameworks with which this thesis was written, and by providing a background to myself as the writer, it is my hope that any personal biases may be acknowledged and minimised. It is also important to acknowledge that stereotypes are a key point of discussion throughout this thesis. Stereotyping is a way in which

“individuals perceive other people, places, and situations they invoke on a daily basis and involve the interpretation of a person’s behaviour, personality and so on in terms of a set of common-sense attributions which are applied to whole groups” (Scarduzio et al., 2017, p. 95). While this usually occurs with marginalised groups, such as females, it also applies to men, and this will be discussed later in this chapter when discussing the various theoretical frameworks that have informed this piece of research.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry or narrative theory is based on the premise that human beings are, by nature, storytellers (Hodgetts et al., 2010). Our experiences and ways of being are shaped through our interactions with the world around us (King & Robertson, 2017). As psychologists, we are tasked with promoting not only the health and wellbeing of individuals, but also of society as a whole (New Zealand Psychologists Board, 2012). Individuals, for the most part, are the best judge of their own internal experiences; this includes their physical, mental, and social wellbeing. Narrative inquiry is important as it provides a space for people to express their story and lived experience without the confines of typical deductive strategies (Bruce et al., 2016). Through the process of narrative inquiry and analysis, the researcher can focus on “the process of recalling and summarizing stories” (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p.120). A key feature of narrative analysis is that the researcher has an in depth understanding and appreciation for the experiences of the participant (Riley & Hawe, 2005). Periodically, individuals will alter their “narratives” in order to reduce discomfort caused by a mismatch between their beliefs and behaviours.

Narratives are associated with face-to-face interactions, and this is the method employed throughout the completion of this thesis. The interviews were semi-

structured to allow the individual to share his experiences and important life events in his own time. The purpose of adopting a semi-structured interview format was to ensure that the conversations remained on topic, while also allowing for the free flow of information. To help ensure that the discussions remained focused, the interviewer would occasionally prompt the participant with an open-ended question. This focus on contextualising the sense making process and examining the world through the eyes of a single storyteller (Riley & Hawes, 2005) is an important strength of narrative inquiry. This allowed the research to evolve from the “public” account of events to the more “private” and detailed accounts (Bloor & Wood., 2006). Public and private accounts refer to the way in which an individual will divulge their story based on how they wish to be perceived. For example, if a person arrives at work with a black eye, they may say that it was due to a fall, when in fact it was because their partner had hit them. This modification of their story is due to a variety of factors, including; wanting to feel accepted, fear of being judged, shame or simply wanting to enhance their story. In order to access the more “honest”, private accounts of the participant, multiple meetings were conducted to gain trust. As was noted in the literature, “good fieldwork relationships are vital to accessing private accounts” (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 140). Individuals sharing their stories and ways in which they interact with the world can help practitioners understand the nuances of difficult social issues (Stein & Mankowski, 2004), such as domestic violence.

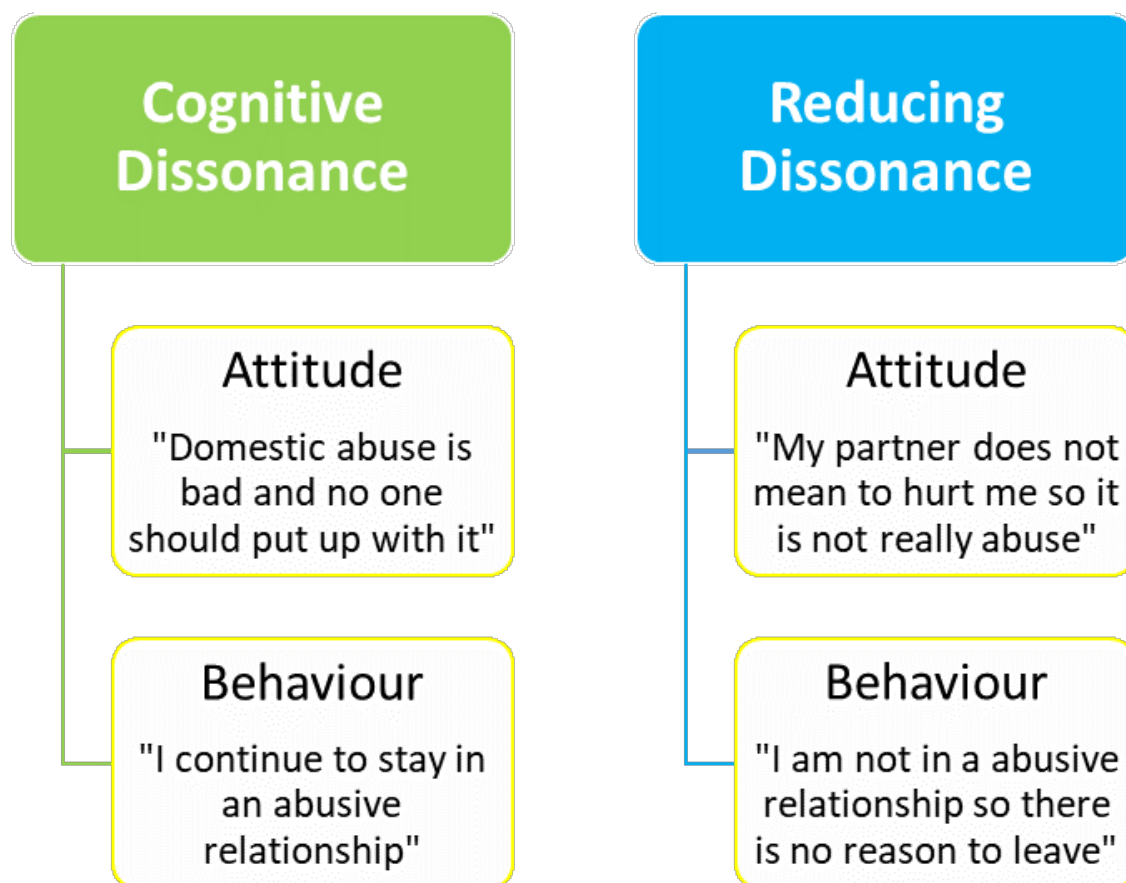
Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The idea of cognitive dissonance has been apparent in psychology for nearly 70 years and was first published by Leon Festinger (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019). The term refers to a phenomenon that occurs when an individual's values, or beliefs are not in line with their actions or behaviours. The connection between cognitive dissonance and DV can

be explained by a “disequilibrium between these victims’ thoughts or actions that forces them to re-evaluate and change negative cognitions towards their relationships and their abusers in order to attain a more balanced view, thus maintaining their commitment to the relationships” (Nicholson & Lutz, p. 478). This can also be viewed as a type of self-preservation, attempting to minimise the dissonance within oneself to alleviate any discomfort. An example of this can be seen in the diagram below.

Figure 3

Diagram Illustrating Cognitive Dissonance



Note. Hasa’s (2020) diagram provides a visual representation of an example of cognitive dissonance and how a person’s attitude can influence their behaviours.

This mismatch between a person’s attitude and expressed behaviours can lead to psychological discomfort. It is also important to note that this dissonance

occurs based on the psychology of the individual and not necessarily, what is logical (Cooper, 2011). A thought and action that causes discomfort to one person may not be experienced in the same way by another. Living in a state of dissonance or contradiction is uncomfortable, and human beings prefer consistency (Cooper, 2011), thus strive to mitigate any mental/cognitive inconsistency. In an attempt to reduce the effects and discomfort of cognitive dissonance, victims of DV may often find ways to rationalise or excuse their partner's behaviours, an example of this thought process is depicted in the image above. For the purpose of this thesis, the participant in this research experienced cognitive dissonance pertaining to his experiences as a male victim of female perpetrated violence. In his case, the dissonance was caused by what Cooper (2011) refers to, as a normative standard of judgment, meaning the judgment is made on the basis of what the majority of people agree is right. The role of gender norms and its links to the cognitive dissonance experienced by the participant will be discussed again in chapter three.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory seeks to understand the gender inequalities that are apparent in society, in particular to domestic violence, how men abuse women as an extension of the patriarchy to achieve power and control (Cannon et al., 2015).

Feminists believe that DV is not a private matter; "rather, it is a deeply embedded social problem that has to be addressed by social change" (Ali & Naylor, 2013, p.612). In order to understand this concept, it is important to explore gender roles, experiences, interests, and many other facets of the human experience.

Simone de Beauvoir was a French author and philosopher who is often portrayed as a pioneer in feminist theory and activism (Bergoffen et al., 2020).

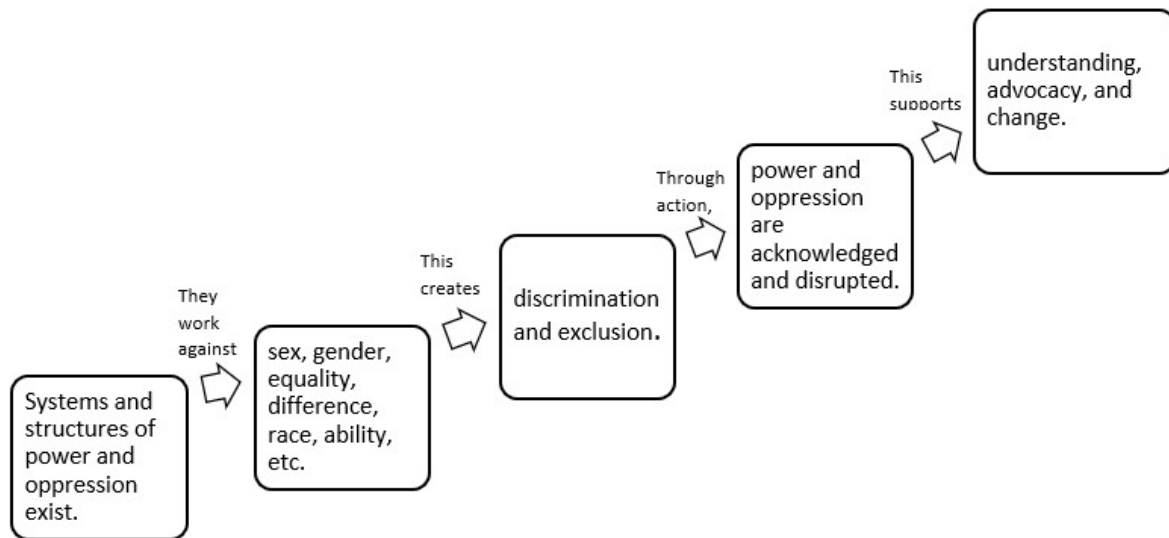
Feminist theory developed in response to the subjugation of women by men in many

aspects of society. This is exemplified in the following quote “a feminist standpoint is a hard-won product of consciousness-raising and social-political engagement in which the knowledge that enables the oppressed to survive under oppression becomes a resource for social transformation” (Code, 2014, p.12). Those who subscribe to feminist theory feel that men and women should be socially, politically, and economically equal (Arinder, n. d). For decades, feminist theory has been a key component in discussions surrounding domestic violence and its causes (Chung, 2005). This perspective has been responsible for bringing DV into a global conversation as well as establishing shelters and interventions for abused women (Ali & Naylor, 2013). Because men have typically held positions of power within a society, it has been suggested that gender inequality and power relations within heterosexual relationships are influential in the experience of DV (Chung, 2005).

When using feminist theory to explain DV, it is assumed that in heterosexual relationships men use violence as a means to maintain power and control over women (Cannon et al., 2015). These opinions were held by many female colleagues with whom I discussed my research. These women felt very strongly that women were victims and that by pursuing this type of research I was undoing decades of work around female rights.

Figure 4

Illustration of Feminist Theory



Note. This figure, created by Arinder (n.d.), illustrates the way in which feminists view the struggles women are faced with within a society.

The figure above is a visual representation of how power structures that favour men (typically of European decent), affect women and others in minority groups. When viewing DV with a feminist lens, it is easy to see why some women may feel threatened by the acknowledgment of men as victims. Perhaps, purveyors of feminist theory would view female perpetrated DV as a woman rebelling against the patriarchy and attempting to regain a sense of power that society has denied her. Historically, in the Western World, women have been denied equal rights (Code, 2014) and been characterised “by compliance, inability to use violence effectively, physically vulnerable, and the sexual object of masculinity” (Cannon et al., 2015, p.676). Because of this characterisation many women have fought for decades, starting with the Women’s Liberation Movement in the late 1900’s (Ali & Naylor, 2013), to ensure equality for women moving forward. When viewing the phenomenon of DV through a feminist perspective, it is understandable that a man being taken

advantage of and abused seems nearly impossible. To many people, it is not fathomable that the oppressed can overcome and become the oppressor.

