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Barriers and supports to the access of justice as experienced by Pasifika women impacted by domestic violence

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a pervasive social issue in New Zealand with the majority of victims being women and children. 45-60% of Pasifika women are likely to experience violence in their lifetime. Despite the prevalence of domestic violence in Pasifika communities, Pasifika women have low rates of accessing services available to assist them to navigate themselves and their children to safety. My research is focused on identifying the barriers and supports as experienced by Pasifika women when attempting to access protection from their abusers and external agency support to deal with the impacts of abuse. Some identified barriers to accessing justice include lengthy court processes, lack of systemic knowledge, language difficulties, lack of knowledge about cultural differences and domestic violence by front line staff, religious values regarding marriage and the role of women and finding physical environments to be an alienating environment. Through a qualitative research frame, I have explored the impact that domestic violence has on Pasifika women. Interviews with two key informants have assisted me with identifying barriers and supports from a professional perspective. A case study approach with five Pasifika women has provided detailed accounts of their experiences as service users. Given the paucity of research on Pasifika women's experiences, let alone conducted by a Pasifika woman, my research will contribute new insights with a view towards improving service delivery in the state sector and non-governmental services, ultimately ensuring the victim's safety is paramount without further compromising identity and wellbeing.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Domestic violence has long been identified as a pervasive social issue in New Zealand with the majority of victims being women and children (Fanslow, 2005; Herbert & McKenzie, 2014; Wilson & Webber, 2014). It has been estimated that between 33 and 39% of women in New Zealand have experienced violence in some form in their lifetime (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004; Haldane, 2009; It's Not Ok, n.d.; Womens Refuge, 2016). In 2014, the New Zealand police calculated that they attended a domestic violence incident on average every five and a half minutes (Ministry of Justice, 2015; Statistics New Zealand, 2015). It is important to note that these sources of data are problematic in terms of identifying accurate rates of domestic violence offending because such offences are no longer recorded as a distinct category. With an estimated 80% of domestic violence incidents going unreported, it is important to identify the reasons why the police are not being called when violence occurs.

Violence against women is a complex health and social issue (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004; Haldane, 2009; Magnussen, Shoultz, Hansen, Sapolu, & Samifua, 2008; Parson, Escobar, Merced, & Trautwein, 2016) with serious and all too often fatal consequences for women (Howarth & Robinson, 2016). At an individual level, domestic violence impacts on all aspects of wellbeing: physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual (Fanslow, 2005; Wilson & Webber, 2014).

Beyond the individual victim impact, domestic violence has impacts at the family, community, and societal levels. In 1996, Suzanne Snively (economist) estimated the economic cost of domestic violence to be between $1.2 and $5.8 billion annually. The equivalent today would be approximately $8 billion per annum (Womens Refuge, 2016), the calculated costs pertain to the justice, education, health, and social service provision sectors. Snively's 1996 calculations align with the recent costs to the state: in the 2013/2014 financial year, service provision costs (e.g. support services, therapeutic intervention) directly addressing the impacts of sexual and domestic violence specific service provision were calculated

to be $1.4 billion alone (Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence, 2014).

Over and above the impacts of being in a violent relationship, women often have to deal with other issues such as poverty, addiction and poor health (Howarth & Robinson, 2016). Women in violent relationships can experience economic hardship through struggling to maintain employment, or due to financial abuse which leaves them unable to access the money needed to provide basic necessities for themselves and their children (Womens Refuge, 2016). In addition, the abuse does not always cease after the relationship ends, and often, despite the women's best efforts to escape, the abuse escalates (Howarth & Robinson, 2016). Children add a further complexity to this decision-making process due to the above factors compounding upon her ability to exit the relationship (Womens Refuge, 2016). It is within this context that victims of domestic violence have to decide between the risks of staying in the relationship and the risks of leaving (e.g. harm, abduction, and fear of the removal of children).

Domestic violence does not discriminate by socioeconomic status, ethnicity, culture, or religion. Despite this, Pasifika women are twice as likely to experience violence in their lifetime in comparison to non-Pasifika (e.g. Palagi) women (Johnson, 2014). Notwithstanding the difficulties in obtaining accurate figures, it remains Pasifika women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence.

Domestic Violence in Pasifika Communities in New Zealand

Domestic violence and violent offending is identified as one of the biggest issues faced by Pasifika peoples in New Zealand (Johnson, 2014). In 2013, domestic violence was the leading type of offending by Pasifika offenders, accounting for more than half of all recorded violent offending. According to New Zealand Police data (as cited in Johnson, 2014), the most common charge/recorded offence was Male Assaults Female, and much of the violence was a part of ongoing abuse. Furthermore, despite the prevalence of domestic violence in Pasifika communities, Pasifika women have lower rates of accessing available support services. Typically, women from minority groups face additional challenges to

access legal protection from their abusers (Fanslow, 2005; Koloto & Sharma, 2005; Law Commission, 1997; Parson et al., 2016; Wilson & Webber, 2014; Wurtzburg, 2003) for example, financial pressures, and cultural pressures, posing a serious safety issue for Pasifika women.

Aims of the Present Study

Despite widespread research investigating the prolific issue of domestic violence, little attention has been paid to the influence of culture and minority status on women's experiences of abuse (Kasturirangan, Krishnan, & Riger, 2004). More specifically, there is a dearth of research relating to Pasifika women's experiences of help seeking behaviour: nor are they given the voice to contribute to service development, delivery, and provision (Crichton-Hill, 2001; Fanslow, 2005; Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Koloto & Sharma, 2005; Wurtzburg, 2003). It has been identified that research is needed on how Pasifika women adapt Polynesian concepts and actions to the New Zealand context. That is, how does gender and ethnicity impact access to services and legal protection as promised under the Domestic Violence Act of 1995 and the delivery of culturally competent (and responsive) and safe service provision (Wurtzburg, 2003). In light of these issues, I chose to focus my thesis research on the barriers and supports to the access of justice when leaving abusive intimate relationships.

To address the imbalance of whose voice is heard in relation to the processes involved in navigating one's way to safety, the women's narratives are presented from their perspective in case study form. It was important to me to understand from a service user's perspectives the barriers and supports experienced by Pasifika victims of domestic violence and the associated impacts. Included in the interview process was the opportunity for women to make suggestions on what changes need to/could be made to ensure the systems in place to protect women do just that –protect, not cause further harm.

Outline of the Thesis

The following is a summary of each chapter:

The purpose of the introductory chapter was to briefly describe the context of the issue of domestic violence in New Zealand and present why I have chosen to focus my research in this area.

Chapter 2 provides a summary of historic factors that have contributed to the contemporary context and issues. An overview of previous research findings and literature specific to Pasifika women's experiences of help seeking and social and systemic issues is also presented.

Chapter 3 outlines the methods that I used to conduct my research. In the method chapter I also provide the rationale behind my consultation with Pasifika community networks, selection criteria for the participant groups, and how I gathered the women's stories. Also described in this chapter are the methods I employed to analyse and present the data.

In chapter 4, I present the findings from my interviews with key informant participants. The key informant interviews preceded the interviews with the women. The purpose of presenting the key informant findings first is to present the professional perspective of the systemic barriers and supports Pasifika victims of domestic violence experience.

Chapters 5 through 9 contain the case studies of the women who shared their experiences. The case studies are narratives from the women's perspective which present the women's voices, feelings, and reflections on their experiences navigating themselves and their children to safety.

Chapter 10 presents my cross-case analysis and discussion. I bring together the themes that arose across the case studies and key informant findings.

The final chapter summarises the key findings from my research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to provide the rationale for carrying out this research. I focus on the historic factors which have contributed to attitudes and beliefs about domestic violence in Pasifika communities. The literature review is presented in two parts. In the first part of this review I focus on the impacts of migration, colonisation and patriarchy. Social factors such as culture, gender roles and norms, church/faith/religion, and the role of the family are explored; and factors which can act as barriers to safety from violent relationships are presented. The second part of the literature review is focussed on presenting the systemic response to violence, already identified barriers which prevent or deter Pasifika women from accessing available support services, and the negative impacts of inappropriate service provision on Pasifika women's wellbeing.

Broader Historic Context

To better understand the contemporary attitudes towards domestic violence in Pasifika communities in New Zealand, it is important to examine the history of colonisation/missionary influences on Pasifika cultures; specifically Samoan culture, and the associated imposition of patriarchy. I will explore the influence that culture, patriarchy, and religion has had on gender roles and cultural norms in Pacific cultures. A brief examination of the migration history of Pasifika peoples to New Zealand will be presented identifying the associated impacts of migration on cultural identity, beliefs, and wellbeing. An argument will be presented that the complex interplay of culture, gender, family, and the church/faith/religion influence how Pasifika women make meaning of their experiences of domestic violence and their decision making about their safety and wellbeing.

Disruptions to Fa'asamoa – Creation of a Counter Narrative to Traditional Constructs: Pre-Colonial Fa'asamoa

Fa'asamoa is commonly applied as a label for Samoan culture, or the Samoan way of doing things (Muaiava, 2015; Peteru, 2012). However, this description does not adequately capture the complex and inextricable

interplay of the visible and invisible components of fa'asamoa (Ministry for Women, 2015; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Peteru, 2012; Stewart-Withers, 2011). "The Samoan heart encompasses feelings, attitudes, skills, knowledge and spirituality" (p.29) whilst the Samoan way describes how Samoan people should behave, communicate, perform specific acts, and how one honours commitments and obligations (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000).

Underpinning the social systems, customs, and traditions of fa'asamoa are covenants which are used to protect and maintain peaceful relations within aiga (family) and broader social networks. Va (space) refers to the physical, mental, spiritual, genealogical, and the historical components that occupy relational space (Ministry for Women, 2015; Peteru, 2012; Seiuli, 2013, 2016). Va manifests in different relationship forms, but va tapuia (tapu or sacred relationships) and va fealoaloa'i (social relationships) are the most commonly practiced forms. Va maintains and restores balance and is traditionally passed down through the generation. In its purest form, it should be the ultimate protective factor against violence against women (Ministry for Women, 2015). There are many forms of relationships but the relationship between husband/partner and wife is the focus of this review. Va tapuia facilitates the understanding that self and others, the environment and divinities occupy sacred spaces in relationships that honour each other's existence (Peteru, 2012). Specific to domestic violence/violence against women, violence disrupts le va tapuia (Peteru, 2012). When va tapuia is breached, love and compassion as a buffer from harm is lost. As will be discussed later in this section, the introduction of Christianity and patriarchal hierarchies has impacted not only va tapuia in intimate partner relationships, but also the core feagaiga (covenant) of the brother sister relationship.

According to the brother-sister feagaiga, respect given to the sister by her brother is to be reciprocated by the sister in the form of a blessing (Amituanai-Toloa, 2006). A brother's role is to hold authority and to protect and serve his sister, even with his life, as his sister holds the honour of the family. The sister's role is to maintain morality, as to act immorally would bring shame to the family. The tuagane-tuafafine (brother-sister) covenant represents balance in the relationship, the brother holds the political power

while the sister hold the moral power which allows women a complementary amount of power, mutual support, and respect (Stewart-Withers, 2011). When a man is violent to his wife/partner the violence sets in motion a chain of relational violations. The va tapuia has been trampled on, which has a spiritual impact. As described by Peteru (2012), "the husband's actions disrespect his wife's genealogy and the genealogy of their descendants through their children" (p.8). Despite contemporary claims that domestic violence is part of fa'asamoa, the following quote captures pre-colonial responses to violence:

> *There is nothing in the beliefs and philosophical principles that condones verbal, physical, or emotional acts of violence against members of one's immediate and extended aiga...Violence causes psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical disruption, disorder, and disharmony to the multiple dimensions of wellbeing within the aiga. Every member exists in relationships in va tapuia...Violence and the consequential violations of va tapuia removes perpetrators, victims, and the aiga from the continuum of wellbeing* (Peteru, 2012, p.8).

As is discussed in the quote, pre-colonial relationships and gender constructs have no tolerance for violence against women. The impacts are more widely held than at the individual level.

Arrival of Christianity

Prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries in the Pacific in the 1800s, Samoan people were polytheistic. Primarily, the family conducted worship (Muaiava, 2015) and it was believed that gods were accessible in human form. Oral history tells how "Malietoa Fitisemanu (the 22nd Malietoa) asked Nafanua [war goddess] for a share of Samoa's government. The latter replied that all jurisdictions of power had been appropriated, and he would have to await his share from the heaven (Muaiava, 2015, p.77). The arrival of the London Missionary Society missionaries in 1830, bringing Christianity to the shores of Samoa, was interpreted as fulfilling Nafanua's prophecy. The connection between the arrival of Christianity and Samoan prophecy became key to the organisation and structure of congregationalism in Samoa. Fa'asamoa social structures were used to entrench Christianity firmly into the belief systems of Samoan people.

Fa'asamoa is enforced by the authority of matai (chiefs) and approved by the structure of Samoan society. Parallel to this social structure was the authoritarian and communal nature of Samoan society (Muaiava, 2015). Pasifika cultures are collective, comprised of family networks containing up to several hundred people and led by matai (Muaiava, 2015; Peteru, 2012; Rankine et al., 2015). Because the aiga are bound to their matai it was identified that the conversion of matai to Christianity was crucial if missionaries were to be successful in their mission. The integration of Christianity into fa'asamoa was over a long period of time and was firmly entrenched by the time the western missionaries exited, having created a powerful social hierarchy which placed matai and faife'au (ministers) in powerful and influential positions which remains today in contemporary culture, both in the Pacific Islands and in New Zealand.

The faife'au was not a traditional rank in Samoan social hierarchies. To assist with 'buy in' from Samoan people, faife'au were soon bestowed the same status as matai (Muaiava, 2015, Peteru, 2012). Faife'au were positioned as men of knowledge as they held

> *The "wisdom of the papalagi (Europeans and as one's point of contact with God a position that persists in contemporary Pasifika cultures. Positioning Western knowledge and world views as something to be revered signalled the starting point where fa'asamoa and lotu (church) began to blend. Samoan people have always had an "unequivocal stance for cultural safeguarding* (Muaiava, 2012, p.73).

As the missionaries tried to eradicate traditional Samoan beliefs and roles (especially gender roles), Samoan leaders during this period were content with constructing Christian doctrine around fa'asamoa (Muaiava, 2015).

Western Christian concepts and social systems, such as patriarchy, predominantly privileged the sanctity of marriage over the safety of women and children (Ministry for Women, 2015). This shifted the status of men and women within Samoan culture. In pre-colonial times women held high status and authority within their family and village. An important political role that women performed was to form and maintain alliances with other families and villages (Cribb & Barnett, 1999). Missionaries did not believe that women having power was acceptable (Ministry for Women, 2015) and

set about eroding women's traditional status by appropriating the status of women as feagaiga, bestowing it on the church-appointed faife'au. The reassignment of the brother-sister covenant meant that a sister's status was usurped by faife'au and once a woman married, her status as feagaiga ceased. Marriage thus cancelled the expectation for men to view women as sacred, opening the space for violence to be a viable option within intimate relationships. Divorce was introduced, polygamy was outlawed and the status of women shifted from being on equal footing with men (as sisters) to the biblical role of wives (Cribb & Barnett, 1999). The impacts on gender roles and norms for Samoan women will be explored in the gender section of this chapter.

Linked to the role of faife'au church, and religion is the impact and disruption that migration has had on Samoan culture and the erosion of protective factors for women (Rankine et al., 2015).

The Impacts of Migration and Further Disruption to Fa'asamoa

The migration process has had a significant impact on the wellbeing of Pasifika people in New Zealand. The majority of migration of Pasifika peoples to New Zealand occurred in the 1950s and 1960s (Paterson, Feehan, Butler, Williams, & Tumama Cowley-Malcolm, 2007). Migration to New Zealand was driven by dreams of better employment opportunities, education, and a higher standard of living. The reality of living in New Zealand was far more difficult than anticipated. Pasifika peoples became entrenched in unskilled labour, minimum wage positions: for example, factory work, commercial laundries, and as cleaners. Income levels did not meet the minimum levels required to sustain one's family in New Zealand as well as send remittances to family in one's homeland, fa'alavelave (usually monetary contributions to weddings and funerals etc.), and church donations (Paterson et al., 2007).

Pasifika people remain socioeconomically disadvantaged in comparison to other groups in New Zealand – unemployment rates, labour force participation, and annual median income are lower than those for the total population (Johnson, 2014; Paterson et al., 2007; Tanielu & Johnson, 2014). Pasifika people are more likely to be living in poverty, have

restricted access to higher levels of education, and poorer access to basic amenities (Paterson et al., 2007). All of the aforementioned issues can be identified stressors which contribute to the perpetration of domestic violence.

Beyond financial stressors, the inability to adapt culturally has been identified as a significant risk factor for violence. For some, migration has resulted in the breakdown of some cultural norms that might have been protective against violence. There have been many challenges to negotiate including addiction issues, socioeconomic status, and housing issues (adapting to in single dwellings/overcrowding) which disrupted the traditional support systems of their home communities.

Urbanisation

In traditional Samoan settings, family networks are important escape routes for victims of domestic violence. The family is the accepted group from which to seek shelter and support. In Samoa for example, violence towards women and children was not acceptable (Magnussen et al., 2008; Ministry for Women, 2015; Peteru, 2012). Intervention was easily accessed in the village, in the context of shared responsibility for each other. If the abuse could not be resolved amongst the family unit then it would be escalated to having the village matai involved (Magnussen et al., 2008). If the abuse continued, then the perpetrator would be exiled from the village. In New Zealand, where stigma about domestic violence persists, women are more reluctant to speak out. As a result of living in urban environments in New Zealand, it is easier for abusive partners to disconnect their victims from family support(Cribb & Barnett, 1999; Magnussen et al., 2008). Family members may be geographically spread apart, thus women are isolated in nuclear family units with violent partners (Koloto & Sharma, 2005; Magnussen et al., 2008).

The role of the church in contemporary Samoan culture in New Zealand

There have been significant cultural impacts as the transmission of traditional values and social structures to the New Zealand context has not been without significant modification and concessions (Cribb, 1999). One

example of this is the attempt to transmit the functions of the village, and implement them in New Zealand via the church community. The rationale for the church-village system substitution was to preserve identity and maintain social order (Macpherson, 2004; Magnussen et al., 2008). Church and organised religion play a significant role in the life of Pasifika peoples; your church is your village and the pastor is your guide (Cribb & Barnett, 1999; Crichton-Hill, 2001; Wurtzburg, 2003). The urban church has become the substitute for the village system and the focus of Western Samoan leadership and community (Cribb & Barnett, 1999; Macpherson, 2004).

Pasifika people have had to juggle cultural and financial obligation whilst at the same time faced with new temptations and lifestyles (Ministry for Women, 2015). It has become challenging to maintain traditional practices such as va tapuia, va fealoaloa'i, and feagaiga (Ministry for Women, 2015). The move from homelands to New Zealand has involved a shifting of realities – there has been a "cultural shift from extended families and an ethnic specific society to situations of living as nuclear families in multicultural societies" (Peteru, 2012, p.10). Disconnection and intercultural differences are issues that will be discussed in the case studies and discussion chapters of the thesis.

Malumalu refers to covering or protection and is also a word used for church in the Samoan language. Spirituality plays a crucial protective role for many Pasifika people; and the church plays a fundamental role in maintaining this (Seiuli, 2016). Many women who have been victims of domestic violence are counselled to remain in their marriage/relationship and endure the abuse as that is their role as a wife. Women who do actually leave have experienced significant pressure to reconcile with their abuser as the separation was deemed to have bought shame to the family. This shame is internalised by women as they bear the brunt of the shame (Wurtzburg, 2003).

According to Seiuli, (2016) "many components of fa'asamoa functions in tandem with church life to serve the community" (p.36). Christian beliefs and the wellbeing of the whole is often privileged over individual

ideological belief systems. Flood and Pease (2009) assert that previous research findings have indicated that religious and spiritual involvement can influence individual attitudes about violence towards women, however, there is no evidence that religiosity endorses domestic violence. Although there is little empirical data on the influence that religious groups have on attitudes toward domestic violence, Flood and Pease (2009) discuss evidence of situations where religion is misused to justify domestic violence and perpetuate the vulnerability of women. One such example is Christianity's emphasis on wifely submission and patriarchal gender hierarchies which can encourage pastors to advise women to stay in violent relationships (Flood & Pease, 2009). Marriage vows include supporting one's partner through the good, bad, and worse times, thus effectively locking some women into abusive relationships because their beliefs about marriage are privileged over individual safety (Towns & Adams, 2009). Christian marriage vows are deemed sacred: no matter what, a woman must stay in the relationship. The attitude held by some of 'you've made your bed now lie in it' towards women who disclose domestic violence privileges those vows over the safety of women (Towns & Adams. 2009). It is effectively a no-win situation for women. On the one hand, a woman who stays despite the violence may be perceived as weak and/or stupid for not being strong enough to leave. On the other hand, if she leaves, she is often seen as neglecting her vows. The implication is that she chose him and therefore should stay with him and live with the consequences of her choice (Towns & Adams, 2009).

Within a Pasifika context, faife'au and their wives are pivotal in role modelling and setting expectations such as setting the standards which promote safe and respectful behaviour and relationships (Ministry for Women, 2015). Maintenance of the standards and supports include marital advice and guidance counselling, and meditative prayer. Faife'au have the authority to correct or condone behaviour within relationships (Ministry for Women, 2015). The combination of Christianity and fa'asamoa teachings encourage respectful relationships and harmony within the family (Ministry for Women, 2015). Although there may be religious sanctions against abuse, such sanctions may be undermined by

the belief in the sanctity of marriage and patriarchal views on gender roles (Giles, Cureen, & Adamson, 2005). The perception that domestic violence is an issue which is to be kept quiet or private persists within many Pasifika communities. For many, churches included, it is an uncomfortable issue to acknowledge publicly (Giles et al., 2005).

Having explored the potentially collusive role the church/Christianity plays in attitudes and reactions to domestic violence, it is important to also acknowledge and identify the strengths of the role of the church and spiritual practices. For example, prayers at the opening and closing of sessions or meetings can create and cover the relational space with protection through a spiritual connection with God (Seiuli, 2013). Where there have been emotional, physical, psychological, social, cultural, or familial disconnections in a person's life, spiritual narratives and teachings can play a significant role in reconnecting, healing, and restoring the broken connections. Spirituality and/or faith reduces or eliminates feelings of isolation and exclusion (Seiuli, 2013). The importance of faith and spirituality will be explored in the case study chapters, as the women interviewed draw strength from their faith, although they were sceptical and somewhat critical of formal religion.

The combination of migration and situational stress factors such as communication difficulties, changes in the status of women and children, urbanisation of Pacific peoples, impacts of addiction, and financial stresses have been identified as contributing to the acceptance of violence as a valid response to stress, anger, and frustration. Contributing to this acceptance is the disruption from the traditional narrative that violence is never acceptable (Peteru, 2012).

Identity shifts have occurred because of migration, resulting in emerging new identities. For example, there is a common distinction made between New Zealand-born and Island-born Pasifika people. It is important to understand the new identities and the role of culture.

Identity and Culture

Culture is not rigid. It evolves meaningfully, creating Samoan identity wherever Samoan people are located. The flexibility of culture allows the space to access both traditional and contemporary knowledge which supports people. Identity is grown and replicated within the family (Seiuli, 2013). Thus, when culture is disrupted by migration, and subsequent generations are born and raised in New Zealand, the impact is felt collectively.

For many Pasifika peoples who have been born and/or raised in New Zealand, cultural identity is a re-negotiated process inclusive of multi-ethnic diversity (Anae, 1997). Significant differentiation in the migrant first/second generation socio-cultural experiences and world views is evident in the New Zealand-born Pasifika communities. Identity conflict involves navigating attendant stressors, coping mechanisms and outcomes. The women interviewed in this research have had to navigate intercultural clashes with partners, disconnection from their Samoan identity, experienced financial pressures, addiction, and cope with partners with mental health issues. How they made meaning of this will be explored in the case studies.

Island-born family members often view New Zealand-born people to be too Palagi (European) in their ways: for example, considering them to have little to no participation in Samoan activities and practices and not being fluent in the Samoan language. New Zealand-born Pasifika peoples are nevertheless expected to give their time, services, finances, and participation in fa'alavelave (gifting) despite being viewed as falling short as a Samoan (Anae, 1997). Fa'alavelave will be explored in further detail later in this chapter. The concept of fa'asinomaga explains one's place within a family, village, land, genealogy, and culture. It identifies how one belongs in the Samoan world (Ministry for Women, 2015; Peteru, 2012). Fa'asinomaga often has been disrupted resulting in intercultural clashes between New Zealand-born and Island born-Pasifika peoples.

Specific to domestic violence, being New Zealand-born or Island-born has been identified as a contributing factor which influences attitude and

perceptions of violence against women (Cribb & Barnett, 1999; Flood & Pease, 2009). Younger New Zealand-born women are less likely to accept domestic violence due to exposure to higher education and other influences (Cribb & Barnett, 1999; Flood & Pease, 2009). One such influence is gender roles and norms.

Gender roles and norms

Colonial and missionary contact, as with migration and globalisation, have resulted in both subtle and dramatic changes in what Pasifika peoples now understand to be acceptable gender divisions (Dvorak, Ehmes, Feleti, Viernes, & Teaiwa, 2016). Patriarchal societies reinforce the ideal that men should be afforded more power and status than women. This societal structure may foster environments where violence may flourish. It does not signify that cultures explicitly condone violence against women (Kasturirangan et al., 2004). Pasifika cultures, Samoan culture in particular, are patriarchal in nature with the matai/man as the head of the family. The outward functioning of society depends on its members playing complementary roles, particularly with the division of labour (Dvorak et al., 2016)

Aggression is deemed appropriate in the male domain, while peace-making and nurturance are viewed as appropriate in the female realm. Contact with missionaries, and more recently the impact of globalisation, has brought about subtle and dramatic cultural transformations of what is understood to be customary and acceptable roles, norms, and behaviours for men and women (Dvorak et al., 2016). Idealised representations of masculinity – whether that be at home, church, or in the media – and femininity morph into persuasive messages about what a real man or woman should be. Men are supposed to be providers, strong, and confident, while women are expected to be submissive, demure, and remain in the domestic sphere (Dvorak et al., 2016). Gendered roles such as those described mirror what is expected in patriarchal societies and religious communities. Within a domestic violence context, men who have inflated levels of male entitlement subscribe to such gender norms and use them to rationalise the abuse against women, and to explain their expectations of their wives/partners. Physical violence (along with other

forms of abuse) is used to “maintain their socially structured right to control women” (Cribb & Barnett, 1999, p.51).

Women have also been marginalised in many church communities despite significant financial input (Cribb & Barnett, 1999). The church leadership functions as the roles of matai and fono (village council), due to the patriarchal/biblical status of women in such communities, portraying them solely as wives and mothers’, women have been excluded from political power within the church. The power structures of the church further entrench the belief that women should be subordinate, and strengthen the claims of male elders to traditional authority (Cribb & Barnett, 1999)

Cultural financial obligations

Misunderstandings over fa’asamoa values and practices can be considered a risk factor for relationship stress. Fa’alavelave is the reciprocal tradition of gifting for significant events such as weddings, funerals, and birthdays. The amount bestowed (predominantly in monetary form in contemporary society) is determined by the head of the family – in a family unit that would be the husband. The amount deemed acceptable has increased and can result in excessive demands being placed on families, especially from Samoan-based family to New Zealand-based Samoan families. There can be competition over the amount given which exacerbated the burden on families and the contributed to marital disharmony (Ministry for Women, 2015).

Socio-cultural barriers to help-seeking by Pasifika women

It is difficult to definitively identify the exact point when a woman is ready to leave an abusive relationship – this differs according to the woman (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010). Many women find it difficult to accurately assess the severity of violence and the danger levels of the abuse in their relationship. Essentially, the reasons for leaving are commonly that women cannot take any more, has been badly injured, were afraid that they would be killed by their partner, and concern about the safety of their children (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010). However, less is known about the reasons why women, specifically Pasifika women, have low rates of help seeking from support sources outside of one’s family. The barriers that

Pasifika women impacted by domestic violence experience are multi layered. Barriers which prevent women from seeking or accessing support services are socio-culturally influenced. The other barriers to access are systemic and experienced whilst navigating their way to safety. First, I will explore the sociocultural barriers, starting with fear and shame.

Victims' fear and shame

In cases of ongoing violence, victims live in fear of their partners. This may include fear about what will happen to their partner if the authorities (police, courts, Child, Youth, and Family service (CYFs) etc.) are alerted to the abuse. Essentially, they are protective of their partners and do not want them to be viewed in a negative light by family and friends. Victims prioritise the protection of their partners over their own safety and wellbeing. Previous research findings have indicated that another reason women are reluctant to seek help, or keep their abuse hidden, is that they do not want to risk male relatives potentially getting into legal trouble if they decide to seek retribution for what has been done to their female relative (Magnussen et al., 2008).

Along with being afraid of the consequences for their partners, women fear being blamed for the violence and having their children removed from their care by CYFs. Children are increasingly being named as direct victims of domestic violence within the context of legislation. For example, in Section 3 (3) of the Domestic Violence Act 1995 it states that a person is held accountable for the following scenarios

> *(3) Without limiting subsection (2) (c) of this section, a person psychologically abuses a child if that person –*
>
> *(a) Causes or allows a child to see or hear the physical, sexual, or psychological abuse of a person with whom the child has a domestic relationship; or*
>
> *(b) Puts the child, or allows the child to be put, at real risk of seeing or hearing the abuse occurring* (as cited in Powell & Murray, 2008, p.460).

The Child Young Person and their Families Act 1989 does not explicitly name domestic violence as potentially a cause of harm to child(ren), nor does it define domestic violence as grounds for protection (Powell &

Murray, 2008). For over 10 years, the Domestic Violence Act 1995 Section 3 (3) is applied when determining whether action is taken to protect children. The protection of children, particularly when domestic violence is occurring in the home, is not under dispute, but it has become problematic that despite it not being explicit in the law regarding domestic violence, the mother is usually the one who is punished if she remains with the perpetrator (Powell & Murray, 2008), by and large leaving the perpetrator unaccountable for his actions.

Women generally bear the brunt of shame for the breakdown of a violent relationship (Wurtzburg, 2003). To avoid the shame, stigma and ultimately the involvement of police and CYFs, many women choose to deal with the abuse in isolation so as not to involve anybody outside of the home (Koloto & Sharma, 2005). Most women are ashamed that they are victims of domestic violence. They fear being blamed by others as being the cause of the problem; for example, by arguing/talking too much or infidelity (perceived or actual). Some women do not want people to know about the abuse as they may perceive that others believe they have allowed themselves to be controlled by their partners (Magnussen et al., 2008). Due to the close-knit nature of Pasifika communities, and not wanting to be the cause of shame, help seeking behaviours are inhibited (Fanslow, Robinson, Crengle, & Perese, 2010). Many issues arose in the interviews with the women who participated in the thesis research relating to fear and shame; these issues will be identified and discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Lack of knowledge

Previous research has identified that there are several issues which present as barriers to accessing justice: there is generally a lack of understanding about legislation (the Domestic Violence Act 1995), court systems, court orders, or how to access legal aid (Wilson & Webber, 2014). Financial deprivation/a lack of financial resources is a significant barrier for victims of domestic violence. Victims often have little to no access to financial resources and often do not know whether they qualify for legal aid (if at all) or other entitlements, or how to access Work and Income financial assistance (Wilson & Webber, 2014).

Additionally, victims often lack knowledge of their legal rights: for example the process required to obtain a protection order (Koloto & Sharma, 2005; Magnussen et al., 2008). Further to this, victims are frequently unaware that as part of having a protection order in place they can access social and counselling type programmes that address the impacts of domestic violence. As will be discussed in the case studies later in this thesis, other issues arise relating to systemic lack of knowledge during women's experiences with the courts systems. Overall, fewer women, including Pasifika women, are applying for protection orders and the enforcement of these orders is not as effective as it could be (Wilson & Webber, 2014).

Financial control by abusive partners

In traditional Samoan village systems, matai have the power to allocate resources and communal village land to family members. Matai act as overseers of labour, and appropriate income which is deemed a communal asset in village life in the home islands. Financial abuse is a common tactic used to control women in violent relationships. The role of the man as head of the family, and therefore in control of the money, is influenced by patriarchal belief systems as well as culturally held views on whose property money is within intimate relationships. Finances and the impact financial stress played in relationships will be explored in the case studies.

In New Zealand, women are increasingly the primary income earner. As was discussed in the impacts of migration section, because of the employment reforms in the 1990s, the nature of the employment available is predominantly casual, part time jobs are less secure, and the majority are working for minimum wage incomes (Krishnan, Schoeffel, & Warren, 1994). Despite women often being the main income earners in Pasifika households in New Zealand, men are still identified as the head of the family (Krishnan et al., 1994). Because their partners have control of the family finances, women's autonomy and access to family resources are restricted. Such control of finances has been identified by victims of domestic violence as a barrier to leaving an abusive relationship (Wilson & Webber, 2014). Magnussen and colleagues (2008) assert that acculturation and resource theory is applicable to financial control of

Pasifika women in New Zealand. Acculturation and resource theory describe the process of women's acculturation to a new environment has meant traditional gender roles held as cultural norms have had to be reversed in order to provide for the family, thus deviating from traditional gendered divisions of labour (Magnussen et al., 2008). Lower economic dependence on men is not an accurate indicator that women have financial autonomy (Cribb & Barnett, 1999).

Language barriers/lack of communication/alienating environments

Women who have limited English language skills, are often reliant on the extended family to act as translators (Wurtzburg, 2003). Having to ask others to communicate on your behalf can contribute to victims reluctance to seek help, as they may be embarrassed about having to disclose traumatic experiences to the family member acting as translator (Parson et al., 2016; Wurtzburg, 2003). Having a lack of frontline workers who can speak to a victim in their first language at agencies, courts, police departments and hospitals leaves migrant women feeling sad and frustrated as they do not fully understand processes and their rights (Parson et al., 2016).

The court environment can be alienating, especially for women with limited English. For both New Zealand-born and Island-born women, being surrounded by formal settings, terminology, behaviour, and protocols which are completely alien can result in feelings of intimidation. Issues of messages and information getting lost in translation in combination with a reluctance to challenge those in positions of authority can result in victims agreeing to outcomes that compromise their safety and well-being and that of their children (Wurtzburg, 2003).

A further challenge is that often members of the various Pacific Islands nations are lumped into one homogeneous group, thus ignoring the differences in language and cultural practices of each Island nation. Barriers such as language and communication difficulties contribute to the prevention of extraction of women and children from a home environment impacted by domestic violence (Wurtzburg, 2003). Intergenerational

communication problems also contribute to a lack of service uptake- children are often required to act as interpreters for their parents. Alternatively, there is a belief amongst some police officers that people fake not being able to speak English (Grant & Rowe, 2011).

Reluctance to access services

To avoid shame, many victims choose to deal with the violence/abuse in isolation. It is deemed appropriate to keep such issues private and to remain within the family (if the family finds out). Some women even see domestic violence as culturally appropriate. Women from ethnic minorities tend not to access support services, largely because there is a significant shortage of culturally specific service provision which reflects another cultural barrier (Parson et al., 2016). Lack of knowledge of what is available or distrust is another reason identified in previous research (Cribb & Barnett, 1999).

Role of the extended family

The role the extended family may contribute to a reluctance to seek outside help. Koloto and Sharma (2005) discussed scenarios where the victim is living with her partner's family. In these situations, women may accept their mother in law's counsel on how to cope with the violence; this communication to the victim may suggest that the violence is to be accepted. Such a scenario presents the barrier that women need to overcome, they need to examine beliefs about abuse and identify the mechanics operating in the family dynamic which supports abuse (Koloto & Sharma, 2005). Family dynamics begin a systemic cultural response to violence – if the family wants the relationship to be preserved then the parents will counsel the couple (instead of a neutral outsider) (Koloto & Sharma, 2005). In some cases, mothers in law and sisters in law contribute to the abuse, even cutting the victims hair in retribution to demean her. Others will return the woman to her family for her own protection (Magnussen et al., 2008).

Logistics of accessing support services.

The logistics of accessing services is an issue. Location of services is problematic – women may need to travel significant distances to access

interventions. Not having access to the finances needed to engage the services of a lawyer or for counselling is another barrier. Having to pay all the living costs on her own after leaving an abusive relationship, especially if no child support is being received, limits the autonomy to seek help for herself (Parson et al., 2016).

Minority group women may be forced to submit to male dominance through the use of conditioned power within a culturally reinforced environment (Crichton-Hill, 2001). Cribb and Barnett's (1999) quote illustrated the duality in the struggle that Pasifika women face navigating domestic violence in New Zealand.