Hegemonic Masculinity

The manner in which individuals interact with each other and how an individual's gender affects these interactions is often socially informed and created. Hegemonic masculinity is a term that is used within the social sciences to understand the way in which many societies have placed men in positions of power. This term was first used in the early 1980s by Connell during his study of social inequality in Australian high schools, and then refined in 2005 by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). Hegemonic masculinity embodies gender inequalities and places men in positions of dominance over women and other males perceived to be inferior, such as gay men (Van Doorn et al., 2021). Jewkes et al. (2015) discussed hegemonic masculinity as

“a set of values, established by men in power that functions to include and exclude, and to organize society in gender unequal ways. It combines several features: a hierarchy of masculinities, differential access among men to power (over women and other men), and the interplay between men's identity, men's ideals, interactions, power, and patriarchy” (p. 113).

When DV is viewed through this particular lens, it becomes clear why there are so few services or programmes available for male victims. A man who becomes victimised by a female partner is, in essence, breaking away from the cultural ideal of masculinity. These 'cultural ideals' characterise men as being aggressive, emotionally distant, and misogynistic, among other things (Van Doorn et al., 2021).

When a man is seen to be submissive or taken advantage of by a woman, it can be viewed as a weakness. As mentioned in Chapter one of this thesis, in a culture where male dominance is less prevalent or important, hegemonic masculinity may not be relevant or may be expressed in a different manner. Hegemonic masculinity reinforces the perpetration narrative, that men are violent and aggressive while their female counterparts are weak and submissive. Similar to feminist theory discussed earlier in this chapter, hegemonic masculinity provides a seemingly simple explanation for the complex issue of DV. This explanation results in the simplification of a multifaceted issue; men are dominant and powerful and therefore have the power to control and subjugate women.

Method

The working relationship with the participant was built over a series of interviews and several hours of interactions. Having obtained his prior consent, all exchanges were voice-recorded and transcribed at a later date. These accounts were then summarized and analysed by means of comparing and contrasting the information already available within the academic sector. There was also an interest in learning whether the participant's engagement with support services had helped or hindered the healing process following the ending of the relationship with his ex-partner. By engaging in one-to-one interviews, the intention was to gain a richer and more holistic understanding of what had led the participant to be involved in an abusive situation.

As noted previously, all conversations between the participant and myself were a combination of informal and predetermined questions. As a result of this approach, several topics from the existing literature, emerged and were available for

discussion. They also formed a useful basis around which to build the semi structured interviews. These topics were as follows:

1. Using children as a means of power and control
2. Emotional and psychological violence
3. Physical violence – types and severity
4. Social norms and gender stereotypes

While these themes and areas of discussion were of interest, the participant continually led the conversation. This relinquishing of control by the researcher in favour of the participant is in keeping with one of the key principles of narrative research (Bloor & Wood, 2006). It is crucial that the interviewer gives control of the conversation to the storyteller and avoids the urge to interrupt, in this way the researcher takes on an interpretive role. The level of detail was then dependent on the individual's willingness to share and the nature of the working relationship that was created between the participant and the researcher. A benefit of this method of interviewing is that it allows the participant to explore his own experiences and reflect with only slight prompts from the interviewer. Utilising these techniques often leads to more open and fluid conversations.

Recruitment

Recruitment for this thesis presented a challenge, and last-minute alterations were required. This will be discussed in more detail later in this section. The original plan for recruitment was to approach clients from my place of employment (due to confidentiality the organisation cannot be named, however, it was a social service providing support in the local community) in order to find participants. Through my work within the social services sector, I was aware of several men who had been

survivors of abuse. Within the homeless population, which was the demographic of the clients I supported, this type of violence was more common. It must be noted that the intent was not to utilise my own assigned clients or conduct the interviews at the work site. These stipulations were made due to the potential for conflict of interest. The organisation for which I worked, gave me tentative approval and the ethics application was made. Initially, ethical approval was granted for this process to take place. However, shortly before commencing the recruitment of participants, the organisation revisited their approval and made the decision to retract their consent to use existing clientele for this research project. The organisation stated that they felt that it would be too difficult for the clients to separate the research from the work and support that they received from the organisation. Due to this unexpected change of circumstance, the approved ethics application was then amended and resubmitted to the committee for approval.

As a secondary means of recruitment, an email was sent to staff members at my place of work. The email asked whether anyone was aware of an eligible person who was not a client of the organisation and who would be willing to take part in the current study. The staff members were not able to provide, for this study, any participants from their personal lives. Another avenue of recruitment was explored by placing posts on Facebook to a Waikato Community page as well as the University of Waikato page. The emails to staff and social media posts are attached in this thesis under Appendix C. These emails requested that any interested party, who fit the criteria and was willing to participate, contact the researcher directly.

In all communications, a private email address was provided so that a potential participant's interest was not published on social media. This avenue of recruitment was also unsuccessful. Participant recruitment was also attempted via

email through several different men's groups in Hamilton. As before, the anonymity of potential participants was foremost and a private, direct contact email address was provided for those who were interested in assisting with the research. This area of recruitment was successful as I was fortunate to source a single participant from the Waikato district. Due to the limited response from potential participants in the Waikato region, recruitment attempts were expanded to Auckland, Tauranga, and Wellington. Again, there were very few replies from this extended attempt to secure men who were willing to be interviewed. Those that did reply were interested in the research topic but were unable to assist with participant recruitment.

During recruitment, the sole participant that had come forward and agreed to take part showed interest and was eager to share his story. Throughout the interview process, he continued to show marked levels of engagement and was willing to provide great levels of detail. The researcher and their supervisor made the decision to concentrate on the single participant. The focus of the research would now be to undertake a more in-depth case study and commentary on the current state of care.

Safety and Ethical Considerations

Prior to commencing the interview process, written informed consent was provided by the participant. The consent form explained that the data collected would be used for research purposes and published in a public forum. They also made it clear that the participant had the right to disengage and recall their consent at any point. A copy of this consent form is provided in Appendix A of this report. A participant information sheet was also provided before the commencement of the interview process. The information sheet outlined what was to be expected throughout the process. A copy of the information sheet is attached in the Appendix

B of this thesis. All the original notes and documentation will be destroyed after 5 years. All interviews were conducted in a neutral location, agreed upon between the researcher and individual participant.

Given that being a survivor of historic or current abuse was a requirement for participation in this research, a list of local support agencies was provided to the participant. Due to the sensitive nature of the research topic, the privacy of the participant and the confidentiality of his accounts are of paramount importance; for this reason, a pseudonym was assigned by the researcher. The names of the specific men's groups have also been omitted as this would increase the possibility of the participant's true identity becoming available.

This research project was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Health) at the University of Waikato.

Participant

William [pseudonym] is a 53-year-old man living in the Waikato region. He was raised in a proud military family, who had served their country for generations. William also served in the military, in various positions, over a span of approximately 20 years. His service provided him with the opportunities to live and travel all over the world, an experience for which he is extremely grateful. William reported that he had a happy childhood and could not recall any incidents of domestic violence between his parents. Originally from the United Kingdom, he moved to New Zealand with his now ex-partner, approximately 15 years ago. When the interviews took place, William was no longer with his partner, they had been together for 12 years and married for 10 of those years. According to William, the violence in the relationship started while the couple were still living in the UK, this will be discussed

in more detail in chapter four. At the time these interviews took place, the couple had been separated for nearly a decade. William has four children from this relationship. He has two biological daughters, and two older stepchildren from his ex-partner's previous relationship.

During the long period of separation there have been numerous custody arrangements. Early in the separation William was granted day to day care of the children, this appeared to be due to the unstable mental health of his ex-wife, as was explained by William. He stated and provided evidence, in the way of lawyers' letters and court documents, that his ex-wife had spent a period of time in a mental health facility and was receiving treatment. During this period, the children's mother was granted supervised contact on court approved terms during this time. This order was then changed to allow the mother full custody and William was allowed contact by agreement only. These parenting orders changed on several occasions with each parent at certain times only allowed to see the children under supervised access. These arrangements and the subsequent toll it took on William and the children will be discussed further in chapter four.

William and I met face to face on three occasions, for a total of seven hours. Due to the difficulties in scheduling, we also communicated via phone calls on two occasions for a total of two hours. The meeting locations were decided upon in advance between the participant and myself. William also provided an array of documentation pertaining to his abuse, and to the subsequent court cases he was required to attend. A letter of support, written for the family courts by a close friend, was presented and a copy is attached under Appendix D. Some of the documentation he provided contained a significant amount of personal information,

particularly about the children, and subsequently, was not attached to this thesis for reasons of privacy and confidentiality.

The qualitative methods used to carry out this research afforded a great deal of autonomy to the participant. By meeting with William over several hours, a level of trust was achieved and allowed for increased detail in his story. The following chapter is intended to highlight the effects that gender and social norms have had on William, and his subsequent treatment as a survivor of DV.

Chapter 3: Social Stigma and Social Norms

Social and cultural norms within a particular country influence the way in which an issue such as domestic violence, is perceived and treated. When discussing culture, this term, for the purpose of this thesis, is used to describe the way in which the majority of a society operates. New Zealand culture is a broad term used to discuss how the country and its inhabitants operate. It is important to acknowledge that the values and beliefs of each individual may vary, to some degree, from the collective median. Although this is not a universally agreed upon definition, social norms can be described as “the written and unwritten rules of a society and constitute the foundation for appropriate behaviour within that society” (Sorenson & Taylor, 2005, p. 78). This includes the values and beliefs of the nation, as well as the political climate. As with most topics that involve human beings, there will always be exceptions to the rules. Gender norms shape the way individuals see themselves as well as influence how society perceives them. These gender norms can also be shaped by the use, or misuse of language. All these topics, be it gender norms, culture or use of language can be heavily influenced by social media. There is often a social stigma that individuals or groups have to navigate if they deviate too far from these accepted norms.

Gender Roles

In New Zealand, stereotypical gender roles are commonly held that typically place men as the more dominant sex (Hokowhitu, 2005; Phillips, 1996; Scott-Storey et al., 2022). Due to the entrenched view that men occupy a position of power (Nielson et al., 2020), the thought of a man being a survivor of any kind of abuse at the hands of a woman seems improbable (Corbally, 2015; Hine et al., 2022). Instead of viewing the abuse in a gender-neutral manner, cases of domestic violence are

often regarded, and treated, as a gender issue (Fergusson et al., 2005). “It’s really stigmatised you know”, this was one of the first comments William had made around his abuse. This comment was made in relation to how he had been treated not only by professionals, but also by his community. These barriers and the stigma around victimisation will be discussed in more detail throughout this chapter.

Domestic violence is a complicated and multi-faceted issue that encompasses a range of social factors (King & Robertson, 2017), as is reflected in studies on personality, child development, family systems and so forth (Muller et al., 2009). The effects that violence in the home can have on children is discussed in more detail throughout chapter four. The use of his children was a key part of the abuse the participant experienced and is part of his ongoing trauma, despite the relationship being over.

In the academic literature surrounding DV (Dixon et al., 2022; Hine et al., 2022; Hines et al., 2007), there were recurrent comments discussing men who have attempted to report abuse to the authorities. Male survivors stated that they were often greeted with suspicion, and on occasions were accused of being the perpetrators by a range of service providers (Hine et al., 2022). The participant in this thesis experienced being treated with suspicion when dealing with the police.

William stated that he was listed on the police system as having been ‘flagged’, “from the start like the violence prevention officer had me down as a red alert thing, so if I ring the police, they have to attend, they have to come, drop everything, and that apparently is not given to anyone, there needs to be a significant risk of harm”.

Despite having this ‘red alert’, on one occasion after calling the police for help, when they arrived, police arrested William as a perpetrator. When asked if this ‘red flag’ was still in place, he said:

“I think it goes for a few months, so I had to get a police protection order. Oh, that’s something I need to stress, that when she was taken to the [mental health facility] I was given a police protection order for [the] protection of me and the children. Cause she did actually say to the police there that she was going to kill me and the children...”.

Despite this concerning comment, when the children’s mother was released from the facility, she was able to regain custody. Other researchers have noted that the overarching gender stereotypes and biases that are evident within the criminal justice system are a serious issue for males (Dutton & White, 2013; Hine et al., 2022). This gender bias, particularly from the police, was noted by Dutton and Corvo (2006), where they found that men are disproportionately arrested for equivalent violence.

During my recruitment attempts, I received the following email response from a service provider in the Waikato area, “It is a pity that male survivors of family violence either don't report the violence or most of them don't seek any help from any support services” (personal communication, 2022). Domestic violence against men often does go unreported and therefore is unrecognised; this is largely because men, for a variety of reasons, are less likely than women to report incidents of violence (Drijber et al., 2012). Some of the reasons that men are less likely to report violence will be discussed in more detail in each of the following chapters.

Male survivors are often faced with a great deal of internal conflict as the abuse causes them to question what it means to be a man and there can be an element of contradiction (Williamson, 2018). Cognitive dissonance can occur when a male feels he is not living up to his societal expectations. It was apparent that the participant struggled with the idea that he could simultaneously be a survivor of

abuse and also a strong and capable man. William commented that “it’s not something that’s easy to...to sort of, admit all this, cause I ain’t soft, I’ll stand up for myself”. These notions of gendered expectations from society, as well as personally, were mirrored in other studies exploring male victimisation (Hine et al., 2022).