> *Patriarchal cultures, rather than being assimilated and modified by the dominant host culture may be reconstituted in such a way as to preserve traditional cultural forms. The Samoan experience suggests that traditional forms may be perpetuated because of economic necessity, given that the household income often supports relatives within the extended family, but also because of cultural imperatives to provide financial support to transplanted immigrant institutions such as the church… to assert one's autonomy may be perceived by some women as disturbing social codes and stepping outside the bounds of the cultural definition of femininity. Therefore such cultural stereotypes may result in the reluctance by women to question traditional values* (Cribb & Barnett, 1999, p.61).

Pasifika women are often navigating two cultures, with a strong expectation to transplant traditional cultural beliefs and practices into a new setting. Such difficulties contribute to another identified barrier to accessing justice and the reluctance to access services.

Women's attitudes to violence can influence the degree of self-blame for the abuse they receive from their partners. Attitudes towards violence may also influence the likelihood of reporting their experiences to the police or other support services (Fanslow et al., 2010). Victims' attitudes to violence and gender roles do not have a bearing on how they experience physical violence, however, normative attitudes are likely to influence help seeking behaviour (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010).

Legal Response to Domestic Violence: The Role of the State

Having just examined the historic and contemporary cultural context, including socio-cultural barriers to safety for Pasifika women, the next section of the literature review will discuss state policy responses to domestic violence and the barriers associated with both policy and intervention.

The Domestic Violence Act 1995

The Domestic Violence Act was passed in 1995 and came into force on July 1st 1996. The Act replaced the Domestic Protection Act (Wurtzburg, 2003), it came about due to growing public awareness of the need for legal reform and the influence of an international trend in the 1980s and 1990s (Fanslow, 2005; Wurtzburg, 2003). The new law had clearly stated objectives to "reduce and prevent violence in domestic violence relationships by a) recognising that violence, in all its forms, is unacceptable behaviour and b) ensuring that where domestic violence occurs, there is effective legal protection for its victims" (Section 5[1] as cited in Wurtzburg, 2003, p.425). To achieve these goals the Act has five avenues available. They are as follows:

> *Empowering the court to make certain orders to protect victims of domestic violence;*
>
> *Ensuring that access to the court is speedy, inexpensive, and simple as is consistent with justice;*
>
> *Providing appropriate programmes for persons who are victims of domestic violence;*
>
> *Requiring respondents and associated respondents to attend programmes that have the primary objective of stopping or preventing domestic violence; and*
>
> *Providing more effective sanctions and enforcement in the event that a protection order is breached* (Section 5[2] as cited in Wurtzburg, 2003, p.426).

Despite the underpinning values and intention, the implementation of the Act has been problematic, especially so for women and members of minority communities who experience additional challenges to surmount in order to access legal protection (Cribb & Barnett, 1999; Magnussen et al.,

2008; Parson et al., 2016; Wurtzburg, 2003). There is a lack of knowledge about the Domestic Violence Act and the provisions available to help victims to protect themselves– this is an issue for both victims and professionals. How are Pasifika women who are victims of violence meant to understand the Act if some service providers themselves are struggling? The Domestic Violence Act was meant to provide accessible services to women without requiring legal representation – the reality is the process is very complicated (Wurtzburg, 2003).

A provision under this Act is that programmes are available for all adult and child victims of domestic violence. The aim of each programme is to empower victims to help them to cope with the effects of the abuse by educating victims about the dynamics of domestic violence and in particular its impact; especially in relation to the intergenerational transmission of violence. Protected persons should also be made aware of the programmes available that the respondent (perpetrator) may be ordered to attend and complete (Fanslow, 2005).

In 2012, the New Zealand Government released *The Green Paper for Vulnerable Children* which identified that early intervention in domestic violence situations was important for the wellbeing of children who have been exposed to violence (as cited in Fanslow, 2005). The justice sector response to domestic violence has been well developed over the past 20 years in New Zealand (Fanslow, 2005). There has been an increased level of social response resultant from the legislation, and intensive regional/local activities. Despite such advances, concerns remain about the implementation of these measures: for example decreases in the numbers of protection order applications, and increased numbers of on notice protection orders being issued (Fanslow, 2005).

State intervention implementation issues

While the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act are generally well-regarded, previous research findings have indicated that it is the implementation of the law that is problematic – that is the response from police, court officials, and lawyers particularly (Robertson et al., 2007). Concerns have been raised that the police, lawyers, and judges have a

strong tendency to react to incidents that involve physical violence and ignore or minimise emotional, psychological, and mental abuse by minimising the latter forms of abuse as simply a couple fighting or arguing (Wurtzburg, 2003). The serving of protection orders has been identified as problematic for the safety of victims. The order is not in force until the respondent has been served (if the order has been put on notice). As respondents are entitled to challenge the order for up to three months post the issue of the order, the order is temporary until this period is over (Wurtzburg, 2003).

Police response to domestic violence and victims

New Zealand police have a poor record in terms of how they respond to domestic violence, both procedurally and how officers themselves react to domestic violence incidents (Grant & Rowe, 2011; Wilson & Webber, 2014). Findings from Wilson and Weber's (2014) enquiry into domestic violence in New Zealand indicated that people are still getting mixed responses from police. Victims felt that the police were unfair and lacked empathy when responding to people who needed their help. Of concern was the sentiment that there has been a lack of action when protection orders are breached as well as a lack of training regarding the dynamics of abuse (Wilson & Webber, 2014). Issues with the police arose in the narratives of the women who took part in this thesis project. These issues will be explored in the case studies and discussion section of the thesis.

Lack of training for frontline staff about dynamics and impact of domestic violence

Research has found that appropriate training for frontline practitioners (social workers and health practitioners especially) is required in order there to be an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence, the contributing social and cultural factors, and to ensure that families experiencing domestic violence are responded to in the best way possible (Bent-Goodley, 2005; Pacific Advisory Group, 2009; Postmus & Merritt, 2010; Te Puni Kokiri, 2008). Training front line workers to acknowledge their individual perspectives, as well as how best to respond in various situations would also go some way towards improving the practice of state services in this area. In identifying gaps in the knowledge base of state

services, the needs of domestic violence victims and their children will also be better met. Currently, the needs of families in this situation are being met by domestic violence services in the community and non-governmental sector (Wilson & Webber, 2014).

Women who do seek help from agencies have identified that the lack of training of frontline staff, for example counsellors, police, court officials, lawyers and judges, described the services they received as unhelpful. The nature of questions asked by such professionals often made victims feel worse (Koloto & Sharma, 2005; Law Commission, 1997). The line of questioning has been identified as irrelevant and re-traumatising -being asked to repeatedly tell one's story can be exhausting. Victims perceived frontline personnel to be "ignorant, arrogant, controlling, bureaucratic, and prejudiced" they were also described as "paternalistic, treating those seeking help like naughty children" (Wilson & Webber, 2014, p.70). Staff attitudes will be discussed further in the case studies and the discussion chapters of this thesis. This further contributes to feelings of shame or stigma as victims often are required to tell their story and share intimate details of their trauma in public settings (Wilson & Webber, 2014).

Lack of culturally competent staff and service provision

It has been recognised for many years that the social services and health sectors have been slow to diversify service provision to ensure cultural awareness and cultural competency is a critical component of service delivery (Haldane, 2009). Cross-cultural competence is a much less developed knowledge area especially for non-Pasifika practitioners, front line staff, lawyers, and judges (Crichton-Hill, 2001; Law Commission, 1997). Very little training is given to, for example, court staff on how to interact with Pasifika peoples (Koloto & Sharma, 2005). The training that is given is generally focussed on the Samoan perspective (Wurtzburg, 2003) thus ignoring the heterogeneity of Pacific Island cultures.

It is a practitioner's responsibility to learn about their client's culture as well as effective interventions for domestic violence victims as one impacts the other. "Culture is a problem-solving device and is a technical tool that facilitates the helping process and should not be viewed as an impediment

to it" (Crichton-Hill, 2001, p.209). Culture is highly complex and ever changing. "How one defines domestic violence, its causes and impacts, will determine how one intervenes…there are difficulties in defining domestic violence from a cross-cultural perspective. As a result, determining interventions cross-culturally are problematic" (Crichton-Hill, 2001, p.210). For Samoan women, the ideal would be Samoan women providing culturally competent, knowledgeable and skilled domestic violence service provision. The reality is that the numbers of Samoan women working in the field is limited (Crichton-Hill, 2001). This skill shortage is not only limited to the Samoan work force it is applicable to the Pasifika work force across the board and across sectors. Although domestic violence services have increased and slowly diversified, and attention to culture is occurring at the grassroots level and as part of national governmental policy/strategy (Haldane, 2009) there is still a long way to go.

Ethnicity and culture are both critical to the development of community response systems and interventions for victims of domestic violence. In a Samoan context, the strengths of a Samoan woman and Samoan culture must underpin any response to a Samoan domestic violence victim. This can only be done with an understanding of Samoan cultural structures and values (Crichton-Hill, 2001).

Supports

The role of shifts in culture toward domestic violence and subsequent interventions has been revealed to be problematic and created numerous barriers to women freeing themselves from violent relationships. Cultural knowledge and responsiveness can also create supports for Pasifika women and their navigation to safety. To enable culture to be a problem-solving tool, dual competency and understanding of both cultural issues and domestic violence is needed (Pihama et al., 2003; Gondolf, 2005 as cited in Fanslow, 2005).

In the remainder of this chapter, based on the literature reviewed, the aspects of service provision that has been proven to be effective and recommended improvements will be explored.

Empathetic client-professional relationships

Wilson and Weber's (2014) research investigating systemic responses to victims of domestic violence identified that frontline staff who were non-judgemental, empathetic, and compassionate were responded to positively. Professionals who believed the victims story, were responsive, and took risks for the victim resulted in women feeling empowered rather than harmed by justice system processes. Ultimately when victims felt listened to or heard by professional they no longer felt silenced. Efficiency of response times, particularly when women are in a crisis state was deemed crucial to contributing to a sense of safety for victims.

Fostering positive relationships

To effectively work with Pasifika peoples, understanding the significance of interpersonal relationships, particularly family and social relationships, is crucial (Peteru, 2012; Rankine et al., 2015). According to Seiuli's (2013) Uputaua Therapeutic Approach, professionals who collaborate with Pasifika clients, to facilitate and acknowledge their role as helpers who have been invited into their client's va tapuia or sacred relational space; it would be detrimental to the client's wellbeing to soli (trample) on the trust and dignity of those seeking support and protection from harm Approaching client-professional relationships with respect and humility can help to reduce the feelings of vulnerability and being exposed when in a therapeutic or intervention context. Honouring and upholding Pasifika peoples' dignity and validating their experiences are important processes in healing journeys (Seiuli, 2013).

Interagency collaboration

Frequently, victims of violence are engaged with multiple agencies at any given time, therefore information sharing and interagency collaboration at multiple levels made navigating a complex system easier and less emotionally exhausting, for example not having to repeat their stories and feeling like everyone "was singing off the same sheet" (Wilson & Weber, p.56).

Collaboration extended beyond interagency effort; it was also identified that to have effective interventions for Pasifika women in particular,

engagement and collaboration between service providers and Pasifika communities is crucial. For example, consultation with Pasifika communities and understanding how existing traditional welfare functions serve as a protective factor would improve efficacy in mainstream service provision and start to redress cultural competence issues (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010; Postmus & Merritt, 2010). Samoan community based preventive initiatives headed by community leaders, driven by the community in consultation with local service providers have propelled and sustained positive change for their community (Ministry for Women, 2015).

Breaking the code of silence surrounding domestic violence

In order to break the silencing of victims of domestic violence, professionals need to understand that violence against women in Pasifika communities is deemed a private issue and not to be openly discussed in order to avoid shame and stigma to the family (Ministry for Women, 2015). Understanding that Pasifika peoples prefer to talk about healing broken relationships rather than using language such as victims and blame is important (Rankine et al., 2015). Harnessing the power of language can help service providers to make inroads into opening discussion about domestic violence. When open discussions and communication strategies have been employed in church communities and other community settings with people of all ages and status given equal opportunity to speak and be heard, stronger relationships have been fostered, and silences have been broken about issues facing their community wellbeing (Ministry for Women, 2015).

Ideological differences about the role of the individual

Domestic violence interventions are typically developed from an individualistic ideological base with the aim for women to develop an autonomous and empowered self (Rankine et al., 2015). Expecting women to rely on the police and social services and focusing on independence without the involvement of the church and other social networks has been problematic. Instead, training church leaders, involving family and generating discussion about domestic violence has generally been a more useful approach (Rankine et al., 2015). Working collaboratively, approaching issues from a relational and community

oriented base, then victims will not feel isolated or individuated by the help-seeking process (Seiuli, 2013).

Summary

In this chapter, the historic and contemporary influences on Pasifika, specifically Samoan culture has been presented. Also discussed were the identified social and systemic barriers as identified by previous research findings. I have provided a critical review of the interplay that culture has on gender, perceptions of domestic violence, and the code of silence that surrounds domestic violence in Pasifika communities. To understand the systemic context that victims of violence navigate, the state policy and legal responses to domestic violence was presented, as well as factors such as lack of cultural competency, training and knowledge about the dynamics of domestic violence, specifically as nuanced by culture. Finally practices and approaches which are supportive of Pasifika domestic violence victims were examined. The literature review aided me to investigate how culture, context and systems intersect when working with Pasifika women impacted by domestic violence.

Chapter 3: Method

Research findings over the past 20 years indicate the vulnerability of minority group women regardless of nationality or religion (Simon-Kumar, Kurian, Young-Silcock, & Narasimhan, 2017), however there has been little research focusing on Pasifika women's experiences whilst navigating their way to safety from domestic violence. In New Zealand, Pasifika women who are victims of domestic violence have low rates of help seeking or engagement with available support services to enable them to navigate their way to safety, it is for this reason that I chose to focus my thesis research on the barriers and supports to the access of justice when leaving abusive intimate relationships. In this chapter I will describe the research process that I undertook to identify the reasons why Pasifika women are reluctant to engage with support services available as well as the identify what supported them on their journey to safety.

Rationale for the Methodology

The ways in which Pasifika women affected by domestic violence in New Zealand navigate safety in the context of conflicting socio-cultural values is best voiced by the women themselves. Qualitative research methods such as the use of semi structured interviews, thematic analysis, and the use of case studies to present the participants' narratives has enabled me to give Pasifika women this voice. The semi-structured interview approach enabled me to build relationships with the participants to ensure that they felt safe with me and the research process. In addition, I began my field work with consultations with key informants. This was helpful in identifying key issues and refining my approach to interviewing women who had experienced domestic violence.

The exploration of domestic violence is of a sensitive nature: many Pasifika people view domestic violence to be a private issue, to be dealt with within the family, and an issue which they feel shame about – both at an individual and family level. Because of such concerns it was important that the participants were assured that their information and identity was kept confidential and secure.

My thesis research was comprised of two parts. Stage one: the preliminary stage, included community consultation, a literature review and obtaining ethical approval to proceed to the second stage of the research. Stage two of my research involved recruitment and interviewing of the two participant groups, thematic analysis, and the writing of the thesis document. In the following sections of this chapter I will outline the processes that I undertook during the thesis research process.

Community Consultation

Mainstream research does not always acknowledge the intersection of gender with other social identities such as ethnicity, culture, and socio economic status (Simon-Kumar et al., 2017; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Because of the diversity within Pasifika communities in New Zealand, women have diverse socioeconomic, class, religious, and intracultural backgrounds, their voices and differences in experience needs to be heard from their perspective. My research focus has been to identify the roles and impact that culture, religion, socioeconomic status and systemic issues had on their meaning making of domestic violence and decision making when navigating their way to safety.

Due to the paucity of research from a Pasifika perspective (including by Pasifika for Pasifika) my research focus needed to investigate the most urgent issues. To enable me to do this I consulted Pasifika practitioners. As the practitioners I consulted with work both at the frontline and policy development level, they have experience at multiple systemic levels which enabled them to identify problematic areas which Pasifika women have to navigate. It was also important to consult with practitioners who are of Pasifika descent because they have insider insight into the socio-cultural barriers experienced by Pasifika people. Consultation with the cultural community that is being researched is important as it provides the platform to identify the issues in order of priority and areas which would have the most practical application as experienced by the Pasifika community; thus aiding me in the formulation of my research question.

With the help of family connections, I identified four people, regarded as leaders in the domestic violence field who work with Pasifika women and

children impacted by domestic violence. I contacted them by email and two agreed to participate. One was a woman of Tongan descent with a long record in leadership of non-governmental organisations that support and empower Pasifika people. The other was a family lawyer of Samoan descent who is also involved with public policy development. I met with each woman once to discuss what they perceive to be the most urgent issues requiring further academic investigation. Notes were taken during the meetings with their permission. The information and recommendations made by both women assisted me, in consultation with my supervisor, to develop my research question and thesis research aim.

The aim of my thesis has been to identify the barriers and supports experienced by Pasifika women impacted by domestic violence when accessing support services while navigating their way to safety. Utilising the knowledge of Pasifika practitioners who are developing and implement policies, and work within the systems that Pasifika women have to navigate, my thesis captures both a professional perspective and a victim/service user's perspective with the intention of giving the "silenced" a voice.

Recruiting Participants

Following the preliminary consultation and having gained ethical approval (see below), I began recruiting two groups of participants: key informants who could provide an overview of the issues facing Pasifika women experiencing domestic violence, and women for inclusion in case studies.

Key informants: I recruited key informants through my personal networks. They were selected for their professional expertise in the domestic violence sector, working with Pasifika women, and their ability to provide insights into the social and systemic barriers facing Pasifika women experiencing domestic violence. I also identified the need for the key informants to be of Pasifika descent, as they have insider cultural knowledge about issues that Pasifika people experience in mainstream New Zealand culture and systems. An advantage of interviewing key informants is the depth of information that can be obtained in a relatively short period of time (Marshall, 1996). I interviewed the key informants

before recruiting and interviewing the women participants as this order enabled me to develop the questions and/or focus of my interview schedule (Appendix 1) with the women.

Pasifika women

A group of six to eight participants was identified as the optimal number required for this study. The participants needed to identify with one or more of the following Pacific Islands nations: Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu, and Fiji, and had been impacted by domestic violence. The aforementioned Pacific Islands nations were selected as the Pasifika demographics in New Zealand are comprised of people from these nations (or identify with these nations). The women who were interviewed, did not need to have accessed support services (statutory or community/non-governmental). My preliminary findings indicated that it was equally important to interview women who had chosen not to access such support services available to them as domestic violence victims.