William, the participant in this study, was the victim of extreme physical and psychological violence at the hands of his partner. During the interview process, it was interesting to see how William would focus on relaying to the interviewer that he was capable of performing well in stereotypically male roles. William discussed his time served in the military, and his love of martial arts, and the demanding training and personal discipline involved in both. He also mentioned that he had trained with the Japanese Karate Association, and “actually taught karate and self-defence techniques to the police and the military...it was a great big part of my life”. Each time he would discuss an incident of abuse it was followed up by another story that showcased his physical and mental strengths. These engrained gender stereotypes add to the difficulties men are faced with when they are subjected to violence at the hands of a female (Muller et al., 2009).

In New Zealand, despite legislation and policies attempting to create a more equal society, it is still apparent that the entrenched gender stereotypes remain (King & Robertson, 2017; Phillips, 1996). Gender roles and expectations, assigned and reinforced over decades, become part of a personal identity and are difficult to overcome. Men are generally still ingrained in the belief that it is their role to be the provider (Hine et al., 2022) and when they are unable to do this, some have reported feeling that they have ‘failed’ as a man (Phillips, 1996). For William, being a strong and capable provider was a key part of his personal identity. Being strong and being a victim are not mutually exclusive variables; this element of contradiction and

internal conflict was mirrored in the experiences of other male survivors in the research by Dixon et al. (2022) and Williamson et al. (2018).

Use of Language

While the use of language was not a central focus for this thesis, it is important to note the impact language has on healing and trauma. William made a comment during one of the first interviews surrounding the use of language. The way in which service providers and society as a whole frame conversations around DV can be impactful (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). William stated that his favourite phrase to use is “you have to participate in your own rescue”. This phrase he felt perfectly encompasses the journey through DV; you must be willing to help yourself as no one can do it for you. He also made a statement around the use of the word ‘victim’ and how it had negative connotations. This finding was consistent with existing literature and comments from other male survivors (Brooks et al., 2020; Dixon et al., 2022), and was briefly discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. In a 2022 article focusing on exploring DV, the authors referred to the men in the study as survivors (Richardson & Kloess, 2022). This acknowledgment of preferred terminology and an attempt to move past the typical DV framing that has been used for females is promising and shows a willingness from some academics to make progress in this space. It is crucial that measures used to treat male survivors undergo critical examination; and are tested for their validity and applicability to the way men understand and conceptualise violence and victimisation (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). Simply changing the gendered nomenclature of a test designed for use with female victims is not sufficient or fit for use with male victims.

Role of Social Media

It is important to acknowledge the effects of social media on gender norms, victimisation, and the portrayal of domestic violence. Media helps shape the way the general public understand and react to social issues, particularly how they understand DV (Scarduzio et al., 2017). The media, and more recently social media, has become an integral part of contemporary societies (Hodgetts et al., 2020). There is a growing platform for digital communication as hard media, such as newspapers, seem to be going out of fashion. Information about world news, celebrity updates, and political reports are now widely available through various communication methods. Internet and cell phone capabilities allow for instant, global communication and television news channels transmitted 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The ease of access to news stories and the availability for anyone to publish their own stories has led to media saturation. While researchers have expressed growing concerns over the negative effects media has on society (Hodgetts et al., 2020), there are equally positive outputs.

William found social media helpful in that he could listen to stories of people like him. He found that utilising the internet and sites such as Facebook were effective methods to locate support services. There was also a sense of hope for William when he could see that there were individuals or groups that were working towards supporting male survivors such as himself. Unfortunately, William also experienced the harmful side of the digital age. These negative aspects include a greater ability for his ex-wife to “keep tabs” on him and the people with whom he interacted. A further negative aspect that he found was in reading about the way a large majority of society view male victims of abuse. Espinoza and Warner (2016) discuss this portrayal of male survivors by the media in their research:

“Take, for instance, the quintessential example of an openhanded strike to a male’s face. Such an action may be laughed at, or alternatively, assumptions may be made about the male’s behaviour.

‘He must be a ‘pig’.’ ‘He must have done something to provoke her.’

‘Maybe she was just defending herself.’ These common responses reflect tacit acceptance of behaviour that would be admonished if the partners’ genders were switched” (p. 961).

Frequently, William would see posts on social media or online articles that revictimized and undermined his lived experience, perpetuating a damaging stigma. In chapter 9 of the book by Hague (2021), the damaging effects that social media and cyber-attacks have had on support services and awareness campaigns were discussed. A part of their discussion was around the potential for information to be transmitted according to the particular view of the controlling organisation or the opinion of an individual. While the misuse of social media can be detrimental to DV and survivors it also has the capability of being a place of healing and hope.

Social Stigma

In order to circumvent the social stigma that is attached to their abuse, male victims of DV experience, and often find that they must overcome an almost overwhelming number of obstacles. This was noted in a number of studies that found that there is still a great deal of stigma surrounding male victims who have been abused by females (Dixon et al., 2022; Hine et al., 2022; Hines et al., 2007). In a report by the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse (2018), it was noted that male victims of IPV are often reluctant to seek help due to societal attitudes that frame men as perpetrators and women as victims. This can lead to underreporting of

abuse against men and a lack of support services tailored to their needs. Perhaps this is why in a New Zealand study it was observed that, “overall 33.9% of women compared with 18.7% of men reported that they had sought help from services following IPV experience” (Fanslow et al., p. 124). Even if such men are willing to come forward as survivors it is, undoubtedly, a further challenge for them to be willing to discuss their situation at length. A comment made by a participant in another piece of research talked about his shame in being a victim; “a man is ashamed to talk about being abused by a woman . . . I was kind of ashamed to talk about it; what the hell kind of a man are you? That’s the hardest thing for a man to come forward and say, “I was being abused by this woman.” (Brooks et al., 2020, p. 5402). When male survivors are asked to become involved as a participant in research, it is a step further, as was discovered in the recruitment phase of the current study. William was vocal around his disappointment at the lack of support from other men regarding this study, “it’s just a real shame and I’m just a little disappointed that no one else came forward to help you...but it’s one of them things right, at the end of the day a lot of guys might feel inadequate”. William’s disappointment is understandable but, in order to participate in research projects, men who have experienced abuse require a great deal of courage and support to come forward. Potential research participants are required to engage one-on-one with a complete stranger and tell that person the most private, intimate details of their life with their abuser. These feelings were encapsulated by William when he said, “it’s terribly embarrassing...but I can see the damage that’s being done and that’s why I came forward”. In depth research is a course of action that requires the abused men to relive the pain, anguish, and feelings of powerlessness that they experienced within the domestic relationship. Qualitative research such as the current study, is a long process, one that requires

patience, tact and a degree of detachment while also giving validation to the survivor's pain. Those men who do participate in such research must also understand that their personal stories will eventually be published and shared within the academic world. The email communication I received from an academic, in Auckland, underpins the point that male experiences of female perpetrated violence are less often acknowledged and researched:

I personally set up a PG [postgraduate] programme at ... [University] in Violence and Trauma and am fully aware of the need of research and action on male survivors of female abuse. Unfortunately, there is still some political resistance at [university] to acknowledging female partner abuse. I applaud your enquiry and would be happy to talk to you further. (Academic staff member, personal communication, February 23, 2022).

This response corroborated some of my personal experiences when discussing the topic for this thesis. As I mentioned in the introduction, there were certain colleagues and other professionals that became very defensive when I attempted to discuss female perpetration. Some individuals commenting that by undertaking this stance of DV I was undermining the struggles that women face. Another opinion expressed by a clinical professional was that even if a woman was violent, it was simply due to her previous victimisation and therefore, she should not be treated as a perpetrator as it was 'not her fault'. The next response was received by the same academic as quoted above and illustrates the difficulty of exploring such a socially taboo subject:

The irony for me is that it must be women who write about abuse of men because if I (any male) write about it we are 'in denial' or 'women blaming'. It really hampered my academic advancement, so my focus has been on travelling under the radar and setting up effective services for men, including an academic programme with more integrity (Academic staff member, personal communication, February 23, 2022).

These communications also demonstrated the difficulties academics, such as the person I have quoted above, are facing when they attempt to bridge the gap in research. This is particularly noticeable when it is a male researcher who is trying to study male survivors of female perpetrated violence. These responses, which were received during the recruitment phase, illuminated the intense social and political struggles that male survivors are faced with when experiencing domestic violence (Hine et al., 2022; Scott-Storey et al., 2022). These views and tensions about gender roles and what it means to be a victim have given rise to multiple social movements.

#metoo Movement

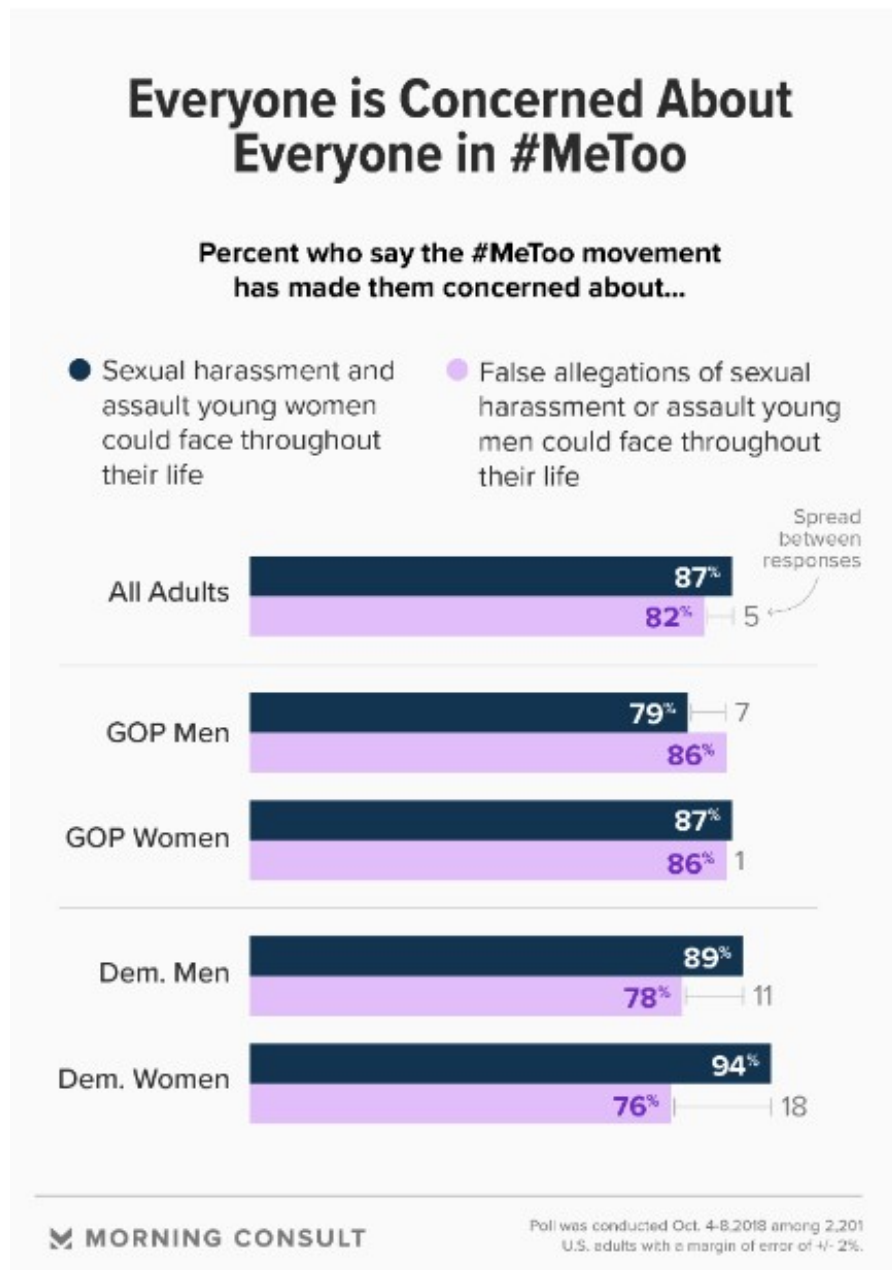
In 2017, a movement encouraging survivors of sexual assault to come forward and be heard took the world by storm. This phenomenon is still relevant and being discussed as can be seen in academic literature discussing DV (Corbin, 2018; Hague, 2021). *Me too.* is an official and international corporation, focused on supporting survivors of sexual violence. The *me too.* website is inclusive of all genders and ethnicities, focusing on supporting survivors, regardless of their backgrounds.