Recruitment of the women participants was via convenience sampling (I collaborated with a graphic designer to design a recruitment poster/flier to distribute) (Appendix 2). I posted the flier online on social media (Facebook) and within 24 hours, I had received enquiries from three Pasifika women who were interested in participating in the research. Two further potential participants were referred to me by a family member working in the sector.

As a researcher seeking to interview Pasifika women, I considered it important that, before formalising their consent to participate, that the va, or relational space between myself and the women first needed to be established (Amituanai-Toloa, 2006). In order to start the process of establishing va between the women interested in participating and myself I followed up their initial enquiry with a phone call. The purpose of the phone call was to tell the participants about myself, explain to them their rights as research participants, and to answer any questions they may have had about the research project itself. Building a safe relational space

is a fundamental principle in Samoan culture, as relationships are reciprocal and sacred (Amituanai-Toloa, 2006). I felt it important to, at the very least, speak to the women over the phone so that they knew whom I was and had spoken to me, the researcher, prior to the formal interview. It was during these phone calls that the women agreed to take part in my research, gave their verbal consent and we arranged times for me to meet them for the face-to-face interview.

Informed Consent

Each participant was required to sign a consent form giving their written consent that they are voluntarily participating in the research process. Prior to their signing, I worked through each of their rights as listed on the consent form (Appendix 3). I also obtained consent from each participant to record the interview with an MP3 recorder. I provided the women with an information sheet (Appendix 4) which outlined their rights as research participants and the purpose of the research project. After each participant had signed the consent form, I proceeded with the interview.

Collecting Narratives: Semi Structured Interviewing.

The use of semi-structured face-to-face interviews enabled me to build on the researcher-participant relationship further (Carpiano, 2009). It was crucial to build a safe and mutually respectful relationship with the women participating to ensure that they trusted me enough to share highly sensitive information, experiences and feelings with me. Due to the highly sensitive nature of the interview content (Carpiano, 2009) it was important that the interviews were conducted in an environment that the women felt safe and comfortable in. The women decided where they would like to meet with me; four of the interviews were conducted in the women's homes. The fifth interview took place at the participant's mother's workplace. Her mother also took part in the interview as it a) made the woman feel comfortable, and b) her mother too had been assaulted by her daughter's partner on one occasion.

On arrival to meet each of the women, I presented them with some food to share. Pasifika people pride themselves in their hospitality (Muaiava,

2015), thus it was appropriate for me to contribute in some way to the sharing of hospitality.

In order to make the interview process transparent I showed each participant the interview schedule (Appendix 4), and advised the women that our interview would be conversational in nature. Conversational style interviews are effective as it entails disempowering myself as the researcher by sharing openly, honestly, and compassionately in a mutual dialogue with the participants (Amituanai-Toloa, 2006). I shared my background, identity, and reasons for wanting to conduct this research as means of establishing common ground with the women. In doing this, the researcher-participant dynamic shifts to that of being the “knower and the known” (Amituanai-Toloa, 2006, p209-210) as opposed to me positioning myself as the expert which potentially creates a tension in the power dynamic.

I structured the interviews by starting with asking for general information and gradually working towards more focussed content as they became more comfortable with the process. I opened the interviews with the offer of starting with a prayer to bless the proceedings, rather than a formal/structured interview approach, I conducted the research conversationally. This approach proved to suit the women, and they were generous with what they shared with me and spoke freely about their experiences, providing deep and rich narratives. The interview times varied between 90 minutes and 180 minutes.

I concluded each interview by thanking them for their time and presented them with a $20 Warehouse voucher as a koha (token of appreciation) to acknowledge their participation. I reminded them that I would send them a copy of their transcript. The inclusion of enabling them to review their contributions allowed them the opportunity to correct any inaccuracies or remove portions of the interview that they felt uncomfortable about. None of the participants amended any of their interview transcripts.

Data Recording and Transcription

The interviews were recorded on an MP3 audio recorder. Recording the interviews was necessary to enable me to focus solely on conducting the interview and fully interacting with the interview participant without the distraction (for both of us) of note taking. The ability to observe non-verbal nuances such as body language, facial expressions, assisted me in identifying distress. Two of the women started to cry when recalling certain events and experiences, because my focus was on engaging with each participant without distraction, I was able to stop the conversation and sit with them until they were ready to continue.

Data collection methods such as audio recordings of interviews ensured that I was able to transcribe the recording verbatim. An added advantage of the transcription process was the ability to deeply engage with the stories that were told and became very familiar with the narratives, which assisted in the thematic analysis and writing process.

Thematic Analysis

By grouping the findings from the key informants and Pasifika women's interviews into themes, the flexibility of this process enabled me to carry out in-depth analysis of the data. Identifying recurring themes, experiences, and barriers in the data from both a professional and victim's perspective was useful in the development of the structure of the key informant's chapter, the case studies and the cross case analysis in the discussion chapter. Thematic analysis was a useful tool which provided rich and detailed accounts of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as is necessary when dealing with the complex issue of domestic violence. By engaging with the findings to identify common barriers and supports for Pasifika women, I was able to "theorise the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts provided" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.85) through the interview process.

The thematic analysis process occurred in six phases

1) I familiarised myself with the data- transcribed the interviews. This was necessary to become more knowledgeable about the raw data.

2) Generating initial codes – I identified the many themes and grouped the data according to relevant experiences and features across the findings.
3) Searching for themes – this involved sorting the initial codes into themes and collating the raw data according to the relevant criteria. I created a table each for barriers, supports, and participant recommendations.
4) Reviewing the themes – there needed to be a refinement of the themes. I subsequently grouped the data into significant themes with sub sets of minor themes that linked to it.
5) Defining and refining the themes - I developed matrices for the women participants and the key informants, as well as one combining the two to identify the commonalities in the data.
6) Producing the report – Having worked through the previous phases, I presented the findings in case study form. This involved selecting the relevant data/themes/extracts that contributed to answering the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The key informants' findings were written into a separate chapter to preface the case studies and link to the discussion chapter of the thesis. The women's narratives are presented in case study form.

Case Studies

The ways Pasifika women, affected by domestic violence in New Zealand, navigate safety in the context of conflicting socio-cultural values and systems are best voiced by the women themselves. The use of case studies enabled me to explore in depth the questions of how and why and obtain the answers from the experts themselves – the service users (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case studies allowed the scope to explore the context within which barriers to the access of justice present themselves. Such methods allowed me to explore the interplay of culture, faith, belief systems about domestic violence, and how those interacted with systemic barriers in the justice and social services systems.

A copy of their case study was sent by email to each of the Pasifika women interviewed for them to review. By doing this, they were able to

make any changes and adhered to their rights to have input as to how their narratives are presented in the final thesis document.

Ethical Issues

Prior to embarking on the interview component of this research, ethical approval was required from the University of Waikato School of Psychology Research and Ethics Committee.

The most important ethical issue to manage was the privacy and safety of the women participants. I ensured that they were protected by using pseudonyms, by omitting or disguising details which might identify them, and by having each woman check her case study. Similar steps were taken in relation to the key informants. I also ensured that recordings and interview transcripts were stored securely. As discussed earlier, when some of the women became tearful, I stopped the interview and sat with them until they felt able to continue, I also offered them the option to stop the interview if they so wished. As each interview reached conclusion, I sat and talked with the women to establish how they felt about the process and if there was anything they needed further support with. Each interview concluded with the women in a calm mood and expressed how pleased they were about the research being done.

The following chapters set out my findings. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the key informant interviews. I have chosen this order as they help to contextualise the case studies which appear in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4: Key Informants

In this chapter I will present the perspectives of the key informants and what they perceive to be the social and systemic barriers and supports to accessing justice for Pasifika women impacted by domestic violence. Sina's (family lawyer) legal and public policy development experience provided rich insight into the justice systems and practices. Kiana's (counsellor) experience working with domestic violence victims in women's refuges, as a drug and alcohol addictions counsellor, and various other programme/policy development capacities provided deeper insight from a practitioner's perspective.

Social Barriers

In this section of the chapter, I will describe the way attitudes to domestic violence in Pasifika communities and the associated impacts of victim blaming and collusive discourses influence decision making processes for Pasifika women. As previously discussed in the introduction chapter, Pasifika peoples are very religious; thus it was important to explore the role of Christianity, the church, and faith from Sina and Kiana's perspective. Finally in this section, the role that family plays in Pasifika people's lives is explored to identify how this may influence help seeking behaviour of Pasifika women.

Attitudes

In some sectors of Pasifika communities, attitudes towards domestic violence have been identified as problematic by both Kiana and Sina. When women disclose their experience of domestic violence, frequently, the responsibility and blame is placed on them. Alternatively, some people may be critical of women who choose to remain in violent relationships (AhSiu-Maliko, 2016; Flood & Pease, 2009; Magnussen et al., 2008). Critical responses to victims actions and responses to abuse is problematic in that is focusses on women's perceived inaction against abuse, rather than on holding the perpetrator to account for the harm they have caused. Placing the blame on the victim rather than acknowledging that there is a problem within a particular group of men contributes to the

ongoing lack of acknowledgement that domestic violence is a serious problem in Pasifika communities (Rankine et al., 2015). Sina identified that it is important that victims and perpetrators need support to both address the trauma as well as stopping further offending.

Silence, collusive messages condoning some men's abusive actions; and victim blaming all indicate that violence against women is something to be tolerated. For some people, it may even be considered a normal component of intimate partner relationships. Sina considered the normalisation of violence as a factor contributing to victims' decisions to stay in abusive relationships. Sina asserted that many victims were unable to recognise they were being abused. Throughout her career, Sina has prepared affidavits for many women who interpreted domestic violence as "just the way it is" in relationships. Because of the lasting impacts of emotional and psychological abuse, reinforced by victim blaming discourse, women make meaning of their experiences by normalising domestic violence and remaining silent about their abuse.

Further to the normalisation of violence against women, Kiana asserted that there is an element of denial, a belief that domestic violence happens to other people: that it does not happen to Pasifika people. One of the impacts of the code of silence that shrouds domestic violence in Pasifika communities is that oppression can become internalised;

> *We internalise oppression which is so huge, but that's all part of the violence. That's all part of the bigger violence that we face on a daily basis here [in New Zealand]. It shreds us of our own identity, cultural identity* (Kiana).

Kiana's quote also highlights the intersection of issues that Pasifika people face. The social barriers within Pasifika communities in New Zealand are symptomatic of macro level barriers and discrimination faced by Pasifika people.

Christianity/church/formal religion

Something that often helps women cope with the impact of violence and move forward is their spiritual and religious values;

> *For some women it's about actually understanding who they are. For some other women it would be God. Other women it would be something completely different, like a parent. I think if you're rebuilding people's self-esteem it will go a long way to getting the cultural and attitudinal change that we're wanting, to raise a better society* (Sina).

Sina's identification of God and/or family, predominantly both for Pasifika women, as a source of strength for victims is an important point. Family, faith, and church communities are significant relationships and influences in Pasifika peoples' lives (AhSiu-Maliko, 2016), working holistically with these support networks is necessary when working with Pasifika women impacted by domestic violence. That said, it is important to explore and acknowledge that said support networks can also be barriers to women navigating themselves to safety, these factors will now be discussed in the following sections.

Feeling blamed, ashamed, and colluded against by the very people Pasifika people are encouraged to turn to for support, in this case the church and church leaders, was identified as a barrier to women speaking out about the abuse they are suffering at the hands of their partners/husbands. Kiana sees such attitudes towards victims as being rooted in Christianity and the associated patriarchal attitudes and social structures historically imposed on Pasifika people. She spoke of the influence of such hierarchies on many of the families she has worked with over her career;

> *When Christianity came, and colonisation, women are here cooking and men do and have the power...What happens is men get [emasculated] by colonisation. They can't find a job, they can't get work, so they can't be the provider and the women are going out doing whatever they need to, cleaning or whatever they need to do to bring in the money. So I can see how our men's mana or self-worth gets diminished and the only way that he can assert his power [is] physically. I see that dynamic happening and it's not an excuse for them* (Kiana).

Kiana's reflection on the impact of colonisation, religion, and patriarchy aligns with the experiences of Teuila (participant) and Tom. Teuila had a better job and education than her husband creating tension in their

relationship. Further details about the gender based tensions in Teuila and Tom's relationship will be discussed in Teuila's case study.

Sina and Kiana identified silence on domestic violence in church communities as a barrier to obtaining help and support. Sina spoke of congregation members, herself included, turning a blind eye to women who attend church with visible injuries consistent with domestic violence.

> *I think even in our churches, in every setting, social setting, there is no consistency how it's preached. Or how the awareness is raised I should say…There is something to say about social theology, it's just not practiced, it's not preached. So, you get up there and the minister will preach love and Jesus and be good and treat others like how you want to be treated and that's as far as it goes. (Sina)*

The above quote aligns with Kiana's critique of the messages that women receive from faith-based communities - that faith and "God will make it okay" for them. She believes that our communities contribute to women remaining silent about abuse and not asking for help. Sina recalled that she herself had once "turned a blind eye" when she saw a woman at church who had a black eye. If she had seen the woman in her professional capacity, Sina explained that she would have worked hard to get justice for the woman, instead she remained silent as in that church environment it was more appropriate to ignore what the black eye represented. Sina's struggle to reconcile the differences in response to domestic violence dependent on the context aligns with Kiana's comments on social theology: what is preached does not necessarily get enacted.

Women who are victimised in the home often internalise the abuse and oppression from their partner, only to be treated similarly by those who we believe are meant to help us, in this case, the church leaders and community. Kiana and Sina both assert that cultural and religious attitudinal and behavioural change is necessary as it is "just not good enough to keep tolerating violence" (Kiana).

Family

The role of family in Pasifika people's lives is significant – whether it be in a positive or negative way. Family is expected to be the first and, according to Kiana, only call for support. Of primary importance is keeping the family unit together. Kiana has observed the pressures women faced from their family, an expectation that it was the victim's responsibility to keep the family together (Stewart-Withers, 2011). Having such responsibility placed on victims can be confusing and disempowering. Should they try to assert themselves in order to be safe from abuse, they are reminded of their place as a woman by someone (whether that is a partner, a family member, or someone from church). Essentially the power and control dynamics of domestic violence extended to other family relationships, as described below by Kiana:

> *We still have it hidden, mothers in law colluding...what I saw in that experience, was that access was hard for the women because the family wanted them, whether they were victims or not, [they] wanted them to stay in the community or the village if you like...so there was a really deluded idea of whanau.*

As we will see later, four of the five women interviewed had a strong commitment to preserving their nuclear family unit, often to the detriment of their own wellbeing. This way of thinking aligns with Kiana's reference to deluded ideas of whanau. Sina, however, was of the opinion that family have an important role to play in supporting victims. In her experience, the women who were successful in navigating their way to safety were the ones who had "an anchor in their lives": friends and/or family who worked alongside women and helped them to find a way out.

From a professional perspective, Sina posited that understanding the role of family is necessary to effectively work with Pasifika women. According to Sina, the skills of Pasifika people are not well supported in mainstream service provision. She has observed Pasifika practitioners who are highly efficient at finding extended family to ensure that children impacted by domestic violence are placed with and remain in the extended family network. Once identified, extended family members quickly come forward as they feel shame and embarrassment that the children are in the social

welfare system. Unfortunately, once a family placement is found, family caregivers are not well supported and unprepared for the complex behavioural issues of the children impacted by domestic violence (Sina). Too often, in Sina's opinion, social workers are so focussed on the physical environment children are placed in that they do not pay near enough attention to the emotional, cultural, and psychological support that is needed. If a holistic approach is taken, then Sina is of the opinion that "we have a chance at saving the next generation".

Systemic Barriers

While much of my conversations with Kiana and Sina were about family and community factors, both had a lot to say about macro-level factors that acted as barriers to Pasifika women seeking help in relation to domestic violence.

Policy and practice

Kiana and Sina were both of the opinion that at a policy and systemic level, there were significant issues which have resulted in a disconnection between policy intention and service provision. Throughout Kiana's career, she has observed how domestic violence victims are treated by the justice system. She is of the opinion that "we don't have a justice system, we have a legal system." Here Kiana is referring to the problematic practices and attitudes of frontline personnel such as police officers. She has witnessed many times over the years attending officers overtly blaming victims for their partner's abuse. Aligning with Sina's reflections on such a disconnection, Kiana asserted that "you can have as many laws in place as possible" these won't be effective "if you don't work with the women's emotional state". Kiana is referring to taking a judgmental stance with women in crisis, judgement and blame can leave women feeling responsible for the domestic violence and can contribute to feelings of powerlessness over their safety and wellbeing. As we will see in the case studies, all five women interviewed for the thesis research had negative experiences with the police.

At a policy level, Sina's experience working in the public policy sector has left her feeling that the environment is one of arrogance and disconnection from peoples' needs. Domestic violence victims are viewed from a deficit lens. Policy makers have a helicopter view looking down from the top thus influencing how policy is developed and subsequently implemented. Sina is of the opinion that the policies are in place; however, practitioners do not necessarily implement them as intended.

Logistical barriers

One of the primary challenges identified by Sina and Kiana were practical barriers to accessing support services such as finances. Funding for service providers is limited, particularly for specialised Pasifika services. According to Sina, Pacific-specific funding is less than 1% of the total national funding for domestic violence intervention. Mainstream service providers submit tenders for the Pasifika specific national funding allocations which further limits availability of specialised Pasifika services, leaving minimal options for Pasifika women to access support which is culturally responsive to their needs.

Sina was concerned about the limited access for Pasifika families to Pasifika agencies. She posited the question, "if this budget can only deal with 50 out of 5000 families, where are the other 4500 [families] going?" Because of limited funding, specialised domestic violence intervention services have to prioritise resources, with priority given to families at the crisis end of the domestic violence spectrum. Families identified as 'at risk', and preventative work is ranked as lower priority. As a consequence of the allocation of money and focus on those with the highest needs first, there is also not enough funding to provide any ongoing support for victims and their families after crisis situations have been addressed. As will be evident in the case studies, women's dissatisfaction with lengthy delays and feeling unsupported can partially be explained by agencies not having enough time and money to meet the complex needs that domestic violence victims present with.

As demonstrated in the case studies, the complexity of issues facing women seeking help from agencies can place strain on already limited

resources. Sina felt that client needs are not met by service providers because of such complexity. Women just want to be happy and safe; they want the arguing and the fighting to stop. However, due to their presentation, families are labelled as dysfunctional, and with high needs. Ultimately this indicates there will be a high cost to the agency/system in terms of staff training, resource allocation, ongoing support, transportation, advocacy, and many other considerations. Sina has seen some victims blamed for services not achieving outcomes for families; consequentially some professionals pathologise clients and view them from a deficit focus.

Fear

As discussed in the literature review findings, fear has been identified as a significant barrier to disclosing experiences of abuse, to leaving violent relationships, and to seeking help from sources outside of women's family networks. Sina and Kiana shared the opinion that women are fearful of bearing the blame for the violence in their home and of losing custody of their children as a result. This too is evident in the case studies: four of the five women interviewed raised the fear of losing their children if CYFs was to become involved in their lives.

According to Sina, women prioritise their needs differently to the professionals working with them, an example discussed was decision making about housing. Victims see this as urgent as they do not want to leave their abusive partner and home, and have nowhere to go for themselves and their children. One of the fears of leaving without having accommodation to go to is that if they take their children and are homeless then they will have their children taken from them. In contrast, when there is service involvement, case workers prioritise women obtaining a protection order over securing accommodation, and the pressure put on some women leaves them feeling loss of autonomy over decision making processes and ultimately what happens to them. The fear of having their children taken from them overlaps with inappropriate service provision and is one explanation of factors which influence why low numbers of Pasifika women apply for/obtain protection orders. Both Sina and Kiana spoke of how this fear is used to pressure women into obtaining protection orders.

Sina has known of women to be threatened by CYFs social workers that they will remove the children if the woman does not leave her abusive partner and/or apply for a protection order. Such pressure does not take into account other barriers which makes it difficult to obtain a protection order. For instance, Sina presented the three most common scenarios she has observed working with Pasifika women over her career.

In the first scenario, Pasifika women are reluctant to engage or apply for a protection order because they are ashamed about the abuse. In the second scenario, women do submit an application but do not follow through due to pressure from partners and family to discontinue proceedings. In the third scenario, women do not have the financial resources to pay for a lawyer but do not qualify for legal aid. Such women are unlikely to initiate action in the Family Court. Sina reflected on the way pressure from professionals can leave "a searing, lasting impression" on women who are already in a vulnerable state. She described how some professionals say:

> *We just think you gotta do this; you gotta do that to get your kids [back]. You've got to do your parenting [programme] to get your kids back. Or they're so caught in their own emotional fracas, they're traumatised...or this is all so new, the violence is off the Richter scale for them emotionally...All you need is for the man to come back when they're feeling really vulnerable, acting really nice, lovey dovey and they want to give him another chance. They don't actually want him to leave they just want him to change.* (Sina)

Sina's quote illustrates the discrepancy between what many women want and the approach that support service workers take. Such a discrepancy will be explored in the case studies and how it can increase fear levels. Not only are the women afraid of their partners; they have the added fear of what will happen to them if they do not comply with agency goals. The responsibility is also placed on the women to make changes to prevent the abuse, seemingly without the expectation that perpetrators of domestic violence need to work on addressing their issues, including parenting. For women, initiating or maintaining change is a daunting process in itself. Unfortunately the help seeking process itself presents further challenges and barriers to safety and freedom from fear.

Silo effect on service provision

In Sina and Kiana's experience, service providers operating in silos impacts at both professional and service user levels. Here, the silo effect refers to the tendency for agencies to work in isolation from one another. The silo effect has been recognised as problematic, particularly for service users, forcing them to deal with multiple agencies, sometimes with conflicting agencies (Herbert & McKenzie, 2014). Various attempts have been made to address the problem of organisations working in isolation such as the Family Violence Inter-agency Response System and Children's Teams (Payne & Robertson, 2015), however, Sina is of the opinion that systemic responses are not yet matching the rhetoric. In her view, there are still many agencies working in isolation and families who are engaged at "varying levels with multiple agencies can often slip through the cracks". As will become evident in the following chapters, the lack of interagency cohesion negatively impacts victims, with the women becoming exhausted from having to repeat their stories each time they encountered a new worker. Additionally, Sina could see how the cost "clocks up" and puts further financial and logistical strain on already limited resources as women interact with multiple agencies.

Ineffective client-professional relationships

Sina perceives that due to the nature of service provision in the justice and social services sector it is "luck of the draw" (Sina) which case worker/social worker a woman is assigned. Sina has witnessed complex cases being given to junior social workers who are "ill equipped" to adequately support vulnerable and traumatised victims in crisis. Sina was particularly concerned by newly graduated social workers being assigned to complex high needs cases. Sina has worked on legal cases where inexperienced social workers are in her opinion, making poor decisions for their clients. As an example, she mentioned social workers who have an uncritical assumption that Pasifika people only want support from other Pasifika people/providers. Whilst the need to have Pasifika services for Pasifika people has long been advocated, Sina asserted that making such an assumption (without establishing what a client wants or needs) can

lead to further problems, and potentially disengagement with supports. According to Sina:

> *If you assume that Pacific [people] always want Pacific [providers] you're in big trouble. Big trouble! What I find is most older Pacific [people] will go to Pacific because of the language factor. And the cultural nuances. But a lot of the younger New Zealand born, they just want to go straight to whoever. Because they don't see culture the way the Island born would. I mean that respectfully.*

Sina's position on the importance of establishing what a client wants and needs aligns with the intracultural differences between Island born and New Zealand born Pasifika people. Beyond intracultural differences is the interconnected nature of Pasifika communities in New Zealand. There is a high likelihood that client and professional will be linked via church and family networks. As evidenced in one of the case studies, Pasifika women may not want to go to the Pasifika Women's Refuge safe house for example because of family connections to the staff.

Lack of Pasifika specific service provision and workforce and cultural competency issues

On the other hand, culture-specific services are also needed, but as Kiana identified, there are only two Pasifika safe houses in the Auckland region, and none in the Waikato region. Thus Pasifika women are often placed in mainstream refuge safe houses. In Kiana's experience, when women are in crisis typically they want to see faces and engage with people who reflect one's identity. Because of limited availability/space/access to a Pasifika refuge, the opportunity to engage with someone from one's own cultural group is significantly diminished.

A shortage of Pasifika practitioners, from diverse Island backgrounds, was also identified by Kiana as an issue. She believes that in order to provide safe and appropriate services for Pasifika women, Pasifika workers need to be willing to "sit there and say no, it's not okay, even if your mother says you have to go back, it's not okay until he stops hitting you." In this statement, Kiana is highlighting how practitioners who have an understanding of cultural values and ideas can work both as clinicians and

indigenous people. Being Pasifika people themselves, they are aware of the expectations surrounding women's roles, gender norms, and feeling the obligation to keep the family together regardless of abuse. Because of this insight they are able to contradict in a safe way the collusive messages about domestic violence. The issue of Pasifika practitioners reinforcing collusive messages will be discussed in the case studies.

Kiana is of the opinion that over and above the pressing need for a bigger Pasifika work force, professional interventions need to be complimented by Pasifika men and church leaders playing an active role in intervening and challenging the beliefs which support and condone domestic violence. As discussed in the literature review, silence and adhering to patriarchal values are identified as contributing factors to domestic violence being upheld as a viable option for conflict resolution. There is a historical context to this issue – racism, patriarchy, and religion.

> *Looking at the roots and the crux of how it's [domestic violence] upheld through churches and religion...through the men and upheld by patriarchy and then we went from there to racism...They are the central oppressions – racism is parallel. We can't get rid of one without getting rid of the other.* (Kiana)

Kiana is of the view that many Samoan men are great orators in the public domain but because of the stigma of domestic violence and the associated shame for the family they fail to speak out and "communicate about the heart". Domestic violence is deemed a private issue to be swept under the carpet by many Pasifika people, including the women participants. Issues pertaining to the private domain will be discussed in more detail in the case study chapters. Abusive men are thus not held accountable for the actions, nor are they seemingly expected to engage in activities which will address and change their behaviour.

Lack of knowledge and specialised training in domestic violence dynamics

Sina discussed the impacts on victims of frontline personnel, particularly lawyers, not knowing enough about domestic violence. Such lack of knowledge can mean nuances are missed, and/or in some cases, victims

are disbelieved or their experiences are minimised. Of further complexity, lack of knowledge intersects with issues pertaining to cultural competence as cultural and religious contexts and factors are not well understood. Sina stressed the importance of cultural responsiveness, especially as the cultural diversity of the New Zealand population continues to grow. Sina described one of her experiences as an example of responding to cultural needs. A Muslim woman engaged Sina to represent her, but after hearing the woman's story Sina decided to refer the woman to a Muslim colleague as she felt that she could not adequately represent the woman herself due to her lack of knowledge about Muslim practices and beliefs. Sina's practice is not common in the legal sector. According to Sina, critical self-awareness and practice is superseded by the "dog-eat-dog" nature of funding and payment for lawyers. Because of this, in her opinion many lawyers take as many clients as they can get, irrespective of their ability to provide a culturally appropriate service.

Sina was particularly critical of lawyers' limited knowledge of what services and supports are available. As a result, victims feel unsupported and are left in crisis. Women are often left with very few options available to them, and struggle to make decisions in the best interest of themselves and their children.

Summary

After community consultation I came to realise that key informant interviews would be an effective strategy to gain some insight into the key challenges facing Pasifika women who experience domestic violence. The two key informants, one a lawyer (Sina) the other a counsellor (Kiana), provided rich insight into the justice system practices and its impacts.

This chapter has described cultural influences on Pasifika people's attitudes toward domestic violence; the role of Christianity, faith, and the church in Pasifika peoples' lives, and the role that extended family networks play in the lives of Pasifika women impacted by domestic violence.

The systemic barriers Sina and Kiana have observed throughout their careers included disconnection between policy intention and the implementation of policy, logistics and finances, language, and fear. Particular cultural barriers to effective service provision such as the lack of Pasifika specific services provision and workforce, and cultural competency/responsiveness are explored from the professional perspectives of Sina and Kiana. Systemic challenges faced by Pasifika women from a professional perspective included the impact of organisations operating in silos and ineffective client-professional relationships will be presented. The aforementioned issues which will be discussed in this chapter to provide the context of some of the challenges Pasifika women experience when help seeking, and from a professional perspective, why some women are reluctant to access service provision and supports external from their family and/or social supports.

Chapter 5: Bella

Bella is a 49-year-old woman who identifies as a New Zealand-born Samoan Palagi. She is a mother of three and has two grandchildren. In this case study, Bella's experiences of childhood abuse and her abusive marriage to Sam is told from her perspective. Bella reflects on how she made meaning of the decades of abuse she endured and the impact on her and her children. Finally, Bella's journey to safety and healing will be presented.

Upbringing

Bella's parents, Fia and George, migrated from Samoa and settled in a small North Island town where Bella and her siblings were raised. This was in the 1950s, a period which Bella described as the "white is right era". Here, Bella is referring to the way migrants were pressured to assimilate into the dominant Eurocentric culture of New Zealand. Bella reported that Fia had a "terrible" relationship with her parents and because of this Fia and George chose to live far away from their extended family, including grandparents. In fact, Bella believes her parents did all they could to keep their children from any Samoan family or community; her parents were "anti-church, anti-Samoan, anti-anything." The family's total assimilation into New Zealand culture and disconnection from any family relationships meant total isolation relationally and culturally for Bella - she did not know that she was Samoan, or even what Samoan was. Upon reflection, as adults, Bella and her siblings felt that their parents deliberately isolated them in order to keep historic events such as infidelity (discussed later in this case) in the past. Later in the case study, the importance Bella places on her family relationships, culture, and the healing she achieved from cultural reconnection to her Samoan culture will be explored.

Childhood abuse and silence

Bella was raised in an abusive home enduring emotional and physical abuse at the hands of both parents. Bella spoke of her childhood as characterised by silence, which has continued to impact her in adult life. In

the following quote, Bella recollected how she and her siblings responded daily to George's arrival home from work:

> *It was silence. We lived in fear, sort of. You kind of get used to that fear. And you're just silent. And you can just tell when the atmosphere in the street changes. You can hear the work bus. Okay five minutes and he [Dad] will be around the corner. Shut down completely.*

At 4.15pm when they would hear the bus arrive down the street, Bella and her four siblings knew it was time to stop making any noise as it would anger him if they did. She described her father George as "large in stature and a man who said little", George was either silent or arguing with Fia and was physically abusive to his children. According to Bella, when George and Fia would argue, Fia would lock herself in the bedroom and George would beat Bella instead of her mother. The beatings took place over a 10 year period, often leaving Bella's face bruised.

Fia was also physically and emotionally abusive to Bella. On three or four occasions Fia was "extremely" violent, which Bella interpreted as "bottled up anger." Bella grew up with "distorted, crazy, and unhealthy" messages about men and life. Bella also attributed Fia's then undiagnosed schizophrenia as potentially contributing to her abuse of Bella. Further reinforcing Bella's learnt behaviour to be silent when George was home, Fia would tell Bella that a woman is to remain silent about what happened at home, in order to keep up appearances:

> *She built a lot of our life under the carpet. That if you sweep it under that it will look nice and it will stay there and keep the secrets. I can decide what acceptable behaviour is, and what isn't.*

Fia's lesson to Bella that private issues are to remain private, regardless of the harm being caused, is consistent with the messages that the other women interviewed learnt. The theme of silence will be further analysed and discussed in the discussion chapter.

Bella discussed the impact of the abuse on her and her siblings:

> *We've all got this thing where we shut down at a certain time or the atmosphere changes for us. Kind of get on edge because we are shutting down. We try not to because we are not kids anymore, but it just kind of is there.*

The need to be silent, particularly in the face of trauma, has had the strongest impact on Bella. Not only did she learn to keep quiet to avoid trouble, on two occasions as an adult Bella has physically lost her voice: in each case, she literally could not talk for a year. Essentially, her trauma manifested itself in physical illness and an inability to speak.

The long term impact of the abuse on her siblings varied. According to Bella, the oldest of the five got the worst beatings, however, as an adult he is the most disciplined of the five. Two of her siblings left the family home and home town at the earliest opportunity and remain overseas. Bella's younger brother has committed multiple crimes throughout adolescence and into adulthood. He has a "respectable job", working with vulnerable people, yet is the one who has grown into an abusive adult. He has also spent time in prison on different occasions. The actions of this brother, align not only with research findings about abused children growing to be abusive adults (Robins, 2010) but also Bella's concerns about her own children, this issue will be discussed in the discussion chapter. The youngest of the five is the only one who remains in their home town. Bella feels it is because of her upbringing that she has a "bad relationship" with her mother and rarely sees her parents. Bella stays away as much as she can from Fia and George in order to minimise the "toxic" effect she feels her parents have on her.

Bella and Sam's relationship

When Bella was 15 years old she met Sam, who is of Samoan, Tongan and African descent. They met through sports. Sam was a good-looking athlete who was quiet, in hindsight, Bella feels that Sam was just like her father, but she did not recognise that at the time. Sam also provided the opportunity to escape her abusive home life. For the first two years of their relationship, Sam was a kind boyfriend who would visit her at home, but they did not tell Fia and George that Sam was her boyfriend: they believed it was a platonic friendship. When George discovered the true nature of

the relationship he delivered an ultimatum – she had to choose her family or Sam. She chose Sam, and in the middle of the night, Bella climbed out of her bedroom window and never went back.

Bella moved in with Sam and his family, and they married shortly after. A timeline of the significant events that Bella shared in her interview is included at the end of this case study (see Figure 1). Sam came from a close, loving family which Bella responded positively to: she had never experienced such an environment and she became emotionally attached to his family. There was always noise in the house, big family dinners, family activities, and close relationships. It was in this family environment that Bella grew to understand and value the importance of relationships. To Bella, her mother-in-law, Lupe was the tough but fair matriarch and her father in law, Afa, was a gentle man who was slow to anger. They represented everything her family was not – loving, caring, kind, lived a fa'asamoa lifestyle and attended the local Catholic Church. It took Bella a long time to get used to not having to be hyper-vigilant about everything she did. She spoke of an occasion where she broke a cup and panicked because she thought they would beat her. Instead of beating her they reassured her it was fine, it was only a cup and not to worry. She felt like she needed a "translator" to explain to her what a loving environment looked like, which included such interactions.

Despite her perceived acceptance by Sam's family, Bella's relationships with his family were dysfunctional. Although Sam's family loved Bella like she had never experienced before, and had taught her another way of being, there were contradictions within the family dynamic. Bella described Sam as the "golden child" in his family and he had always been perceived by his family as having a gentle nature. However, after they were married the onset of prolonged domestic violence began thus contradicting his gentle reputation.

When Sam was violent to Bella she would turn to his older sisters for help. Sam's family seemingly condoned his abusive behaviour by blaming Bella for his violence. The family would tell her that Sam had never been violent until he met her. Bella was told by Sam's sisters and Lupe that she had to

learn to accept Sam's abuse. Bella interpreted such statements to mean that it was her fault that Sam was beating her. The messages coming from Sam's family reinforced earlier messages from her own family that violence was normal and felt that she was at fault. The messages conveyed to Bella about Sam's violence indicated there too was a culture of domestic violence in Sam's family. This was reinforced by her mother-in-law's response to her own daughter, Mary, being beaten. Lupe would be called to intervene when Mary was assaulted by her husband, Jack. Lupe would go to Mary's home, according to Bella, and calm Jack down, and leave- until the next time Jack assaulted Mary. Like Bella's family, Sam's too believed that family issues were to be kept "hidden under the carpet" which reinforced for Bella that silence about abuse was the only way to address domestic violence. Sam's family's reactions to domestic violence were collusive in nature as they blamed Bella without holding Sam to account. Bella was expected to forgive and accept that this was how life would be in her marriage with Sam. An expectation that victims of violence will forgive their abusers and suffer abuse in silence is a theme which emerged with the other women interviewed. This theme will be analysed further in the discussion chapter.

Making meaning and coping with the domestic violence

Bella experienced 22 years of physical, verbal, and emotional abuse throughout her marriage to Sam. He would regularly pull out knives or ropes and threaten to harm Bella or himself if she talked about leaving. She lived in constant fear of what would happen next. The violence was worse when Sam consumed alcohol.