[We] focus on assisting a growing spectrum of survivors — young people, queer, trans, the disabled, Black women and girls, and all communities of colour. We're here to help each individual find the right point of entry for their unique healing journey. But we're also galvanizing a broad base of survivors and working to disrupt the systems that allow sexual violence to proliferate in our world. This includes insisting upon accountability on the part of perpetrators, along with the implementation of strategies to sustain long term, systemic change (Me too., 2022).

Nowhere in its conception did those who created this platform state that sexual violence was a specifically female issue. Even in the above quote, there is focus on inclusivity and accountability. Over time however, it appears as though the organisation has predominantly been used for female survivors. While this movement was brought about in the hopes of helping survivors of sexual violence, it also generated a great deal of criticism (Lisnek et al., 2022). There were stories of women coming forward with accounts of abuse that were unfounded, and simply untrue; causing #MeToo to become associated with shallowness, fame, and artificiality (Villa & Alcalde, 2022).

Figure 5

Graph of Public Opinion Regarding #MeToo



Note. This is a graph of a survey completed in the United States around concerns for the #MeToo movement. It is divided by gender and political affiliation.

In the figure listed above, the general public in the United States were asked about their perceptions of the #MeToo movement. Of the adults surveyed, both male and female, 82 % were worried about the possibility of false allegations. These false

allegations towards men had the potential to cause disruptions throughout their lives. It would be interesting to conduct a similar poll in New Zealand where political affiliations are not as prominent, and there is a higher rate of political stability (WorldData.info, n.d). An individual's political views could play a role in their understanding and treatment of DV.

Unlike the original corporation [Metoo.], which focused around ending sexual violence, the hashtag that became popular online appeared to be focused on demonising men. It appears as though those men who came forward with accounts of sexual violence, were not granted the same level of support and respect for their stories as women who had suffered a similar experience (Catton & Dorahy, 2022). The *me too.* website expressly mentions that the worldwide phenomenon and *#metoo* is strictly a social media reference. *Me too.* (the official corporation) released a statement saying they do not “control the hashtag [*#MeToo*], and often individuals and/or organizations co-opt its use, sometimes in direct contradiction to the actual work of interrupting sexual violence” (Me too., 2022).

As with many social movements that are disseminated online, this hashtag was quickly used worldwide (Corbin, 2018), and many used it to further a gendered approach to the issue of sexual violence (Me too., 2022). The dangerous and sometimes corrupt nature of social media influences was seen during the highly publicized domestic violence trial of Johnny Depp and Amber Heard. The court case and its relevance to this thesis will be discussed in more detail in the following section. This issue of misappropriation of social movements was addressed in a statement by *Me too.*:

#MeToo is the greatest acknowledgment by survivors about the prevalence of sexual violence, ever. Since the hashtag went viral, so

much has shifted toward nuanced narratives about survivorhood and the long term, widespread impact of sexual violence. And yet, the way in which #MeToo has been co-opted and manipulated during the Johnny Depp vs. Amber Heard trial is a toxic catastrophe and one of the biggest defamations of the movement we have ever seen. Over the last six weeks, we have been confronted with the mockery of assault, shame and blame. Countless headlines proclaiming the death of #MeToo. News stories full of clickbait, having nothing to do with the actual work happening to interrupt sexual violence, have come across our screens with haste (Me too., 2022).

This quote, taken from the Me too. website, illustrates the frustration with which those who are fighting for legitimate change are faced, when individuals utilise social media to further their own cause. Perhaps people were not properly informed about what Me too. was created for and simply used the popular hashtag in ignorance rather than with malicious intent. The use of social media as a means to disseminate information and foster support, both positive and negative, was seen on a massive scale during the highly publicised court case between two prominent Hollywood stars.

Johnny Depp and Amber Heard Trial

In 2022, actor Johnny Depp and his ex-wife, actress Amber Heard, began a very public court case in the United States centred on allegations of DV. This widely broadcast court case brought the topic of male survivors into a global conversation and is important to the overall social portrayals of gender roles and victimisation. During our second meeting, William mentioned that he felt a sense of hope from

watching the trial and believed this would help bring other male survivors forward. “I very much hope that Johnny Depp sees some justice, and then perhaps you will see other people actually come forward...”. This was an interesting comment as it illustrates a positive side to social media. However, this also brings into question how William would have felt if Johnny Depp had lost this case. Would a loss have resulted in a monumental setback for male victims of female perpetrated violence, just as William felt that a win would have provided much needed positive change. It is possible that due to the nature of this case and those involved, namely wealthy celebrities, that the outcome would have had little lasting change with regard to policy or public opinion.

It is also worth noting that when William spoke to a lawyer around his ongoing issues with his ex-wife, the lawyer used the Depp trial as an analogy for Williams’s case, “I could put a case forward like Johnny Depp...but it would cost you around \$800,000, can you put that forward?”. William enquired with several different lawyers around the cost of a defamation case, and all were in agreement that it would cost upwards of \$600,000, therefore, it was by no means a feasible option for William to pursue.

William spoke about the barriers he faced as a man claiming to be a victim of female violence in our society. He felt that the Johnny Depp trial highlighted similar issues and backlash that he had also faced. As an example, in the Depp vs. Heard trial, one of the expert witnesses, a female psychologist, said that in her 20 years as a practitioner she had never collaborated with a male survivor of abuse. During her testimony, she made it clear that it was not feasible for Johnny Depp to have been a victim because he was a man, and his partner was a woman. This concerning gender bias from professionals was seen in a study by Dutton and Corvo in (2006).

In their research the psychologists rated male perpetration of abuse as more abusive and severe, even for the same actions. When violence is involved, the significant gender bias displayed by professionals is of great concern, especially when those practitioners have shown to be “limited in their ability to assess female patients' risk of future violence” (Skeem et al., 2005, p. 173). In cases of violence, it is imperative that authorities focus on the facts and evidence, and not simply make a judgment based on an individual's gender (Muller et al., 2009). It is important that gendered barriers to accessing support are addressed (Malihi et al., 2021; Muller et al., 2009).

With both the #metoo movement and the Johnny Depp trial, people around the world, and the media in particular, sensationalized what should have been a profoundly serious issue (Villa & Alcalde, 2022). Violence in any form should not be taken lightly. Recognizing that men are also survivors can support the gendered analysis of domestic violence, it does not hinder or undermine the experiences of female victims as some may suggest (Williamson et al., 2018). Assault is an act of violence perpetrated by one person against another, with the intent of causing harm either directly or indirectly (Community Law, 2022). The term assault does not provide a unidirectional gendered bias or causality. Regardless of the gender of the victim or perpetrator, any accusations should be investigated thoroughly and with impartiality. Everyone concerned, the offender and the person offended against, should be given the proper respect and dignity that a human being in crisis deserves (Magdol et al., 1997; Scott-Storey et al., 2022). A rush to judgment based on perceived norms of a particular sex is not justice and creates a built-in inequality within the system, when in theory all citizens are entitled to equal protection under the law (Muller et al., 2009).

Human beings are social creatures by nature, shaped and socialised by the world around us. Political, social, and family systems all influence an individual's world view and how they make sense of things. Gender stereotypes, while not intended to, can cause a great deal of distress for both men and women. When examining accusations of violence, of any type, it is important to look beyond the genders of those involved and focus on the problem at hand, namely, the violence. In the next chapter I will discuss the way in which children are often used in a domestic violence situation. It is also important to understand the impact violence within the home has on children.

Chapter 4: Use of Children as a Means of Control

Throughout the existing literature pertaining to male victimisation, a prominent finding was how women tend to use their children as a means to control their partners (Corbally, 2015; Hines & Dunning, 2007; Lien & Lorentzen, 2019). In the qualitative work completed by Corbally (2015) it was discovered that “for men, the removal of fathering experiences was the most powerful and long-lasting form of IPV they experienced” (p. 3121). Many men feel trapped due to the indirect abuse relating to their children, and this became the main reason why they chose to stay in that relationship (Richardson & Kloess, 2022). It is also well documented that children who witness violence in the home are more likely to enter violent relationships as adults (Lien & Lorentzen, 2019). Children of a domestic relationship, where there is violence between the parents, are vulnerable. They are often the silent witnesses to domestic violence and have the potential to be adversely affected by what they see and hear (Hines & Dunning, 2007). Unfortunately, children are present in nearly two-thirds of all family violence incidents (Good Shepherd, 2022).

Domestic violence, regardless of which sex is the perpetrator and which is the victim, leads to all manner of psychological and societal maladjustments in children who witness the attacks (Muller et al., 2009). Children may become hyper aware or sensitive to potential hostile behaviours; this can lead to inappropriate management of social situations (Ziv, 2012). The effects that William's relationship with his abuser had on their children cannot be known as the children were not contacted for the purposes of this research. The thoughts and opinions William still holds regarding these potential effects on his children will, however, be discussed later in this chapter.

The threat of having one's children taken away and being refused access can be an effective way of gaining control over another person's life (Dixon et al., 2022). Not only did William face the prospect of losing all contact with his biological children, but he also witnessed the father of his two adoptive children losing access to his daughters as well. There are many reasons why a battered partner may remain in a relationship where there is the constant threat of assault. While women typically stay in a violent relationship for financial reasons or emotional attachment (Jose & Novaco, 2016), men tend to stay in fear that they may lose contact with their children (Hine et al., 2022; Steinmetz, 1977-78). William seemed to have a heightened fear of losing all contact with his biological children after separating from his ex-wife. One contributing factor was that, while he was still with his ex-wife, William had witnessed how she had severed the relationship his stepdaughters had with their biological father. William stated that "she [ex-wife] has falsified affidavits in my name to make sure their father [the two older children] never sees the children again", he felt that his ex-wife would have gone to any lengths to exclude him from his girls' lives; he had seen her do it before. William's experience was similar to a participant in another study who said that his abusive partner "used false allegations of child abuse to have me removed by family court from my children's lives for around the 5 months it took to have the allegations shown to be baseless" (Bates, 2019, p. 20).

During the period of separation and various court proceedings, none of his children had much of a relationship with William, this was in part due to the various custody arrangements. These arrangements and the subsequent effects on the family will be discussed further later in this chapter. There is also a timeline of events that William had provided, which is attached under Appendix E. In this document it is clear to see that the separation and custody battles between both parents would

have been extremely difficult for everyone in the family. This tactic of limiting contact and straining paternal relationships was seen from participants across multiple countries in Dixon and colleagues' study (2022). William stated that his ex-wife had taken the children from him as she knew it would cause him the most pain. William was not unique in this experience. The ongoing effects of a violent relationship, even after separation, were noted by a participant in another study, "...although separation has stopped the physical violence, [participant's] estranged wife continues the abuse through the only means available: preventing visitation, alienating the children and filing false allegations with Child Protective Services." (Hines et al., 2007, p. 69).

When talking about his youngest daughter, William said that when she was growing up, she was like his shadow; they did everything together. As a result of the trauma caused by numerous hearings, changes in visitation and custody schedules and potential parental influences, their relationship became strained and virtually non-existent, "I would go months without seeing the kids at all". Over the last year, the relationship with his youngest child has made some improvements. Currently, there is an agreement that William can see his youngest daughter every second weekend. While he appeared thrilled with the contact, it was apparent that he was still distraught over the loss of their close bond. With regard to William's second oldest daughter, he continues to see her sporadically, but there still appears to be a great deal of strain on that relationship.

When we discussed some of the effects that the abusive relationship had on the children, he said that in relation to his second oldest "her mother has convinced her that she's autistic, but the psychologist says she's not, she just had ADD [attention deficit disorder] ...she's managed to completely brow beat these guys [the children] down slowly". William relayed an incident he experienced through his dealings with the family

court where, he said, a judge had made statements to him regarding the effects the separation had on the children. The judge had, allegedly, made a comment to William that he was unable to give William more time with his children. The judge was of the opinion that they, [the children] had been so negatively affected and turned against him that it would only make things worse for him to get this extra time. To William it felt as though he was stuck in a losing battle,

“the fact that you’re told you’re damned. There is nothing you can do that will make any difference...these things that I’ve had to go through with the family court...it’s a symptom of something sinister going on in society”. Not only do custody issues affect the children but can have lasting and damaging effects for the parents (Dixon et al., 2022).

Cultural Difference as Viewed by William

During our conversations, William mentioned that he felt a significant part of the problem was the culture in New Zealand and the wide prevalence and perpetration of domestic violence (Fergusson et al., 2005). When discussing the variations between the United Kingdom (UK) and New Zealand particularly around drinking culture and DV William stated, “in the UK you leave work, go for a couple of beers, bitch about your boss and whatever else is going on then go home ... in NZ it’s like go via the bottle shop, go home get pissed and beat the missus up”.

Fergusson and colleagues (2005) examined a New Zealand birth cohort and discovered that DV was present in 70% of relationships. This statistic encompassed both genders and included both perpetration of violence as well as victimisation. This was not the first study in New Zealand to have found that both genders show similar prevalence rates of DV (Magdol et al., 1997). In the study by Magdol and colleagues

(1997) they found that the perpetration rates for men were 22% versus 37% for women.