Calling the police was not an option for Bella as the local police officer was a long-term friend of Sam's from when they were in the armed forces together. However, the police were called on two or three occasions when members of the public rang them about violent incidents between Bella and Sam. Bella described one such occasion when Sam held her in a headlock and threatening her with a screwdriver whilst sitting in the car outside of church. With oxygen deprivation impacting her ability to breathe, think, and speak, Bella's interaction with the attending police officer did not go well;

> *The guy [police officer] goes, he was all compassion, he goes "do you want to press charges?" It was the first thing he said. I go "what?" Then he got frustrated with me: 'oh well if you don't want help and you don't want this to stop', then he slammed the car door and that was it.*

Bella explained that her interaction with the police officer occurred before she could catch her breath- he interpreted her lack of response as indicative of not wanting help. Bella recommends that the police, particularly Pasifika male officers, need training to improve how they respond to victims of domestic violence. She believes that police need to be trained to not side with the perpetrator and to remember that it is their role to "get between" a victim and their assailant. They should not leave a situation where the conflict is unresolved leaving a victim vulnerable to further harm.

The violence escalated over the years until it became "unbearably violent" and had a cumulative effect on her. Bella and Sam have three children, Liam, Edward and Rebecca, who were also victims of Sam's abuse. The impact of domestic violence on the children will be presented later in this case. Bella described her feelings about the domestic violence in the following quote:

> *I was numb. I'm either numb or dead and that worried me. It really worried me. Somewhere inside all my creative whatever had gone and I was just someone that could function in a job. I had nothing left for my kids. I had nothing left for me. I suddenly had nothing and couldn't see a way out.*

Bella described being depressed and having suicidal ideation. She could not figure out why she wanted to die. There were a number of barriers for Bella which prevented her from imagining a way out, other than death.

Family relationships

Her emotional attachment to Sam's family created a barrier to her leaving the marriage. Bella feared losing the first group of people who had taught her about love. She privileged the relationships with Sam's family over her own safety and that of her children. Bella also had no other family supports to help her navigate her way to safety.

> *…And when I suggested to a sister in law that I thought that I was close to, that I wanted to go, she said to me if you go, consider yourself cut off from everyone, you will be cut off.*

Bella's former sister in law's comments confirmed her biggest fear –that she would lose the people who were the first to show her love. She felt alone, and that nobody understood her experiences:

> *It's a whole other planet and nobody is going to get it unless they live there for a long time and found the exit off. They know where to get to the exit and there has to be an exit because you don't want to go back. You don't get to exit if you can't leave in one piece or am worrying about 24 other pieces that are glued back to get here. That was the thing that stopped my exit. Something else would pop up that was detrimental to whether I was going to survive or not.*

The something else that Bella referred to was the incessant victim blaming discourse directed at her; be it from Sam's family or her own. Bella was criticised for not "dumbing" herself down enough so that she and Sam could communicate with each other effectively. She was also told that she should not be so "lippy" and that she brought the violence on herself. Essentially, Sam could do no wrong and Bella was blamed for the domestic violence. Bella judged that everything bad in her entire life was her own fault.

> *It messes with your head, it really does. It's like I don't know how I ended up there…They could be the worst partner in the world and they may have the best family, you have to weigh up what you are going to give up. Especially if you have nothing to fall back on and it was a small town. As far as we were concerned the big world was just a little too overwhelming.*

Not only did the victim blaming message come from Sam's family and her own family, it also came from their church community. Bella said that when they began attending the church where her brother was the pastor – Sam was applauded and Bella was viewed as a fake. According to Bella, their congregation's opinion of her did not change until Sam and Bella were asked to speak to their former church congregation about domestic violence. It was only after their talk to former friends and family, in which they heard first hand Bella's account of events in her and Sam's marriage that they began to change their views and treatment of her. Despite this,

Bella remained terrified to leave Sam as it would mean that she would lose his family at the same time.

The Final Assault

The catalyst for Bella to leave Sam was an assault following a work function. Sam had been drinking heavily. Bella wanted to go home but Sam did not. Eventually they got home and Sam completely lost his temper;

> *I think it was the first time the neighbours had ever heard what they heard that night and my son who was only ten, my ex-husband had finished ripping cabinet doors off he ripped the kitchen door off its hinges, he's quite strong and then pulled a knife and then my son was in front of me and he was just telling his dad not to kill me. He was telling our boy to get out of the way and he was going to kill me and my son would not let me go. So he's still very protective of me he's very close to his Dad. Because they won't have taken up what happened to me.*

The fact that her son had now become directly involved in the violence was the catalyst for Bella decision to leave.

Separation

On the day that Bella finally made the move to leave, she told Sam that she could not cope any longer, and advised him she was leaving and wanted a divorce. Sam refused to let Bella take the children with her; she had to make an incredibly difficult choice between her own safety, and having her children in her life. Bella described Sam as having "all the tools of violence", and he used them in this situation by refusing to allow Bella to take their children with her. Bella wanted to go through the Family Courts to obtain custody of her children; however, she was discouraged by her father and told to work it out with Sam. Bella's mother told her to collect all her belongings and move on to a fresh start. Fia had even booked Bella a ticket to Australia. In reflecting on this time, Bella said that she adopted her default position, submitting to her two abusers.

Bella left New Zealand. She went into hiding and did not register her name on anything that Sam could use to find her. Bella lived overseas for five years before returning to New Zealand, her experiences whilst away will

be explored later in the case. Before I do that, the impacts of the separation on Bella and Sam's children will be presented.

Impacts of the separation on the children and their relationship with Bella

Bella described. Sam as "dark and growling" on the day she left and each were at different ends of the house. Their children came home from school and Bella tried to talk to each of them individually to explain the situation. She was able to speak with Liam however Sam intercepted Richard and proceeded to tell him that Bella was leaving because she did not like any of them anymore. During the five years that she was away, Bella sent letters and parcels delivered to her children in secret by other people in an attempt to maintain some sort of relationship with them. Her friends would get them to the children at school or at church and Liam, Richard and Rebecca would hide them at their grandparents' home so that Sam did not discover them. Her children kept all of her letters and would read them to each other.

After five years overseas, Bella decided to return to her hometown and re-establish relationships with her children. Since her return, Bella has managed to develop relationships with each of her children. Liam and Bella have a close relationship. He is still very protective of her, which she perceives is as a result from when he intervened to prevent his father from stabbing her. Bella feels there is a barrier between herself and her second child, Richard, because he had been told Bella left them because she did not like them anymore.. Bella said she is always careful with how she communicates with him and that everything is transparent between them to ensure Richard does not feel she is hiding anything from him.

The impact of the violence and separation has had the most impact on Bella's relationship with her daughter Rebecca. On her return to New Zealand, Bella went to live in her hometown so that she could be there for her children. Although Bella wanted them to live with her, instead, the children moved freely between Bella and Sam's homes. Rebecca preferred to be with her father, as Sam was a "yes" man to Rebecca in

comparison to Bella's more structured approach to parenting. For example, Bella was concerned about a young man Rebecca entered into a relationship with. For many years Bella had believed that Rebecca was also vulnerable to being a victim herself and Bella's fears were eventually borne out. When Bella raised her concerns about Rebecca's boyfriend, Sam refused to intervene. On one occasion, Bella confronted the boyfriend and he became aggressive towards her. After this confrontation, Rebecca and her boyfriend, moved to Wellington, where on one occasion that Bella knows about, Rebecca was badly beaten by her boyfriend. Fortunately, one of Bella's brothers lived in Wellington and Rebecca turned to him for help. Intergenerational experiences of abuse, such as Bella and Rebecca's will be examined in the discussion chapter.

Not only does Rebecca have a very close relationship with Sam, Rebecca is close to Fia and George. Rebecca's relationship with Fia is of concern to Bella as she is afraid of the influence on Rebecca of Fia's "distorted" views on life. However, despite Bella's concerns about her parent's influence on her children, and her own refusal to maintain a relationship with them, Bella does not stop her children from having a relationship with their grandparents. Bella had always wanted to have her own grandparents in her life but was never allowed to. Bella does not want her children to miss out on such connections and this overrides her concerns that such relationships are detrimental to her children's wellbeing. As a grandmother herself, she stated she would be devastated if she was not allowed contact with her grandchildren. Bella acknowledged that she has a double standard about her parents – she will not have a relationship with her parents because they are abusive, while at the same time not wanting to have the choice taken from her children (like in her own childhood) as to whether or not they can see their grandparents.

Bella's Journey to Healing

For a year after Bella left her marriage, her children, and New Zealand she was physically unable to speak, a physical response to her lifetime of trauma. Bella credits a Papua New Guinean family that she met online as helping to heal her. They welcomed her into their family and were a

significant support network for her. Since leaving Sam, Bella has accessed counselling services to address the impacts of the abuse she had suffered as a child and as a wife.

> *They were effective and they had me thinking and trying to work out what was me and what was everybody else. What I should be living with and what wasn't my fault. The hardest thing to shake was people thinking it was my fault. It's my fault he's violent. Or it's my fault my father's violent or it's my fault my mother is, yeah it's my fault.*

The counselling helped Bella understand that violence was not a normal tool for conflict resolution and gave her insight into violence and abuse cycles. She also learnt about previous behaviour which had fed disagreements between herself and Sam; understanding parenting skills, and; observation skills that enabled Bella to recognise the warning signs about Rebecca's boyfriend. Most of the support she received was through her church. Bella met trained counsellors, medical professionals and others who Bella credited as having helped her heal emotional and physical wounds. Bella draws a lot of strength from her faith, though she is no longer an active member of a church congregation due to pressure to contribute financially and conflicting beliefs.

During a difficult period in her life, Bella had issues with her accommodation which left her with nowhere to live and Jack (her former brother in law) offered Bella the opportunity to board with him. Jack's behaviour towards Bella became increasingly inappropriate and suggestive. One night, Jack was drunk and broke into her bedroom and assaulted her. Bella also sought counselling after this assault and eventually left her hometown again to escape the trauma of the assault. For the second time, Bella lost her voice – the duration was also for a year. Bella said she regressed because of the attack by Jack. She thought the counselling she had already completed would have given her a solid foundation for coping with trauma, but after the assault she realised this was not the case.

Supports

After the assault, Bella was referred to a Pasifika therapist Nina. Bella could only speak highly of Nina as many things about her practice resonated with Bella. Nina established rapport through the use of humour, which helped build a safe therapeutic relationship in which Bella was able to explore her experiences. Bella was particularly appreciative of how Nina also unlocked the positive influence and aspects of Samoan culture and the strengths this could bring. Bella credited Nina with providing her tools, coping mechanisms and supports she had never been exposed to previously, finally realising that she had power and control over who was in her life. Personal development through this process has helped Bella to understand there is a “method to her thinking and that things are fixable”.

Bella has drawn strength from other outlets which have had a healing effect for her. She has taken up boxing. This has not only improved her fitness and given her the ability to defend herself it has also provided emotional support via her trainer. He had similar experiences to Bella and shared his story with Bella and the rest of the class she trains with. Writing and public speaking has provided Bella with a stronger sense of confidence, she credited such activities as improving her communication skills with her children.

Bella recently began a relationship with Alan. They had been friends for several years prior to deciding to change the nature of their relationship. Bella feels that they are good for each other and she is very happy in her new and violence free relationship.

Summary

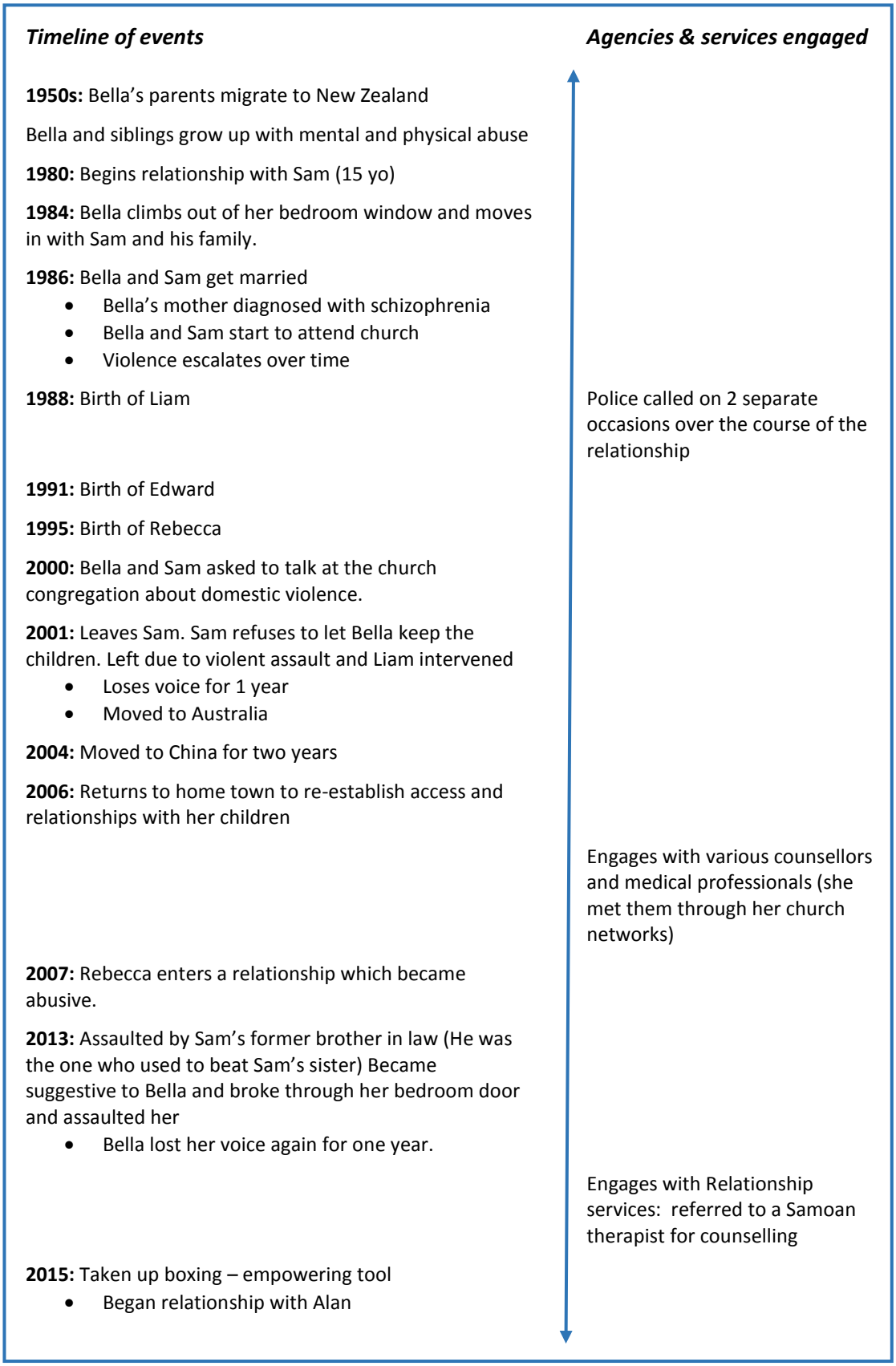
Bella’s case encapsulates common upbringing experiences, subsequent relationship interactions, as well as the barriers and supports that Pasifika victims of domestic violence have to navigate. Manifestations of childhood trauma that led to abusive relationships are consistent with previous research on intimate partner violence. Figure 1 on the following page presents a timeline of the significant events in her life as discussed in the

interview. Each case study chapter will conclude with a timeline such as Figure 1.

Bella described an inability to see a safe or viable exit from of the abusive relationship. The practicalities of surviving on her own during her abusive marriage were more overwhelming than the abuse itself. Bella had been silenced by loved ones and blamed for the violent outbursts thrust upon her for most of her life; and then again as she observed domestic violence directed at her daughter. As a result, Bella became depressed. At her lowest point death seemed the only way out. Instead, she fled the country.

Over and above her lack of familial support Bella's negative experiences with the police left her feeling unprotected and vulnerable, this reinforced Bella's belief that she was meant to endure in silence. The repeated message Bella received was that violence was actually an option for resolving issues – just not publicly – and one is to stay silent about abuse.

Figure 1: Sequence of events in Bella's life



Chapter 6: Teuila

Teuila is a 30 year old Samoan-Palagi woman who has three children. In this case study Teuila's narrative about her experiences in two violent intimate partner relationships is presented. Teuila reflects on the roles that violence and culture has played in her life, and how this has impacted how she interpreted domestic violence and subsequently her decision making processes in both relationships. Teuila actively tried to avoid the authorities' involvement in her home life. She did, however, engage with counsellors at different times to address the impacts of domestic violence. Her experiences with support services are reflected upon - including the barriers she felt hindered her healing and navigation to safety for herself and her children.

Upbringing

Teuila was born in New Zealand and raised predominantly in the Pacific Islands by her Palagi mother, Lisa. Teuila feels that her upbringing in the Cook Islands and her cultural identity had a significant impact on how she viewed violence, specifically domestic violence and child abuse;

> *I think people are really confused with my ethnicity because there seems to be a trend that kids would tend to gravitate more towards their mother's culture rather than their father's. So when people see that I'm a staunch Islander they're kinda like ehhhh? But your Mum's white, how's that gonna happen? It's because I was raised in that environment. I was thinking about it in terms of violence in the home. I was sitting there…thinking about my own thoughts and processes and stuff and I think, I don't even know how to say it, that you're not as confronted by violence because it's so normal… because I grew up in a culture where it was absolutely normal, I didn't have a problem with it.*

In order to gain deeper insight into Teuila's reference to violence being a normal part of life, it is important to examine the social influences that she believed contributed to this view.

Normalisation of violence

Teuila described how violence was common and widely accepted;

> *Even at family gatherings, barbecues where everybody starts drinking, it was normal for somebody to get a hiding that*

> *night…You'd hear your neighbours; someone was getting given a hiding next door. You could hear it. It was just part and parcel.*

Because it seemed that physical violence was so widespread and normalised, according to Teuila, it was rare for witnesses to call the police to intervene. If the police became involved in the Cook Islands, to her knowledge, the perpetrator would get taken to the police cells to "cool down" for the night but nothing further would happen. She compared this response to the police and courts in New Zealand where perpetrators are frequently arrested, charged and sometimes sent to prison. Whereas in New Zealand, Teuila reflected;

> *When you hear things, going on next door, you know people are ringing the police and stuff like that. But that's not part and parcel of what we did growing up.*

Teuila thinks that Pasifika people living in New Zealand hide what is happening "because they know that all of your Palagi neighbours will just ring the cops straight away." Teuila believed that because the consequences are likely to be more significant, Pasifika women in New Zealand are less likely to speak out because they are scared of losing everything; their partners being sent to prison, their children being removed from them, and attracting stigma associated with family violence. Teuila used the example of reactions to child abuse in the Cook Islands to draw comparison to New Zealand reactions to illustrate why the fear exists in New Zealand. At school, in the Islands Teuila described their responses to children coming to school with visible injuries inflicted at home;

> *It was common for kids to come to school with black eyes and stuff cos they'd stepped out of line. It was just normal. At school you were given hidings by teachers, and I got a few cos I was a big mouth.*

Teuila reported that the teachers would joke with them about what had happened to them at home the previous night. Pasifika people often use humour as a means to cover up what happens to them and to deflect from how they are really feeling about painful experiences. Teachers' responses in the Cook Islands were very different to what would happen in a school setting in New Zealand – in New Zealand, if teachers suspect

child abuse is occurring then they “are on the phone to Child, Youth, and Family service (CYFs) straight away. This fear keeps victims silent and afraid to embark on the process of navigating their way to safety.

Teuila’s First Relationship

When Teuila was 14 years old, she began a relationship with Jason. He was five years her senior and already had a reputation of being violent to previous partners. When his former partner (the mother of his child) questioned him about his relationship with Teuila, he gave her two black eyes in response to feeling challenged. In hindsight Teuila viewed Jason’s actions as maintaining power over someone he was no longer in a relationship with. Although Teuila knew of his violence against previous partners, being young and naïve;

> *[I] didn’t necessarily believe what all the coconut wireless was telling me. I kinda knew in the back of my head that he was violent, but never kind of believed it or want to believe it.*

When Teuila was 15 years old, she returned to New Zealand with her mother (Lisa) so that Teuila could finish her secondary education. A short time later, Jason moved to New Zealand to be with Teuila. It was not until they were both living in New Zealand that Jason became physically and psychologically abusive towards her. Teuila attributed the start of Jason’s abusive behaviour to being away from his family;

> *So there’s this funny dynamic, that it’s acceptable to beat up somebody but then your family still intervene because if it gets really hard core and you’re doing it in front of them, they’ll still jump in and stop it.*

Teuila’s earlier statements and the above quote indicate that there is a subjective and insidious level of acceptable violence. Once that threshold has been breached, others will intervene. Because Jason was now in New Zealand, he no longer had familial monitoring of his behaviour.

The first time Jason assaulted Teuila was while they were driving in the car. Teuila cannot remember what she had said “to piss him off” but, without warning, Jason attempted to punch her. She tried to protect her face and hit her head on the window causing bruising. Nothing further was said and Jason continued to drive. Lisa did not notice Teuila’s bruising: nor

did Teuila tell her mother what had happened. From that point on, Teuila was constantly scared of saying something that would anger Jason.

Physical violence and the threat of it were two of the power and control tactics used by Jason to control Teuila. When he did hit her, it would be a single punch. This would be enough to control the situation. On such occasions, when Teuila could no longer cope with the abuse, she would try to end the relationship. Jason would then threaten to commit suicide. Such threats often included him pulling a knife from a drawer and brandishing it. Teuila stated that she found it strange that even though Jason was not in New Zealand for long periods of time (he would frequently travel for sports commitments), he was still able to control her and she did not recognise it.

Teuila fell pregnant to Jason when she was 16 years old. Teuila told Jason about the pregnancy and not long after that. Jason announced he was moving to Europe to play rugby and earn money to provide for her and their child. However, Teuila later discovered that Jason had been lying and had actually returned to the Cook Islands. She ended the relationship. Jason has no contact with their son, Toby, however Jason's family do.

This is the first instance of Teuila ending a relationship, not because of domestic violence, but because her trust had been breached. Teuila reflected on the impact that her first relationship has had on her life;

> *So that was that. I didn't realise that then sets you up for the way you react in every other relationship, and so I think that's been part and parcel of the deterioration of my relationships over the years.*

Reflecting on her relationship with Jason which was "sour and violent" and Jason's departure when she fell pregnant made her feel abandoned. So much so, Teuila feels that when things went well for her in subsequent relationships she expected it to deteriorate into violence and infidelity.

Teuila completed her secondary schooling and subsequently attended and graduated from university. Teuila feels that her tertiary education had a significant impact on her identity, particularly on her cultural identity/views

> *I'd had this whole world of other learning and views that I had picked up from being at uni. Things that you don't actually realise*

> *sitting in the classroom. What you're listening to, hearing. But when I came out I was like nah bro, I don't agree with that. I think I had started to find me as a person.*

It was during her time at university that Teuila decided she needed to have some counselling to help her process the emotional impacts of the domestic violence she experienced whilst in a relationship with Jason.

First Experiences with Support Services

Teuila felt depressed and sought advice from her doctor and was referred to counselling. Teuila's first experience of counselling was not effective for her. She was not able to establish a relationship with a counsellor as she would see someone different each appointment. Teuila described the service as "hit and miss" and that she spent a lot of her session times repeating her story. Cultural competency was also an issue for Teuila with the free counselling service;

> *They gave me a Māori counsellor one time and I did not click with her at all. I was like, just 'cos we're brown! We're a different type of brown. Totally different! In the end I felt like I was sitting down listening to her story more than I was getting any opportunity to talk about my story. So that didn't work either. I didn't find the person that clicked with me, so I didn't pursue it anymore.*

The above quote highlights many issues that victims of domestic violence encounter when they do reach out for help to deal with the impacts of abuse. Inability to establish rapport and trusting relationships, repeatedly recounting traumatic events to different people, and issues with cultural competence have previously been identified as barriers that women encounter when trying to heal from the impacts of domestic violence (Rankine et al., 2015; Wilson & Webber, 2014). These barriers and the associated impacts will be analysed in the discussion chapter. Teuila's reference to there being "different types of brown" highlights the importance for service providers to understand that there are distinct differences between Māori and Pasifika cultures, including between Pacific Islands nations. Teuila felt that if she had received some thorough counselling at this point in time it could have helped her to recognise the patterns of abuse present in her next relationship. At this stage in her life and relationships, Teuila largely blamed herself and recognised that

patterns in relationship dynamics were repeating. She also attributed it to her relative immaturity.

Teuila and Tom's relationship

Teuila met Tom when she was approximately 22 years old. He was Samoan/Palagi who had been raised in Samoa according to fa'asamoa practices. Teuila stated that Tom was "very" Samoan in his values and attitudes. Teuila had not long graduated from university when they met, and she responded to Tom's desire to settle down and have a family, particularly after having been a single mother for many years.

Intercultural differences – New Zealand-born and Island-born Samoan

At an emotional level, Tom appealed to Teuila as he appeared to be sensitive, even though she felt that they were intellectually incompatible. She described Tom as not being well-educated. The intellectual differences over time would become problematic.

> *It sounds like I always put this down to a big thing, and I didn't want to sound like I was up myself, but the difference between me and Tom was I was educated and he wasn't. So there was no other way for him. He had never seen another way of life, where I did. I really put it down to there was such a big difference and there was also inadequacy in that if I started speaking out and my ideas were too big, he would beat me down to reality.*

Teuila felt that she was "brown enough" to manage the intracultural and intellectual differences between herself and Tom despite not having been raised with Samoan culture.

When her relationship with Tom became serious, Teuila realised that she did not agree with many fa'asamoa cultural expectations relating to gender roles, finances, and, in particular, attitudes to violence against women. These issues will be discussed throughout the case study. Over time Teuila would be conflicted between cultural expectations and practices and her evolving personal identity influenced by her socialisation in New Zealand.

The first assault

The first time Tom was physically violent to Teuila was at dinner time one evening. Teuila could not remember what was said to trigger Tom but he threw his dinner at her and held her up to the wall by her throat, strangling her. Prior to this event, and having had counselling to address the violence from Jason, Teuila had thought that she had moved past tolerating domestic violence. However,

> *I thought I had grown some balls and was strong and would never put up with violence again. And then when he did it, I fell back into, this is just normal and this is just what they do, he's just another Island guy that hits his wife or whatever.*

Teuila managed to extricate herself from Tom, left the house and went to her mother's (Lisa) home. Lisa was and still is Teuila's primary source of support. The first incident of domestic violence and Teuila and Lisa's responses to Tom signalled the start of an ongoing pattern of behaviour: Tom would assault Teuila, Teuila would call Lisa to intervene, Lisa would mediate between Tom and Teuila, and after a day or two Teuila would return to Tom.

On the first occasion, Tom called the police to report the incident after Teuila had left. His rationale was to get to the police first, to provide his account of events to prove to the police that he had not hit her. According to Teuila, Tom believed that because he had thrown a plate at her and "held [her] up against the wall" his actions "didn't count" as hitting her. The police visited the house and spoke to Tom, but they never spoke to Teuila about her version of what had happened. Teuila subsequently returned home.

Silence and privacy

Two days later, Victim Support visited Teuila to offer support but she did not want anyone involved in her personal life. She told me that she was rude to the Victim Support workers. She was adamant about not having the police or any other agencies aware or intervening at home. Teuila discussed how it was always in the back of her mind that her children could get taken from her if it became known about the abuse the happened in their home.

Another concern for Teuila was the impact of her personal life crossing over into her professional life. In Teuila's profession, police checks are often conducted as part of the job application process and she did not want anything showing up on her official records. Despite the ongoing abuse from Tom, when discussing this particular situation Teuila appeared to be angrier about her private life becoming public than what had actually happened to her at the hands of Tom.

Teuila felt that things started to settle down in the relationship after the above incident. Subsequently, Teuila fell pregnant with their son Flynn. Approximately six months after Flynn was born Tom and Teuila got married. Teuila had wanted to get married for some time, however Tom did not. He changed his mind when he wanted to get full custody of Nico, his son from a previous relationship; he thought being married would help, portray a stable home environment to the Courts. Teuila described the wedding as a grandiose Fa'asamoa wedding; it was something she went along with, rather than what she really wanted.

Family court experiences

Teuila's experiences with the Family Court custody processes reinforced her strong desire to stay silent about the abuse perpetrated by Tom. It was during this process that Teuila first learned of the family violence alert on their police record. This information came to light when their lawyer requested their police records. Two years later, Teuila was further angered about the intersection of her private life into the public domain when a potential employer completed routine police checks as part of the recruitment process and the checks alerted potential employers to the domestic violence warning. The alert should have been a warning signal to the lawyer regarding the environment that she was advocating a young child should be permanently placed into. Instead of enquiring into whether the recorded incident was an isolated one, the lawyer managed to keep it out of court proceedings;

> *So they managed to cover it up but she was like, anywhere along the line the other lawyer can request to get it and this is going to come up so you need to have a really good story about why this happened.*

The actions of their lawyer sent the message to both Tom and Teuila that domestic violence needed to be hidden. Having learned of the warning system, Teuila knew that if she ever called the police for help then it could impact on the custody proceedings. She did not want to jeopardise the process in any way as she loved Nico. Teuila believed that Tom knew she would never call the police for fear of losing custody of Nico.

Escalation of violence

Their marriage coincided with an escalation of violence against Teuila by Tom. He also began to accuse Teuila of infidelity.

> *He'd accused me of cheating with his best friend, but I was just mates with [him]. I had a Palagi friendship with him, which isn't acceptable in fa'asamoa terms. The way I was raised, it was alright to have guy mates and to text your guy mates and things like that. But to Tom that was absolutely a no-no.*

Tom and Teuila's differing interpretation of acceptable behaviour for each gender and relationships was another example of the intracultural clashes that created tension in their relationship. Tom did not accept friendship between a man and a woman could be platonic - it was not acceptable for a woman to have such relationships according to what Teuila assumed were fa'asamoa social norms. Tom became irate and severely assaulted Teuila, including smashing her head against the kitchen bench while she was holding Flynn. It was during this assault that Teuila became desperate for somebody to intervene, she was desperate for her Palagi neighbours to help but nobody did. The fact that her neighbours did nothing to help her conflicts with Teuila's belief that Palagi people do not hesitate to call the police or CYFs to notify about domestic violence, particularly in the homes of Pasifika people.

Two young women were walking past at the time of the assault. Teuila thought that they might have helped her because they were "brown" and they "might help a sister out", but they kept on walking. Teuila managed to get a message to her mother asking for help, Lisa, along with one of Teuila's cousins, came round. Tom managed to convince Lisa that he had calmed down so she left leaving Teuila alone with Tom. Flynn had already been removed from the house by Teuila's cousin. Lisa's presence made

Tom angrier. After Lisa had left the house, Tom closed the curtains and went “hell for leather cos there was no baby around, no Mum around”. Eventually Teuila managed to escape from Tom and went to Lisa’s house. Instead of calling the police or establishing how serious Teuila’s injuries were, Lisa told Teuila to leave and go to a friend’s place where Tom could not find her. When Teuila was asked why she thinks her mother responded the way that she did; she reflected:

> *It’s funny, cos I know my Mum would call the cops on other people, like on the neighbours one time when we were in Raro[tonga] because there were little kids in the house and she was worried about the little kids. But she didn’t call the cops for me. I don’t know what her reasoning was behind that. At the time you do what you think is right and so her solution was you just need to get outta here.*

Teuila thinks that Lisa does not have much faith in police effectively intervening in domestic violence incidents. Teuila also felt that Lisa’s emotional involvement hindered her responses to the situation – she did not know the right thing to do. Instead when Tom repeatedly called Lisa trying to locate Teuila she would placate him by telling him that Teuila needed a couple of days away and she would return soon enough. Unfortunately, Lisa’s actions indicated a lack of insight into domestic violence and the severity of the situation that Teuila was in. Teuila wanted her mother to have stayed or taken her with her when she left. Moreover, because the police were not called, Tom was not held accountable by anyone for his actions. Tom profusely apologised to Teuila via text messages and phone calls, a common tactic of abusers when their victims leave them (Hayes & Jeffries, 2015). His efforts worked and Teuila agreed to return home;

> *The whole time he was texting me apologising and apologising. I was like ok, all good, I’ll come back and you know that’s always it. They’re always way sweeter when you come home and everything is fine and good.*

Unfortunately the sweet and caring behaviour did not last.

Extended family relationships

Teuila and Tom learned of his sisters having difficulties while living with an aunt, so they invited Tina and Josie to come and live with them. Teuila's thought that Tina and Josie would be a form of protection from Tom. Unfortunately for Teuila, the sisters' presence did not stop Tom's violence. Tom continued to assault Teuila; it seemed to her that he thought it was acceptable to hit her in front of his sisters. Nevertheless, Josie and Tina were of some use as they would intervene to stop Tom, thus lessening the severity of the assaults. The role that family members play in domestic violence situations will be examined further in the discussion chapter.

One such occasion that stands out for Teuila was when Tom managed to lock her in the bathroom which prevented Tina or Josie from helping her. Tom punched her and strangled her leaving bruising to her lips and neck. This had a lasting impact on Teuila. She recounted how she had to buy a high neck top and dark coloured lipstick to wear on the first day of her new job to hide the bruising. Teuila was saddened that she had developed skills and knowledge of things she should never have needed to know such as which cleaning products were the best to get blood stains out of carpet – "you get really good at covering things up". Essentially Teuila became very skilled at remaining silent about the traumatic experiences she was forced to navigate.

Finances and cultural obligations

Finances were a constant source of tension in Teuila and Tom's relationship. Tom regularly sent fa'alavelave (gifts) and remittances to his family in Samoa. Teuila resented this as it placed strain on already limited family resources. She felt that the money they sent to Samoa was "wasted on playing bingo" while they were struggling in New Zealand to provide the necessities for her son. She also believed that Tom's family became more demanding on Tom for money once they learned of his relationship with Teuila as it meant there were two incomes available. Tom's family also knew that Teuila was a university graduate, which influenced the sums requested of Tom. This has been identified as a common perception of family members who have relatives that live in New Zealand (Ministry for

Women, 2015). Incomes in New Zealand are higher than in Samoa but Island-based family members may not fully comprehend the high living costs. Teuila agreed to the remittances, convincing herself that it was what was expected of her as a Samoan.

At this point in their marriage, Tom was working two jobs and spent little time at home with Teuila and the children which became a contentious issue for Teuila. Further compounding the pressure was Tom's insistence that his brother Jamie should also come to live with them. Teuila tried to dissuade Tom saying that it was a bad time to come to New Zealand due to high unemployment. Teuila believed it was difficult enough for New Zealanders to get work, let alone a new migrant from Samoa. Teuila eventually conceded to Tom and they paid for Jamie to travel to New Zealand. They now had Tom's two sisters and one brother living with them, plus their three children.

Gender norms and expectations

Not only were Tom and Teuila under added financial pressure, the relationship dynamics were further strained as Teuila believed Jamie's presence heightened Tom's expectations of her to act as he thought a good Samoan wife would.

Teuila quickly learnt that a "good Samoan wife" never challenges her husband as Tom would hit her if she got angry or argued with him. Tom would become especially enraged if she challenged him in front of other men, Jamie in this case. For example, during one of their regular arguments about Tom going out- he wanted Teuila to drive him and Jamie into the city - Teuila told Tom to "fuck off". Tom's reaction to being spoken to like this, especially in front of Jamie, was to drag Teuila to the garage where he gave her "a hiding." This time, Tina and Josie did not intervene;

> *So there was this real funny female male dynamic there that I didn't understand fully. So that was just a really big, bad night.*

Teuila believed they did not help her because another male was present and he would have told them not to help her because she deserved it. Tom's family were highly critical of Teuila and her "inadequacies" as a Samoan wife. Their opinions had been formed from what they he told

them about her. According to Teuila, Tom's family thought she was a "stupid fucking Palagi". Now that Jamie had seen that Teuila had dared to be disrespectful to her husband, he regularly told Tom to find himself a good Samoan wife as Teuila is too disrespectful to him and their family.

Tom's treatment of Teuila further deteriorated, and he had an affair. Jamie's encouragement of Tom to find another woman aligns with the double standards about what is acceptable behaviour within a relationship – women are not allowed to have any interaction with men other than her husband, yet it is tolerated or somewhat accepted that men can sometimes even be encouraged to seek comfort with other women because they have a 'bad' wife at home.

Infidelity and Separation

For Teuila, Tom's affair offered a way out of the relationship. Teuila reflected on the irony that her "tolerance for infidelity is lower than my tolerance for violence". Tom's family were Catholics and they believed divorce was not an option, so for Teuila to reach the point where she was going to leave her husband went against the religious norms expected of them. Teuila also reflected on how Pasifika peoples "rarely get divorced", especially not "just" for domestic violence. She had grown up knowing of abusive relationships within her family networks and her relatives stayed together. The message that Teuila took from such knowledge was the sanctity of marriage is privileged over the safety of women and children.