New Zealand has a long history of domestic violence, one that has considerable costs socially as well as economically (Corbally, 2015; Phillips, 1996). In the early 2000's it was estimated that the yearly cost of domestic violence in New Zealand was approximately \$717,000 when converted to US dollars (Ko Ling Chan & Cho, 2010). This figure did not take into account loss of earnings or employment when the economic cost was produced. As was noted in the literature and throughout this thesis, many men do not report DV, so we can assume that the actual figure may be much higher than the estimated \$717,000. New Zealand is ranked as the worst developed country in The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) regarding rates of domestic violence (inclusive of both male and female survivors) (Good Shepherd, 2022). There will be further discussion surrounding prevalence rates in NZ compared to other countries in the following chapter.

As mentioned in chapter two, William and his family underwent a multitude of custody arrangements, and the day-to-day care of the children changed between him and his ex-wife on more than one occasion. This swapping between primary caregivers would have contributed negatively to the overall wellbeing of the children. It is crucial for proper development to occur that a child "maintains and strengthens their relationship with their primary caregiver and, second, minimize their exposure to interparental conflict" (Tolmie et al., 2009, p.665).

William was of the opinion that had this violence in his relationship and subsequent child custody battles occurred while he lived in the United Kingdom he would have been granted, at the very least, 50/50 custody of his children. In the UK, the general rule when separating is that it is the child's right to have access to both

parents (Kabir Family Law, 2020). William also felt that she (ex-partner) would have been held accountable for her actions, for example, faced jail time or received fines. When viewed alongside statistical data, it appears as though both countries have similar custody issues. However, there appears to be limited research and statistics available within New Zealand that apply specifically to the experiences of fathers following separation. While there is information about how much time separated fathers spend with their children in other countries such as the United States, there appears to be no easily accessible information available in New Zealand (The Fatherhood Foundation, n.d.).

In New Zealand, women are granted sole custody of their children 76 % of the time, nearly three times as often as fathers (Carson, 2014). While this could, in part, be due to a gender bias within the family courts, this only provides a simplistic answer for a very complex issue. Another possibility for the difference in custody outcomes is the parental work schedule and availability. Typically, males are in higher paying full time employment, this makes it hard for them to then become a full-time parent. Father & Child Trust support worker Brendon Smith, commented in a newspaper article (Carson, 2014), that he was unsurprised by these statistics as he often encounters fathers who feel they are “hard done by” with regard to the legal system. Feeling “let down” or overlooked by the legal system was a sentiment mirrored in Williams's experiences when attempting to gain the right to see his children. William's experience with the justice system regarding his children was undoubtedly painful and caused him a great deal of anger. It is interesting that a New Zealand study by Tolmie et al. (2009), found that the experiences of women in the justice system were actually supportive of fathers. The legislation in New Zealand does evidence a supportive stance on shared parental involvement after separation

(Tolmie et al., 2009). In the participants interviewed for the Tolmie and colleagues (2009), study women felt that professionals involved in family law and custody issues were in favour of children having contact with both parents, regardless of circumstances. It is acknowledged, however, that the practice of parenting is still heavily gendered (Tolmie et al., 2009).

Ending a relationship is an emotional and painful process. It can be hard for those in the relationship to take a step back and understand how their actions are affecting their children. When dealing with separation, it is perhaps most important that professionals attempt to place their gender biases aside and focus on the overall wellbeing and development of the child. Having a service provider that is unbiased and supportive is key in these types of situations.

Positive Interactions with Service Providers

While the majority of William's experiences with service providers were inherently negative or disappointing, it is important to note that he did receive some positive outcomes. While still living in the United Kingdom, William was able to recall a positive interaction with a police officer. He discussed how the police officer had taken the time to listen to his story and was able to validate his feelings and experience. When discussing the interaction William said, "I think I was sat on a park bench; I went out, I didn't know what to do, I didn't want to go home, she was just awful and I was worried about the kids... I was sat on a bench and a cop walked past and went, are you alright? An I went no actually I'm not...". The police officer sat with William and told him that he needed to get out of this relationship. When William asked how he knew, the officer said he himself had been in a similar situation in the past. The officer said that his experiences in that violent relationship were what had

led him to join the police force. The officer told William that he 'ticked all the boxes' of a survivor of violence and told him he needed to get help. Unfortunately, when William got home that night, he stated that his ex-wife was very lovely, and kind and he decided not to end the relationship, "you know what they say about make up sex...but it was the kids you know, I'd never had a family". Then the family moved to New Zealand, and he said that it was years before "things got really bad again". One of the main driving factors for the family move was to distance themselves from his ex-wife's family. William explained that any contact she had with her family would result in a flare up in her behaviour. William mentioned that he had discussed his situation with friends in New Zealand and they felt that William was a surrogate for his ex-wife's trauma. The explanation William gave was that his ex-wife had been abused as a child by her own father. As an adult, she told William that she had forgiven her father for the trauma he had inflicted upon her. William felt that this forgiveness was not complete, and that she had simply shifted her feelings onto William, taking her pain out on him. This was apparently an opinion others around him shared stating, "people said, oh that's obvious that she just transferred all her hatred from him to you." The thought was that a move to another country would be the solution to this problem, and for a while it seemed to work. Unfortunately, old patterns of violence began to emerge again even without the influence of her family.

Loss of His Daughter

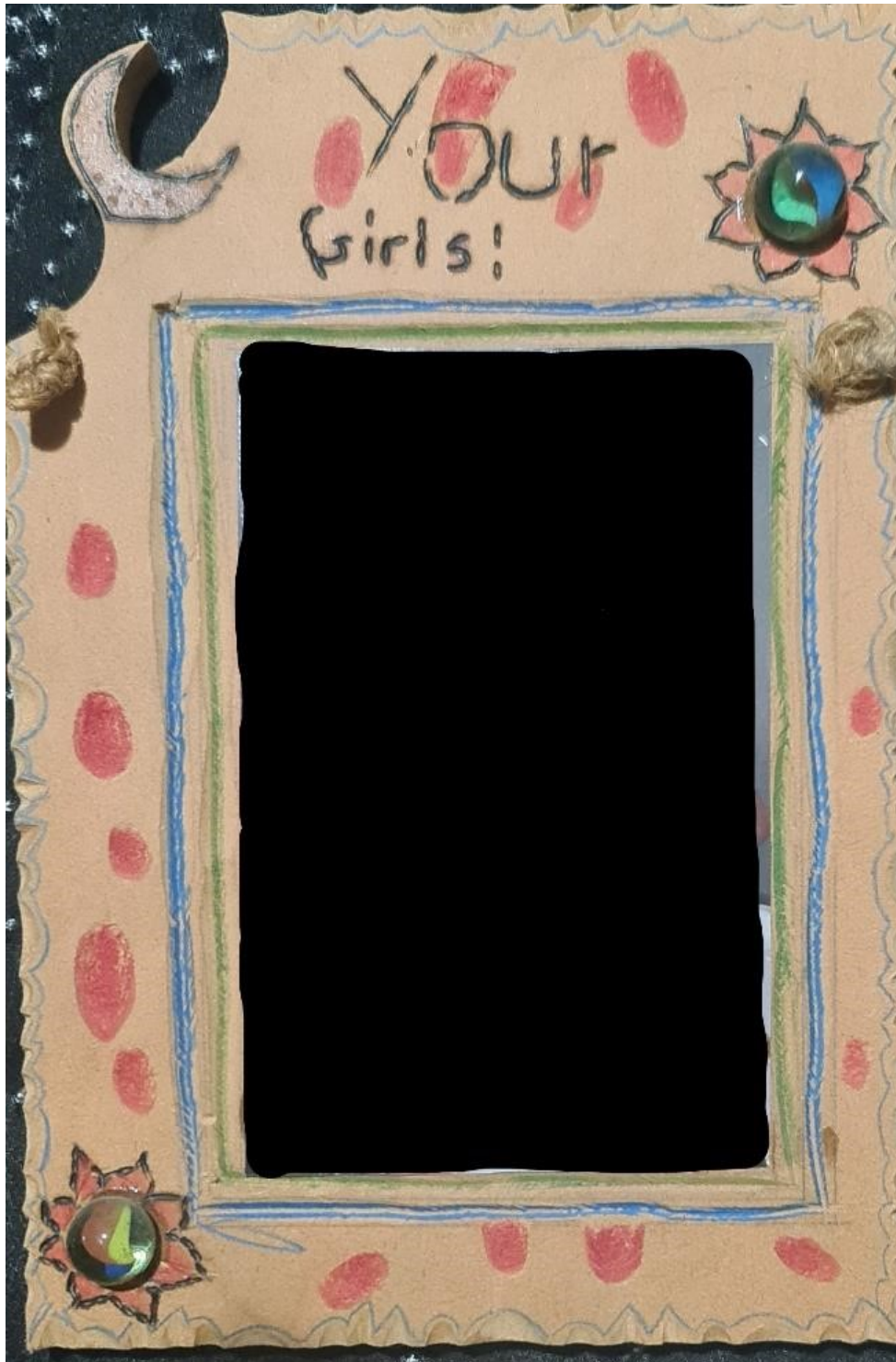
It was clear throughout our meetings that the relationships with his children were invaluable for William. When discussing some of the paperwork he had brought to show me, he stopped at one of the psychologist's reports and said, "this lady says that when they get away from the mother and they get a taste of normality, they'll

make a break". "That's what the older girl did, and it's been very difficult". William shared with me that his eldest daughter had unfortunately, taken her own life; "the ramifications of what she's done to the kids, that will take them the rest of their lives in therapy... She's the reason why the older girl's dead". This was a statement made by William when discussing how the violence in the home had affected his children. While it is not possible to know the exact reasons a person chooses to take their own life, the comment from William illustrates his emotional and mental state especially as it pertains to the relationship with his ex-partner. Despite his daughter being an adult when she sadly passed away, and we are unable to ask her what had gone on for her during her final weeks; William is convinced that the suicide is a direct effect of the way that his ex-wife treated the girls and himself while they were growing up.

During one of the interviews, William showed me a photo of a gift he had received from his eldest daughter when she was a child. It was a handmade picture frame she had made him for Father's Day. Inside the frame, she had put a photo of all four of his girls inside. This was a poignant moment in the interview, one which illustrated the degree of distress William felt for the years he was deprived of the parental right to participate in helping raise his daughters. William told me that the photo and frame still sits on his bedside table, and this object is one of very few things he has left to remind him of his daughter. He went on to describe the time and care she would have taken to create this frame. To William, this was a clear expression of her love for him. For the safety of his daughters and to protect the privacy of all concerned, the photo has been blacked out to avoid identification.

Figure 6

Handmade Picture Frame



Note. Photo frame made by William's eldest daughter as a gift for Father's Day
(William, 2022)

This photo frame reinforced to him that his daughters, at one point, loved him deeply. One of the consequences of the abuse William suffered was the ongoing alienation from his children. William mentioned that there was a period of nearly six months where he did not see any of his children. In the six months following the period of no contact, he only saw them for an estimated ten hours per month. Throughout the separation and numerous court cases, William was consistently portrayed as an individual who did not care for his children, accusations which were made by his ex-partner and her lawyers. In a support letter, he shared with me, it was noted by a third party that it was clear that the children's mother had gone to great lengths to discredit their father and paint him in a negative light. William and his supporter also felt that the children were being coached by their mother. This can be seen in a quote from the support letter which can be found in Appendix D:

“The psychological impact of the discord between their parents and particularly the lengths their mother goes to, to discredit [William] wherever she can, which often comes through in the comments spoken by the children which do not sound like something a child of their age and stage would say. It is obvious through the children's comments/statements to [William] that their mother speaks in a debasing way about their father to them”.

A close friend of William's who had met and worked with his ex-wife at one stage wrote this supporting letter. This friend and William had entered into a relationship at the time of her writing this letter. The purpose of the letter was to support William in a custody hearing. The support letter has been attached to this

thesis under Appendix D. The next chapter explains in more detail the emotional and psychological effects that DV has on survivors and those around them.

Chapter 5: Emotional and Psychological Violence

Emotional and psychological violence can often be overlooked and underestimated as it is not as easily recognisable as physical violence (Drijber et al., 2012). Unlike a black eye or broken bone which is easy to see, and which have established and effective treatments, psychological violence is not so easily handled. According to statistics from the United States, men experience psychologically aggressive behaviour by an intimate partner more often than women (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, n.d). In New Zealand, a study found that the lifetime prevalence rates of psychological violence from a partner was 47% for women and 40% for men (Fanslow et al., 2022). These rates are substantially higher than those from the United States who exhibit 36% and 34% for women and men respectfully (Fanslow et al., 2022). These types of violence have been shown to produce negative long-term health effects for both men and women (Coker et al., 2002). These negative effects are not limited to psychological issues, such as depression or anxiety, but can also cause physical pain as well. Psychosomatic symptoms can develop in an individual who undergoes psychological maltreatment (Hines & Douglas, 2009). As every individual reacts differently to a set of circumstances, there is no direct cause and effect pattern with regard to violence. There are, however, studies that have examined the way in which genders differ in the expression of their trauma. For example, women are more likely to internalise symptoms, whereas men are more commonly found to externalise their symptoms, which can lead to issues such as alcoholism (Hines & Douglas, 2009). Psychological violence can affect every individual in a different manner, depending on their environment, level of resilience, as well as social supports (Jose & Novaco, 2016). Social supports are an important protective factor for any survivor. Social supports

can be informal such as friends, family members and teachers or more formal, such as a therapist or a doctor. The more protective factors an individual has, the higher chance they will have lower trauma responses and adverse effects from their abuse (Jose & Novaco, 2016).

Emotional and psychological violence are terms often used to describe a variety of violent acts. The specific nature of the violent behaviours can be threats, coercive tactics (such as isolation), as well as comments intended to humiliate and undermine the survivor's credibility (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). In Appendix C of this thesis William's support person noted that she had witnessed the ex-wife's attempts to discredit William. The support person also noted that during her conversations with his children, it appeared as though their mother was very controlling over what the children were allowed to discuss with their father. There can be little doubt that this behaviour was intended to create division between William and their children. These acts are typical of a person who is committing violence of an emotional and psychological nature (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). William made a statement during our second meeting that he felt "it is never ending, it will only ever end when I die, or she dies". Despite their relationship having been over for several years at this stage, it is evident that the emotional trauma is still ongoing. This continuation of abuse, even after separation was also discussed in the previous chapter.

Loss of Friends

One of the key characteristics of emotional and psychological violence is a perpetrator's efforts to isolate the survivor from their support networks (Scott-Storey et al., 2022; Swan et al., 2008). Control can be achieved through various methods; in the case of William, this isolation was achieved through alienating his friends.

Isolation itself can cause significant health risks for an individual. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), social isolation significantly increases the chance of a premature death, even suggesting it could be as detrimental as smoking (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). William talked about how, when he was married, he lost many friendships due to his ex-wife's behaviours. Friends would eventually be afraid of repercussions from his ex-wife or were simply uncomfortable being around her. As a result, they ended relationships with William in order to avoid unpleasant interactions with her. William provided me with several affidavits from various friends or neighbours. I have not attached them to the appendices of this thesis as much of the information was very personal and could be used to identify him or his children. The quote below was taken from one of those reports in order to illustrate the way his ex-wife's behaviour had contributed to his loss of close friendships.

“...It was at this point in time that I began to see less and less of [William] and his family as we did not know how to behave or talk around [the ex-wife]. It was walking on eggshells trying not to get [William] or the children into trouble”.

The writer in Appendix D eventually ended the relationship with William as well, even though their relationship had started long after he had separated from his former wife. William discussed with me that even though that relationship was over, his ex-wife would still attempt to contact this friend. He described a situation where his friend told him she could not maintain the friendship due to his ex-wife stalking her and making her life difficult, to the point it was affecting her career.

The final chapter will cover the physical violence that William experienced, as well as the general effects that physical harm has on an individual.

Chapter 6: Physical Violence

Despite men statistically being survivors of severe physical violence less often than women, it is still important to acknowledge it does happen (Drijber et al., 2012). In the United States one in seven men report being victims of *severe* physical violence (e.g., beating, burning, strangling) by an intimate partner in their lifetime (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, n.d). Minor physical abuse such as pushing, slapping, or shoving is even more common, as many as one in four men report being a victim (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, n.d). While these figures are alarming, they may not reflect the full extent of the problem. It is also important to be aware that statistics can be presented in different ways and used to portray facts that benefit the interested party (Fergusson et al., 2005). For example, there is a difference between rates, and numbers (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). Before drawing conclusions, it is important to be clear around what the statistic is representing and how it was derived (Teach & Murff, 2007). Some more recent studies have shown that women perpetrate minor acts of physical violence at the same rate or even higher than males (Allen et al., 2009; Swan et al., 2008). One reason why there is a dissonance between the statistics is that men often do not consider a slap or a push to be an act of violence worth discussing. This is due to their conceptualizations of violence (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). An act of violence such as a slap, is perceived differently when delivered by a female versus a male (Sorenson & Taylor, 2004). While these minor acts of violence can often be ignored by men (Scott-Storey et al., 2022), they may appear more significant to women. This could contribute to the varying statistics of physical violence. A man will be less likely to report his partner pushing him in an argument, whereas a woman could view this as a much more substantial threat (Malihi et al., 2021).

Social constraints are perhaps a contributing factor for men being typically slower to recognise the abuse and its severity. Western society has shaped men to be dominant, not only physically and socially, but also economically and politically; to deviate from this social norm is in itself taboo and risky (Scott-Storey et al., 2022). In the current social climate, women are told from a young age that it is never okay for a man to hit them (Espinoza & Warner, 2016). Women are taught and socialised to be hyper aware of potential violence in any form (Hague, 2021) and are more comfortable voicing their concerns (Steinmetz, 1977-78). In order to enable men to identify when a violent situation is occurring a change in societal attitudes is required. Young boys should be schooled in principles that equal those used to inform young girls: namely, that it is never acceptable for a person of the opposite sex, or indeed anyone to hit or throw things at you. If society was more accepting of men discussing their feelings and difficult situations (Corbally, 2015), perhaps William would have found it easier to leave his relationship before things escalated to the degree of violence that he experienced. His situation was serious and included multiple instances of physical violence ranging from minor to severe. As William has written in his letter, attached under Appendix F; "I have been physically assaulted on numerous occasions by [ex-wife], several of which I could have lost my life. At least two dozen assaults which resulted in significant physical injury".

William's Experience with Physical Violence

During our conversations, William was able to show me photographs of several of his injuries during our conversations. In order to maintain his anonymity, it was decided that these photos would be omitted from this thesis. On one occasion, William discussed an altercation between him and his ex-wife that resulted in him

needing 36 stitches and he sustained a broken jaw. She had come home and hit him over the head with a wooden hockey stick. William explained, “she smashed my jaw, 36 stitches that one, that’s not the worst one” when asked to elaborate on some of the physical violence he had suffered. He described several of these “out of the blue” assaults, as he termed them. Some ranged from scratching and hitting, to more extreme instances such as breaking a plate over his head. When relaying a discussion, he had regarding this incident with a lawyer William said “the question has been asked, well how do you put up with that, that was asked by a lawyer. I says, [to the lawyer] how many of your female clients do you ask that question to. Well, that’s different [the lawyer replied]”. It appears as though even when a person is accepting or empathetic regarding male victimisation, they are still unsure as to how they are meant to respond or support.

On a separate occasion William relayed to me that while he was laying on the couch in their home, an argument ensued. The argument was not around anything serious but simply a miscommunication with regard to who would post a letter in the mail. The argument quickly escalated, and his ex-wife began to choke and hit him in the face. William stated that in order to get her off him, he was forced to start pulling at her hands. This incident resulted in him breaking her finger. William explained that he was not proud of what had happened but at the time he was just focused on getting her to stop choking him. This incident was the instigating moment for the separation and William looking to get support for the years of violence. He said after his wife had gone to the doctor about her finger, the doctor was able to “see right through her story”. The next time William went to the doctor; he was stopped and asked “do you need to talk to me about anything else?.. and I said, well things aren’t going well at home”. It was then that William told his doctor what had been

happening at home and the doctor called in a social worker. The social worker told William that he was living in a very dangerous environment and that “if you don’t do something, we will and the children will be taken out of both your care and you’ll be really struggling to see them”. He was unsure at the time how the social worker seemed to know so much about what was going on in the home but surmised that they must have talked to teachers at the children’s school.

During one of our interviews, William relayed to me an interaction that he had with a police officer who attended a family violence call out to his home in New Zealand. “A cop actually told me that the only way I would be free was to kill her, [he] said I might go a few years in jail but then you would be out, otherwise you’re gonna be monitored for the rest of your life by that creature”. This is an extremely inappropriate comment for someone in law enforcement to make. Most people would assume that police officers are there to prevent crime, not to advocate murder as an option to escape a difficult relationship. That said, such a senseless statement, from someone in such a position of authority, must have some kind of rationale. It is possible that this police officer had been to many incidents similar to those in which William was involved. Perhaps, during this process he had connected to the level of helplessness felt by men in this type of violent situation. Another statement of belief and support from a police officer was made to a male participant in Dixon et al (2022) study. The officer in this instance told the participant he needed to go to the courthouse immediately, stating ‘this is going to kill you’. It is interesting, that in both William’s case and the research done by Dixon et al. (2022) it was a police officer that stopped and took the time to listen and validate these experiences. A possible explanation for this is because police officers are often first on the scene (Javaid,

2020) and are able to witness first-hand what happens in a violent relationship. As a result, police officers are given an unsanitised, unbiased, and less-sheltered view of how events unfold. This clear-sighted view of the issue will undoubtedly inform their opinion, especially when one considers the number of domestic violence calls, they are likely to attend during the course of their careers. Despite some positive outcomes with the police, it is clear from the existing literature that there is still a great deal of work to be done (Dixon et al., 2022; Javaid, 2020).

A comment made from a participant in another study, unfortunately, illustrates some of the more negative interactions with which men are faced; “when the police came... they tackled me to the ground, and here she was the one beating on me, and they seen that, the whole damn neighbourhood seen it, but I'm the guy that they tackled, and they walked her inside the house” (Brooks et al., 2020, p. 5403). In a study carried out in the UK, a female police officer that was interviewed regarding male rape survivors, suggested that the training officers receive is lacking; “There is too much focus on female rape in training and it’s almost like, because nobody discusses male rape, that it can’t possibly happen. It’s almost like well, “It [male rape] mustn’t have happened because I never had any of this on my training”. Again, that contributes to the cynicism of officers ...” (Javaid, 2020, p. 420). The comment made by the officer above, highlights the need to change the narrative surrounding male survivors of violence to ensure they are provided with appropriate support.

Gender Differences within the Legal System

Despite the physical evidence that William had managed to provide over the years, including photographs of the injuries he had received, he felt that the law would still not support him, “I would just like to see some justice”. This belief that the

legal system would not, or could not, take action to support abused men was a recurrent fear expressed by male survivors (Dixon et al., 2022; Drijber et al., 2012). It appears men are not granted the same level of protection under the law to which they are entitled (Espinoza & Warner, 2016; Muller et al., 2009). William struggled with the family courts and felt that there was a strong gender bias, “she went in court and lied, and no one questioned her but everything I said people took as a lie...this system supports her every single step of the way, it’s criminal...guilty until proven innocent”. This comment from William, reflects the sense of hopelessness and powerlessness that he was feeling. He also described his frustration when working with some professionals within the system, “I have been completely miss quoted by the social worker, this report is not only sexist and bias there are references in there I certainly did not say, and are a downright lie”.

Due to the gender stereotypes that men face, and that were discussed in chapter three of this thesis, it also appears that the social sanctions and repercussions for men are much stronger than for women (Fergusson et al., 2005; Sorenson & Taylor, 2005). The burden of proof is also significantly higher for a male complainant when compared to a female who is seeking legal aid (Hines & Douglas, 2009). A contributing factor to this may be a willingness to accept the victimisation of females as it fits into our societies gendered views on violence, this was discussed in-depth in chapter three.

In Dutton and Corvo’s (2006) research around gendered beliefs of violence perpetration, they found that males were disproportionately arrested for the same use of violence as women. In a study completed in the United States it was found that judges were 13 times more likely to grant restraining orders to women for male

perpetrated violence than for men who were survivors of female perpetrated violence (Muller et al., 2009). This is by no means a small percentage and would merit further investigation around judicial gender biases (Espinoza & Warner, 2016). In New Zealand, for example, it was found that male victims of domestic violence were often not taken seriously by the police, social services, and the justice system, and were more likely to be arrested or charged themselves instead of their abusers (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2016).

Conclusion

Despite the progress made in research and policy over the last few decades domestic violence remains a problem that affects many people (Muller et al., 2009). It is crucial that domestic violence is treated seriously regardless of the gender of either the victim or perpetrator (Scott-Storey et al., 2022; Steinmetz, 1977-78). The gender differences in the perpetration of domestic violence remains a controversial subject (Allen et al., 2009; Fergusson et al., 2005). Since the term 'battered husband' was coined in the late 1970s by Steinmetz (1977-78) the academic world has been made aware that men can become victims of female violence. Yet it remains unclear why society appears to have such harsh resistance to acknowledging this type of violence. For over 50 years the debate surrounding the legitimacy and potential causes behind male victimisation has been ongoing. It is as though society fears that by acknowledging these men, it will somehow take away from the experiences of women.

During the interview process it was clear that above anything else the participant was seeking validation and justice for his experiences. His experiences of violence were similar to those in the existing literature and have been noted throughout this thesis. In many instances, the men in these studies felt that the law did not protect them, and in fact did not hold the female perpetrators accountable for their actions (Dixon et al., 2022; Fergusson et al., 2005; Hine et al., 2022). There are substantially fewer support services tailored specifically to male survivors when compared to those offered to women (Espinoza & Warner, 2016). For example, in the Waikato Region in New Zealand, abused women are able to seek help through Women's Refuge (Waikato Women's Refuge, n. d). This organisation has the ability to offer temporary accommodation for these victims in order to escape their abusive

relationship. There should be a service similar to this to assist males find a temporary safe haven to escape their abusers; parity with what is offered female survivors must be the ultimate goal. Often when men do finally seek help, they are faced with professional gender bias (Dixon et al., 2022, Muller et al., 2009) and left feeling hopeless and isolated. While this study examined the experiences of a single participant, it is clear that society and legal systems are not providing sufficient support or recognition to male victims of violence. The research for this thesis noted that the experiences of the participant were mirrored by participants from other international qualitative studies (Brooks et al., 2020; Dixon et al., 2022; Hine et al., 2022; Hines et al., 2007; Machado et al., 2020).

It is evident from the findings of the current study that urgent changes are needed. As in most issues of social awareness, education is the key to change. An important first step will be achieved by educating service providers and the legal profession. Through my personal conversations during this process, it still appears as though many people are not even aware that men can be and have been victims of violence at the hands of women. Awareness of the issue would be first and foremost the best way to educate individuals. Information on a man's perspective of the inequalities in the services they provide and subsequent monitoring of how they then interact with victims, will hopefully go some way to affecting change.

Future Directions and Limitations

While this research provided an in depth look at the experiences of a male survivor of female perpetrated violence, there are some notable limitations. As there was only a single participant it would be difficult to generalise his experiences to those of other men. Generalisation or saturation, however, was not the goal for this study. The goal was to explore those lived experiences and the complexities that DV

presents, particularly with males. The participant was able to assist in this aim by providing very detailed accounts of his life living with an abuser. It is also important to note that many of the discussions had with William were based on his feelings and his worldview and should not be taken as facts. A notable potential limitation of this study is the gender of the researcher. Given that the target group of participants were survivors of female perpetrated violence, having a female researcher could have affected other men's willingness to engage in the process.

The theoretical frameworks used to explore this topic were chosen deliberately, particularly that of narrative inquiry, however, that does not negate the limitations that are associated with this method. A well-documented weakness of narrative inquiry is that the research is retrospective in nature (Riley & Hawe, 2005). In the case of the current study, the relationship that the participant was discussing had been over for nearly a decade at the time of the interviews. Due to the substantial length of time between the events and the research taking place there is the possibility that his own attitudes and opinions could have changed, as well as his ability to recall certain events.

In future, it would be beneficial to complete a similar study with multiple participants and with various ages, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Having a wider variety of participants would enable future researchers to further investigate the cultural and social influences that are relevant to domestic violence. It would also be useful to include interviews with service providers to gauge their understanding of male survivors, and to assess their experiences working with this group. Perhaps with further research and understanding it would be possible to create a survey or screening tool similar to the violence against women survey but designed for use with males. To my knowledge, this is the first case study completed with a male

victim of female-perpetrated domestic violence. It is my hope that this thesis will acknowledge the support gap for a large portion of the population and that this knowledge will educate service providers on how to effectively support male survivors.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
DIVISION of ARTS, LAW, PSYCHOLOGY & SOCIAL SCIENCES

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Name of person interviewed:

When I sign this consent form, I will retain ownership of my interview, but I give consent for the researcher to use the interview for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet.

Please complete the following checklist. Tick [✓] the appropriate box for each point.	YES	NO
I have been given a copy of the information sheet and a copy of this consent form for my own records.		
I understand I can withdraw my consent up to two weeks after the first interview takes place		
Due to the nature of the topic being researched I have discussed with the researcher the use of a pseudonym (fake name) to protect my identity and confidentiality		
I have been provided with a list of support agencies in the area as the events discussed have the potential to cause emotional distress		
I understand that I do not have to answer any questions that I am not comfortable with during the interview process		
I understand that my information and the transcripts of the interviews will be held for a minimum of five years and that the information I provide will be published in an academic forum		
I understand that if the researcher has concerns for my wellbeing or wellbeing of others, they will notify the police or crisis team. This is to ensure everyone's safety.		
I would like a copy of the interview transcripts		
I would like a copy of the final report		

Participant: _____
Signature: _____
Date: _____
Contact: _____

Researcher: Samantha Jervis
Signature: _____
Contact: _____
027-818-8020
samanthajervis27@gmail.com



Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet Case Studies

Title: Case study: An in-depth look at male survivors of female perpetrated domestic violence

Information sheet for participants

Who is the researcher?

My name is Samantha Jervis, and I am currently a student at Waikato University, looking to finish my Masters in Psychology. I am also working full time as a Case Manager with The People's Project.

What is this research about?

This research is about understanding the experiences of men who have been survivors of domestic abuse at the hands of their female partners. I believe that in order to best support people, we need to hear directly from those affected about their experiences and how they would like to be supported.

What would I be asked?

You will be asked about your own experiences of domestic abuse, and if and how you tried to reach out for help. You will be asked to take part in interviews with the researcher, these interviews are anticipated to take between one to two hours. You will be asked to take part in a minimum of four interviews, with a max of six, depending on your story and how much you would like to share.

Will other people know who I am or what I say?

Your real name will never be used in this research, we will give you a pseudonym (fake name) so that your stories remain private.

What if I agree to participate and then change your mind?

You will be able to withdraw consent and stop your participation up to two weeks after the first interview takes place.

Will I be asked to sign anything?

Yes. Before we start any interviews or discuss any personal information, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What if I feel you have been treated unethically during this research?

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Health). Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email alpss-ethics@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix C: Social Media Post

Thesis research – Participants wanted: Male survivors of female-perpetrated violence.

I am currently working on my Master's in Psychology at the University of Waikato and am preparing for a research project and am looking for potential participants. For my research I am trying to understand the interactions and experiences of men who have been survivors of female-perpetrated violence and their experiences with service providers.

If you or anyone you know would like to help me, get a better understanding, and hear your stories, please contact me using the email provided below and I can give you more detailed information.

Samanthajervis27@gmail.com



Community Waikato
@CommunityWaikato · Community Organization



The University of Waikato
@WaikatoUniversity · College & University

Email to Staff at TPP

Kia Ora team,

I am currently working on my Master's in Psychology at the University of Waikato and am preparing for a research project and am looking for potential participants. For my research, I am trying to understand the interactions and experiences of men who have been survivors of female-perpetrated violence and their experiences with service providers.

If anyone you know fits this criterion and would like to help me, get a better understanding, and hear their stories, please have them contact me using the email provided below and I can give them more detailed information.

Samanthajervis27@gmail.com

Appendix D: Support Letter for Family Court

Feedback Re: ██████████ Family Court Matters

██████████ I am ██████████ partner of approximately 6 months. I am a working professional and solo mother of my five year old Daughter. I have a Bachelor of Social Sciences Degree in Psychology and a Masters in Social Work (Applied). In my professional career to date I have worked in the government sector and in NGO's with children and families. I worked as a Care and Protection Social Worker both in NZ and theUK, within the NZ context I have a working knowledge of the Children and Families Act 1989. I have also trained and worked as a call out advocate for the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Pilot Project (HAIP). My most recent roles have been as a Senior Probation Officer in Auckland and currently a Probation Officer in Hamilton. I have worked for the Department of Corrections for approximately 7 years. In this capacity I have been a Community Probation Services Representative for a Interagency weekly response meetings to Family Violence in Tauranga. Currently I am a designated High Risk PO whereby I manage very high risk offenders in the Hamilton area on ROC, Parole, PD and Extended Supervision sentences, many of these include GPS monitoring.

The above is included by way of indicating my experience in identifying risk and care and protection concerns in regard to adults and dependents aged 0 to 17 years of age.

Whilst I have been with ██████████ only a short time I never witnessed him to be abusive to ██████████. I have not noted any physical acts towards them that would be considered violent in intent, I have not seen ██████████ in my company or that of his daughters to ever display a propensity for violence or violent outbursts. In fact, if anything he behaves in a calm and considered manner in general. Occasional shouting has been witnessed but is rare and has been in the context of having made several mild-mannered requests to do something which has been ignored by one or both girls. Such raised intonation is not noted to be beyond anything any other parent would utilise in similar circumstances.

██████ has shown only care and concern for his daughter's and their wellbeing and actively seeks to participate in their lives as much as the current parenting order allows. He regularly does activities with his children, rock climbing, biking, walking, swimming and school activities, also encouraging them in sporting endeavours. He also encourages homework and the like. He maintains appropriate routine and boundaries within his home whereby the children will undertake the odd household chore, clean up after themselves, retire to bed at a reasonable hour and get ready for school on time. It is noted the maintenance of boundaries in the home is not without challenges given the behaviours presented by both girls, particularly ██████ and sometimes ██████. ██████ often displays defiant behaviour and will direct nasty barbed comments to her dad with no provocation - the display of such behaviours is generally more noted the first few days into change of caregiver until routine is again established.

In my time spent with the girls I have interacted with them often and as such one of the most noted observations has been ██████ efforts to prevent ██████ from talking openly about things in their life which have been asked in general conversation with no agenda attached. For instance, when ██████ birthday was coming up I asked what she wanted to do and what did she have planned to with her mum and other half siblings. ██████ immediately told ██████ she could not say as she was not allowed to.

I have not noted ██████ to talk about his ex (the girls mother) inappropriately in front of them.

In regard to care and protection concerns my primary concern in regard to the girls is the psychological impact of the discord between their parents and particularly the lengths their mother goes to, to discredit ██████ where-ever she can, which often comes through in the comments spoken by the children which do not sound like something a child of their age and stage would say. It is obvious through the children's comments/statements to ██████ that their mother speaks in a debasing way about their father to them.

In regard to the interview by the Lawyer for Child that took place on the 29/2/16 I was ~~surprised~~ at the omission of information in her report submitted to the Court.

20 November 2013	Contact record made by police regards domestic violence against [REDACTED] by Ms [REDACTED]. Photographic evidence was obtained which included injuries from a blow to the right eye.
26 November 2013	Ms [REDACTED] Notice of Objection to direction to attend Anger Management Programme, Ms [REDACTED] Notice of Defence and Notice of Intention to Appear
Unknown Date	[REDACTED] receives support from [REDACTED] and completes the Restart programme with Family Works, with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
12 December 2013	Letter by [REDACTED], Psychologist – “in my opinion [REDACTED] appears mentally stable at present”
10 December 2013	Voicemail message left for [REDACTED] by Ms [REDACTED].
13 December 2013	Section 132 Social Worker Report.
16 December 2013	Ms [REDACTED] file Affidavits in Reply and Support alleging domestic violence
17 December 2013	First Memorandum of Lawyer for Child. Report summarises that at this time the children resided with [REDACTED] and all appear to want for the parents to get back together. Primary recommendation is to find a way for mother to have regular access. Lawyer recommends that social work and psychologist reports be obtained.
17 December 2013	Memorandum of Counsel for [REDACTED] filed for Judicial Conference on 19 December 2013 proposing interim contact arrangement and timetabling directions for filing further evidence/hearing.
18 December 2013	[REDACTED] affidavit filed proposing contact supervisors and objecting to [REDACTED] as contact supervisor.
19 December 2013	Judicial Conference and Directions of Judge [REDACTED] directing urgent hearing, following day.
20 December 2013	Memorandum of Consent prepared after discussions in Chambers and submitted to Judge [REDACTED]. Interim Parenting/Contact Order made setting out Ms [REDACTED]'s contact
20 December 2013	Ms [REDACTED]'s Affidavit in Reply and [REDACTED]'s Affidavit in Support
7 January 2014	Affidavit of Andrew [REDACTED] – includes observations from 2009-2014

	<p>- Making Interim Parenting Order in favour of [REDACTED] and giving [REDACTED] contact by agreement.</p> <p>- Making Interim Parenting Order in favour of Ms [REDACTED], and setting out a detailed schedule of contact for [REDACTED], change over details and conditions.</p> <p>- Latter order to be reviewed 5 June 2014.</p>
21 February 2014	[REDACTED]
27 February 2014	Formal Complaint to Police from [REDACTED] against Ms [REDACTED] for conduct on 23 February 2014
31 March 2014	Letter by [REDACTED], Psychologist – discharge letter to care of GP “I have no concerns about [REDACTED]’s mental state currently and am optimistic that she will continue to recover her equilibrium.”
14 April 2014	CYF Report of Concern states “father calling concerned for his children with their mother”. Caller repeated many of the concerns that are likely to have been included in affidavits filed before the Family Court. The concerns appear to be [REDACTED]’s complaints regarding Ms [REDACTED] physically abusing himself and the children, leaving the girls home alone, and trying to change the children’s school. Report appears to conclude that no assessment is needed.
16 April 2014	Letter from CYF to [REDACTED] stating that his information has been recorded and passed on to a social worker supervisor at CYF. There would be no further action.
28 April 2014	Application to Inland Revenue for Administrative Review
14 May 2014	Agreement reached for contact with the help of Police Family Safety
19 May 2014	CYF Report of Concern
20 May 2014	Ms [REDACTED] without notice applications to discharge interim parenting order for [REDACTED] and applying for day to day care, with supervised access for [REDACTED]
	Allegations made against [REDACTED] for physical, verbal and emotional abuse.
28 May 2014	Dr [REDACTED]: Psychiatric Assessment Report for [REDACTED] essentially concludes that he has no mental disorder but he could benefit from counselling to overcome psychological and physical abuse issues.
3 June 2014	[REDACTED]’s notice of response
4 June 2014	[REDACTED]’s counsel’s memorandum for directions conference on 5 June

4 June 2014	Lawyer for Children memorandum saying children in day to day care of mother and contact with [REDACTED] as set out in interim parenting order; enjoying visits with dad
5 June 2014	Family Safety Teams case overview <p>"[REDACTED] find it very difficult to put their own issues aside to act in the best interest of their children ... Both parties have potential for reacting badly to ongoing stress or decisions against them, especially in relation to their children ... [REDACTED] has learnt strategies to deal with her aggressive behaviour and is now able to identify where she went wrong and is working on identifying her triggers."</p>
6 June 2014	Letter from Dr confirming no signs of alcohol abuse or toxicity within the 5 months acting as [REDACTED]'s GP, comments on good bi-monthly liver function tests taken over several years (management of medication)
9 June 2014	Section 131A Social Work Report filed
10 July 2014	Memorandum of Lawyer for Children
22 August 2014	Ms [REDACTED] updating Affidavit setting out contact proposal
26 August 2014	[REDACTED]'s updating affidavit setting out contact proposal
24 October 2014	Letter by [REDACTED], Psychologist: <p>Assessment of [REDACTED] making note of no mental health concerns</p>
13 November 2014	Memorandum of Consent for Parenting and Contact with conditions
1 September 2014	Memorandum of Lawyer for the Child confirming children clearly want to have contact with their father.
9 September 2014	Hearing. Oral Judgement of Judge [REDACTED] setting out contact and making below orders
9 September 2014	Discharge of Interim Parenting Order dated 13 February 2014
9 September 2014	Shared Parenting Order made for Ms [REDACTED] to have day to day care and setting out [REDACTED]'s contact
22 October 2014	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
22 October 2014	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

	[REDACTED]
19 November 2014	[REDACTED]
20 June 2015	Trespass Order for [REDACTED] against Ms [REDACTED]
14 July 2015	Partnered Response Referral: Individual counselling for the girls
17 November 2015	Application for Dissolution of Marriage by Ms [REDACTED]
18 November 2015	Separation and Relationship Property Agreement
2 February 2016	Ms [REDACTED] without notice application for protection, property and interim parenting orders and affidavit. Allegations made against [REDACTED] for domestic violence towards Ms [REDACTED] on 24 January and for physical and emotional abuse towards children. Affidavit states the children were removed from [REDACTED]'s care by CYF on 8 February 2014 until the court hearing on 13 February 2014 when matters against her were discharged. Fails to highlight this was not decided by the court, but by consent.
3 February 2016	Minute of Judge [REDACTED] refuses above application. Further Minute directing the application for protection to be on notice.
5 February 2016	CYF case note recommends that children return to their mother's full time care without any supervisory plans put in place for the mother (sic?)
13 February 2016	CYF case note states that children are in mother's care with father having supervised access and a s 132 report has been completed
24 February 2016	[REDACTED] Notices of defence to parenting and protection orders. Application to vary an existing Order. Application for protection order. Supporting Affidavit.
24 February 2016	Memorandum of Lawyer for Children basically explaining the report has not been completed yet. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
3 March 2016	First Memorandum of Lawyer for the Child recommending psychological

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The girls continue to engage with their organisation and receive therapeutic support tailed to their needs, - The parents complete an Incredible Years course in order to continue to develop a range of strategies that will support them to parent safely and positively, - The parents continue to have a visual access roster for the girls to follow, - Travel and change for the girls is minimised, - Ms [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] no longer talk to the girls or to the girls' school, negatively about each other. <p>The report further recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The handover for the access visits is arranged in such a way that neither of the parents meet, - [REDACTED] engage and participates in a therapeutic process to address his experiences in his relationship with Ms [REDACTED].
3 August 2016	<p>Psychologist Report: [REDACTED], Clinical Psychologist.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - [REDACTED] believes father hurts [REDACTED] but has never heard or seen it – has only been told this by [REDACTED]. - Parentline were concerned that [REDACTED] is aligned with her mother in an adult dispute which is not healthy for her. - Parentline considered the father was more open to parenting advice than the mother. - Parentline had the impression the mother interrogates the children after contact which promotes story-telling. - Parentline considered that the mother did not genuinely support the

4 December 2017	Letter to Ministry of Vulnerable Children requesting information: Disclosure of any involvement that Oranga Tamariki has had with the children
7 December 2017	Letter from Ministry of Vulnerable Children disclosing requested information: s 40 PA and withholding certain information under relevant provisions of the PA and OIA.
12 December 2017	[REDACTED]'s notice of response to the without notice application filed on 24 November 2017
14 December 2017	Oranga Tamariki – [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
15 or 18 December 2017	Memorandum of Lawyer for Children This is an exhibit for the without notice application below. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
19 December 2017	Directions Conference at which Judge [REDACTED] declined to extend the Interim Parenting Order and directed that a Social Worker's report should be obtained. As a result the Interim Parenting Order was discharged.
20 December 2017	Without Notice Application made by Ms [REDACTED] (without a lawyer) together with information sheet and Affidavit alleging that the girls have made disclosures to Women's Refuge, Te Oranga Tamariki, Nga Ringa Awhina and Lawyer for Child, as documented in a previous affidavit of 24 November. Affidavit alleges the following behaviour: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Excessive mood swings,- Inappropriate use of alcohol,- Swearing at the children,- Intimidating physical behaviour and assault,- Inappropriate body remarks towards other women in front of the children,- Inappropriate boundaries including massage, back-shaving, lying on

top of [REDACTED],
 And generally behaviours that “have led the children, particularly [REDACTED], feeling unsafe, frightened, and unfortunately suicidal.”

Affidavit states that “given the children want to see their father once a week or fortnight, contact at a supervised centre is the most appropriate for the safety and wellbeing of the children.” [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Exhibits to Application and Affidavit are as follows:

Exhibit C her own affidavit dated 24 November which claims the children made disclosures to herself and Women’s Refuge, and as a result a notification of concern was made by Women’s Refuge to Te Ora Tamaki, and that they were to interview Frankie on 24 November 2017 (the date she filed proceedings). Further at a meeting with Te Ora Tamaki, Frankie disclosed an immediate risk to self-harm.
 See above comments re evidence – Women’s Refuge and CYF

Exhibit D Lawyer for child report that confirms the disclosures. See [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

The exhibit refers to a report dated 15 December 2017 and only annexes the covering page to the report. Does Adrian have a full copy of the exhibit or was this all that was filed

Exhibit E A’s 131 A report that she claims is before the court and highlights significant concerns for the children since 2013. This exhibit merely confirms the concerns that have been raised by people including both parents about both parents

Exhibit F Blames Frankie’s need for psychological evaluation on Adrian

Memorandum of Judge SD Otene granting leave to apply for the reasons that the children and have made disclosures as to the nature of contact with father that raise concern for welfare and best interests.
 Memorandum further states that the application is dealt with on the papers and I am satisfied that the delay that would be caused by making the application on notice would or might entail serious injustice

	<p>indue hardship, or risk to the personal safety of the applicant or child of the applicant's family. (Emphasis added) BASED ON WHA EVIDENCE??</p> <p>Interim Parenting Order is replaced by another interim order or a final order, stating that Ms [REDACTED] has the day to day care of [REDACTED] and that [REDACTED] has contact with the children by phone weekly and supervised contact (either by an approved supervised contact provider or by a person approved by the court).</p> <p>Lawyer for child appointed because the Judge is "satisfied" there are concerns for the safety and/or wellbeing of the children.</p> <p>Case Management Review set for 22 January 2018 to monitor service and any defence filed.</p>
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Appendix F: Letter Written by William

Hi [REDACTED]

As per telephone conversation Friday,

Attached 132 report Dated 31st Jan 2014.

I feel that there has been particular bias toward [REDACTED] regarding the incidents where she has physically and psychologically assaulted me and the children.

I have been physically assaulted on numerous occasions by [REDACTED], several of which I could have lost my life. At least two dozen assaults which resulted in significant physical injury. I understand I have suffered serious psychological abuse also have been referred to a psychologist by my GP.

[REDACTED] has assaulted the children on many occasions also treat them in the most awful manner, many of the assaults to me were when I intervened, and [REDACTED] took it out on me instead of the children. I'm deeply concerned for the wellbeing of the Children whilst in the care of their mother. [REDACTED]'s rages are often spontaneous.

Though [REDACTED] has threatened that if I were to expose her she would use her connections and knowledge of the system to 'Fu*k me over' and wouldn't give up until I were dead. Seems she is fulfilling her promise.

I understand [REDACTED] uses throwing many counter allegations, this is a well-documented technique. [REDACTED] has been trained with the domestic violence team over the last five years. [REDACTED] is been coached by professionals within the Department of corrections as well as her lawyer and parents. [REDACTED] has successfully used this before; she was acquitted of stabbing a previous partner. She has also used this to permanently preclude [REDACTED]'s biological father from seeing them, even submitting false affidavits in my name.

[REDACTED]'s counter allegations don't hold water. Eg. The statement I made with regard to [REDACTED] assaulting me in our bedroom at the beginning of November 13. [REDACTED] put a counter allegation that I had held her up by her neck and sexually assaulted her, this in a quite odd manner. I am simply not physically big enough to of done this, to restrain anyone weighing 90kg by the neck as described would require a great amount of force, [REDACTED] was admitted to HBC two days later, where was the physical evidence? Why did she not mention this until several weeks later in an affidavit?

Highlighted Text

A8) I was the Abused and [REDACTED] the abuser, she had not previously expressed any wish to end the relationship. This is an 'after the event' re-interpretation.

A9) [REDACTED] mental and emotional instability? What exactly are these inappropriate behaviours?

A10) this does not mean this care is sufficient, I don't believe [REDACTED] has received a proper diagnosis.

A12) Again, What 'behaviours and negative contributions'?

A13) ██████ has trained domestic violence courses and coached it in the community. ██████ is the dynamic of family violence. There was no mention to me ever of ██████ ever suffering from 'post natal depression' where is the medical evidence? I distinctly remember ██████ having one of her turns and threatening to kill ██████, she was approximately 5 months old. I 'stepped up' and took her away to child care for her protection.

A14) what happened to the anger management programme ██████ was ordered to do in the original protection order?

A17 ██████ was bed wetting, as many children do. ██████ made ██████ **sleep in the bath without blanket or pillow for more than a month.** I eventually persuaded her to relent; ██████ told me she was advised to do this by social services, who exactly are these Professional support people?

D5 Actually punched in the face whilst I was driving, this with all the children in the car.

D6 Misses out the fact ██████ was actually strangling me at the time.

D7 ██████ has made many accusations of my sexual inappropriate behaviour In front of the children these in sworn affidavits, all of the children deny me ever being inappropriate. E2 ██████ states she has been hit by ██████ and it was scary last incident six months previous, this may of been when ██████ hit her with the vacuum cleaner (again).

E2 The children were interviewed together, unprofessional.

F1 This is an insufficient psychiatric report, ██████ has obviously convinced Ms ██████ that this is a recent Issue.

Where is the report on issues that have affected ██████ from when she was a child? She told me on numerous occasions she was sexually abused.

What about the times she was raped? What about the eating disorder, the gambling problem, the drug abuse and the post natal depression? What about the recent (three years) obsession with sex offenders within her job as a ██████ Where are the medical notes from ██████ that highlight some of these issues?

I have been completely miss quoted by the social worker, This report is not only sexist and bias there are references in there I certainly did not say, and are a downright lie. I never said I was going to top myself I have never had suicidal thoughts. Why would I say I was a judo expert? I have not practiced Judo.

I made a point that I had a very good support from friends and family. I had been to EAP counselling twice and had the support of my GP who viewed the claim of my being suicidal laughable. I also had the support of social worker, police and ██████. None of this has been mentioned, only the contrary.

This ██████ is possibly the most bigoted sexist corrupt and unprofessional person I have had the misfortune to meet.