Teuila suspected Tom was having an affair as he was increasingly claiming to be at work but she knew otherwise. One evening she went to his workplace and found that he was not there. Teuila then called Tom asking to get something from his car that she needed, upon arrival at his workplace, Tom realised that he had been caught and became enraged. Teuila tried to escape but Tom chased her in the car, overtaking her and cutting her off, all the while yelling abuse at her. She had their children in the car at the time but this did not stop Tom from the dangerous car pursuit. Eventually Teuila returned home where Tom tackled her and assaulted her. Teuila remembers laughing a "hysterical" kind of laughter because she had finally realised that she had to leave because of what

she had endured during the relationship. Teuila reflected on this during our interview;

> *Sometimes I can't believe what I did or what I went through, sometimes I can't imagine that I was in that state of desperation. Desperation isn't an adequate word to describe just how much you need help.*

The next day, with the help of friends, Teuila moved out of the house. Tom arrived while they were loading vehicles and he lost his temper about the events. Teuila's uncle was present and firmly told Tom to never harm her again.

According to Teuila, after her departure Tom became depressed after she left. He turned into this "whimpering little coward that was just crying all over the place." She had many a conversation with Tom asking for explanations as to why he had abused her so badly over the years that they had been together. He never gave her a reason; but he did apologise. Teuila believed that Tom's upbringing had a significant influence on why he was a perpetrator of domestic violence;

> *I thought it was bad what the Cook Islands were like, but the stories that he would tell me about was 10 times worse than anything I'd ever seen. Everybody was giving everybody a hiding…so you know the strangling thing, somebody must have strangled you. That must have been their go to tactic and he must have been strangled a lot when he was a kid. Because you learn that from somewhere, you don't just suddenly go oh, I'm gonna be a strangler.*

Teuila's identification of childhood abuse as a contributing factor to Tom's abuse of her aligns with how the other women interviewed made sense of their experiences of abuse. Victims meaning making of abuse is examined further in the discussion section (Chapter 10).

After the separation, Tom had only minimal contact with son Flynn. Teuila felt that Tom used the children as "bargaining tools" to try and coerce her into returning to the relationship. An example of this was the threat to send Nico to live in Australia if Teuila did not go back to Tom. The children and the impacts on what the children had been exposed to factor significantly in her decision making process to stay separated from Tom. Tom had been abusive to her older son, Toby, on many occasions. She knew that

she could not put Toby back into that situation, so she took the risk of not being able to maintain a relationship with Nico to ensure her own children were safe. Tom followed through with the threat, forfeited custody of Nico and subsequently Nico was sent to Australia.

Reflections on Decision Making and Intimate Partner Relationships

Teuila feels “mega guilt” about some of the decisions she made and the impacts they had on her children. On one occasion she had to leave Toby behind to escape the violence because she truly believed that Tom may kill her. On another occasion when she had to flee from Tom’s violent attacks, she loaded the children into the car, none of them in car seats or seatbelts herself included. Teuila was pulled over by the police that night. She explained to the police officer that her husband was beating her. The officer checked if she was okay, gave her a warning about the seatbelts and sent her on her way but there was no follow up of the disclosure of violence.

Teuila’s association of domestic violence with cultural world views and norms extended to the ethnicity of potential partners. She did not ever want to enter into a relationship with a Pasifika man again. Teuila is now in a safe and loving relationship with Anaru who is Māori. Anaru grew up with his father being abusive to his mother and views violence against women as abhorrent - he “hates wife beaters”. Teuila and Anaru now have a daughter together, Ariana. Teuila reflected on how the long term impacts of having to be hyper-vigilant of her own behaviour still lingers. Toby reminds her from time to time that the house being messy or dinner not being ready is not going to trigger a violent reaction from Anaru - he is not like Tom, their life is different now.

Supports

After her separation, Teuila again engaged the services of a counsellor to address the impacts of the domestic violence during her marriage to Tom. This time the counselling was able to help Teuila gain insight into the dynamics of domestic violence. Because of her earlier experiences of counselling, Teuila was careful to select a counsellor who was a good fit.

The first counsellor she engaged with was not a “good fit” for her. She did not like it when the counsellor seemingly fell asleep during their sessions. She next saw a male counsellor which worked very well for her; largely because he was able to give a male perspective on her experiences. Historically Teuila felt that the women counsellors she had seen in the past were “men haters”, she responded more positively to the “logical approach” taken by the male counsellor Teuila no longer wanted to “navel gaze”, she wanted tools to move forward, which he gave her.

Returning to, waka ama was also healing for Teuila, both in terms of rebuilding a positive cultural identity and enhancing her health. Prior to engaging in counselling, Teuila hated what she perceived as fa’asamoa culture;

> *I’m too white to be brown…Fa’asamoa is you beat up your wife. That’s how it is. I can’t change that. That’s how they do things… Then at the same time I was like, but that’s not me, I’m totally against that. That’s not how I was raised. My Mum didn’t do that. I actually don’t like violence. I don’t like seeing my kid getting hit. I don’t like being hit. I don’t like fa’asamoa anymore. And so I have real big issues, afterwards as well with my cultural identity. I didn’t want to be fa’asamoa. I hated Samoans. I hated Samoa. I hated Samoan culture.*

Teuila had become so disenfranchised with fa’asamoa that she disconnected from her cultural identity, but waka ama helped her to reconnect with her cultural identity in a positive way. When Teuila was out on the water, she felt spiritually connected to her ancestors who were navigators. Waka ama helped to re-establish her relationship with her father because it was a mutual interest they shared. Waka ama also had physical benefits. Being alone on the water, focusing on her paddling rhythm had a meditative and calming effect, which Teuila much preferred over taking anti-depressants.

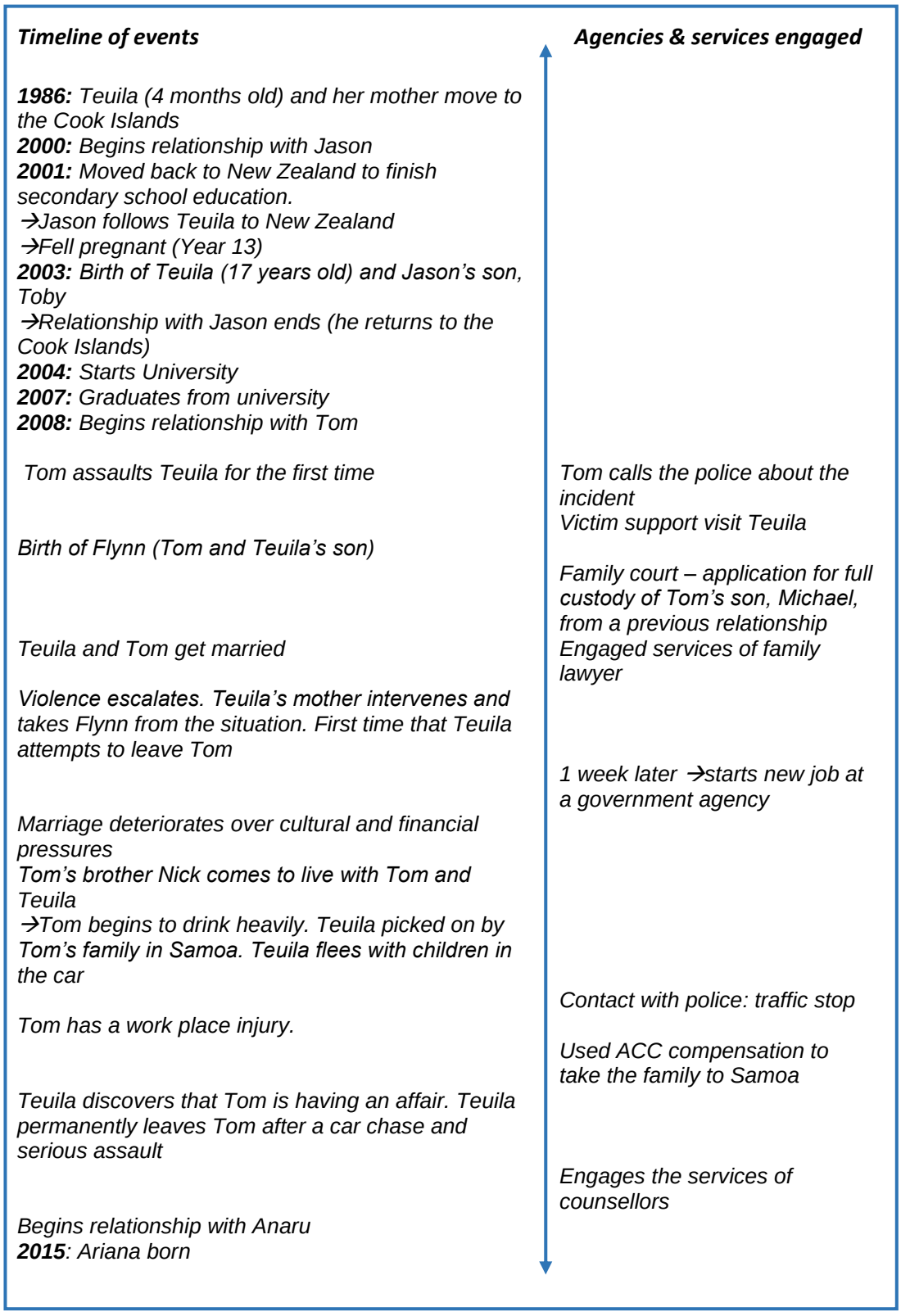
With the assistance of counselling and her return to waka ama Teuila has shifted to loving her Samoan cultural identity and she has come to accept it in its current form, even though she believes there needs to be cultural change regarding gender roles and acceptance of domestic violence.

Summary

Teuila's story is an example of the role that culture and intracultural differences played in her life which silenced her as a victim of domestic violence. In this case the influence of culture on gender roles and perceived "acceptable" violence against women and children had the power of keeping victims from disclosing their experiences and thus engaging in help-seeking behaviour.

Pasifika women are scared of losing everything; their partners being sent to prison; their children being removed from them, and; attracting stigma associated with family violence. This fear keeps victims silent and afraid to embark on the process of navigating their way to safety. So when Teuila found the courage to engage help-seeking strategies, she was disappointed that the services offered were based on her skin colour, not her culture. Unsurprisingly, the service was not a good fit - because assumptions were made about her. Finding the right fit with counselling services took some time and thankfully gave her the strategies she was desperately looking for.

Figure 2: Sequence of key events in Teuila's life



Chapter 7: Jennifer

In this case, Jennifer recounts her experiences with the agencies from who she sought support in relation to the impact of sexual abuse, being a teen mother (she has a one-year old), mental health concerns, and domestic violence. Jennifer's story is an example of the cumulative effect of multiple agencies making her feel like she was disbelieved and let down repeatedly. Her story begins with her childhood experiences of sexual abuse and the subsequent engagement with support services. Jennifer provides the context for her decision making/actions as a teenager and her perceptions of her experiences of domestic violence and further agency/frontline personnel involvement. Also explored are the social and cultural barriers and supports experienced by Jennifer which contributed to the impacts of abuse and trauma. Jennifer's mother, Helen, also participated in the interview as she too was assaulted by Jennifer's partner, Tevita.

Upbringing

Jennifer was born in the Cook Islands but raised in New Zealand – her parents, Helen and John, migrated to New Zealand when she was seven months old. Jennifer grew up with no siblings. However, she has close relationships with "people that I like to call siblings" as well as a younger brother. Jennifer described herself as a happy child, until she was sexually abused.

Childhood sexual abuse

At age seven, Jennifer disclosed to Helen that she had been sexually abused by her uncle Tim. Helen contacted the police to make a formal complaint as she thought this was the best course of action to protect her daughter from further harm. Unfortunately, Helen and Jennifer did not feel like they were helped and supported by those mandated to protect them. Helen was frustrated by the lack of communication from the police; she stated that the only progress updates she received about their case were when she contacted them. The police response made them feel like;

> *… [I'm] just another file in the pile. It's like they expect them to kill you before something happens.*

Helen and Jennifer sensed a lack of urgency from the police; Jennifer's safety did not seem to be priority. According to Helen the lack of explanation about the investigation process resulted in confusion. Inadequate service provision, particularly from the police, has emerged to be a common experience in previous research findings (Wilson & Webber, 2014) as well as in the findings from all interviewed in this research. This theme will be examined in further detail later in the case and in the discussion chapter.

Having been in New Zealand for only seven years, Helen felt like she did not know how things worked: nor did she know what supports and services were available to them. She felt lost in the system. Helen asked the police for counselling for Jennifer to help her to deal with the trauma of sexual abuse. They were referred to a counsellor to complete and evidential video; however, due to a lack of understanding about police procedures, Helen misunderstood the role of the session;

> *I was so disappointed. After they interviewed her, I thought it was a form of counselling; maybe it was in a way. We didn't know the outcome of it. We were just dropped out of the system. They showed her pictures of body parts and what happened. That was it. And that was the only process that we went through. (Helen)*

The lack of transparency about what was happening meant that the processes were shrouded in mystery. Ultimately no further action was taken against Tim nor was Jennifer offered counselling which she blames the police for.

Reinforcing Jennifer's feelings of insignificance were her family's response to Jennifer's disclosures of abuse. Tim admitted his offending against Jennifer, but exploited their Christian faith by asking for forgiveness and promising he would never do it again. The family expected Jennifer and Helen to forgive Tim. Jennifer's father accepted Tim's apology; her mother did not.

Helen tried to protect Jennifer from having further contact with her uncle Tim, causing conflict between Helen and John as well as between Jennifer

and her father. Helen felt that it should be obvious to John that Tim should not have access to Jennifer. Jennifer's father, who is disabled, was reluctant to sever his relationship with Tim as Tim is one of the only people who regularly visited him. John's continued relationship with his brother hurt Jennifer and caused tension in their relationship.

Despite Helen instructing the family to never leave Jennifer alone with Tim, she discovered that Jennifer had been left alone with him, when Helen believed that Jennifer was being looked after by an aunt. Helen got to the point where she would no longer leave Jennifer in anyone else's care. Unfortunately, when Jennifer was 15, Tim sexually assaulted her again. Again, Jennifer put her faith into the hands of the Police, after a brief interview, they took her home. Again, no further action was taken.

Sexuality and Jennifer's First Relationship

Jennifer believes that the experiences associated with her sexual abuse have been influential on her behaviours and decision making when she reached her teen years. Further damaging to Jennifer's self-esteem and sense of self-worth was the bullying that she experienced throughout her school years. Jennifer said she experienced feelings of depression and did not care about her safety or wellbeing, so she "rebelled" by sneaking out of home at night and "sleeping with boys" Jennifer stated that "sleeping with people" was her way of coping with depression.

Knowledge of Jennifer's sexual activity created tension between Helen and John. John would get angry with Helen because of Jennifer's actions. Helen would communicate her frustration and anger at John for continuing to allow Tim into their home jeopardising Jennifer's safety. Essentially, Helen could understand the reasons for Jennifer's rebellion.

Jennifer, Sione, and teen pregnancy

Aged 15, Jennifer became involved in a sexual relationship with Sione, and over time she developed strong feelings for him. Soon after entering the relationship with Sione Jennifer fell pregnant. When she told Sione about the pregnancy he denied that the baby could be his and that it was too soon into their relationship to be faced with a pregnancy. Sione's family also denied the paternity of the child and harassed her about this.

One example that distressed Jennifer was when Sione's mother, Langi, insisted on attending Jennifer's first ultrasound appointment. According to Jennifer, Langi used this opportunity to express her disbelief about Sione being the father of the unborn child, ruining what was meant to be a special moment for her.

Despite the opposition from his family, Jennifer tried to maintain a relationship with Sione as she had strong beliefs about the importance of a nuclear family structure. Jennifer's desire to raise her son in a family environment is consistent with Pasifika/collective cultural values about the importance of family (Ministry for Women, 2015; Rankine et al., 2015; Seiuli, 2013, 2016). Sione was repeatedly unfaithful to Jennifer but she forgave him each time. When Jennifer was four months pregnant Sione ended their relationship (he had a new girlfriend already). The stress of the relationship ending and the harassment from Sione's family resulted in Jennifer being hospitalised for stress induced seizures.

Mental health issues and health service provision

During this period of hospitalisation, Jennifer admitted to hospital staff that she was depressed and had suicidal thoughts. The hospital staff referred her to a maternal mental health service. Jennifer found this service to have had a positive impact on her. Jennifer was assigned to Ani, a Samoan social worker who equipped her with skills and tools to work through her stresses. Specific practice strengths identified by Jennifer will be discussed further in the supports section of this case. When Ani deemed Jennifer to no longer be a suicide risk, she was discharged and referred to a teen/young peoples' parenting programme.

The parenting programme is designed to support teen parents become equipped with the skills necessary to parent their child. Sione and Jennifer attended one session together; after that Jennifer completed the programme alone. Jennifer enjoyed the programme and found it to be a strong source of support. Particularly pertinent was being able to interact with other teens experiencing similar issues to her. During this period, Jennifer left mainstream education and attended a school for pregnant teens. According to Jennifer, she thrived in this environment;

> *When I started there, I was doing good. I didn't realise I was doing better there than when I was at school. I was like why couldn't I do this in school?*

Although Jennifer was excelling in the new and supportive environment of the teen parent education unit, due to John's health deteriorating, Jennifer made the decision to leave her new school.

> *I would have continued with that, but when I had appointments with Dad, I realised that I'm always at home more with Dad than Mum. But you know, Mum's working and I see everything that happens with him. And because Dad had problems I was always the one telling them what's going on. So, I decided to stay home from course.*

As Jennifer was pregnant with no income and John was unable to work, Helen had to work two jobs to support the family. Further to the parenting programme, Jennifer had been referred to a mental health service which provided post crisis intervention support. Jennifer felt she has had mixed experiences with her social worker, Dorothy. Whilst Dorothy has assisted her with some issues, Jennifer feels that the service has not adequately cared for all aspects of her social and emotional wellbeing. To date, Jennifer has not been advised of state financial subsidies that she is entitled to. Jennifer was angry about this as she wanted to provide for her child in her own right. Instead she had to rely on already stretched financial resources at home and from other family members for financial support. It was only after Jennifer enrolled herself on a training course that she discovered what she was entitled to and had been in the past.

Birth of Tama

The time Jennifer spent in hospital for the birth of Tama had a negative impact on her. Jennifer felt that she was negatively judged by hospital staff, and that the nurses had made the assumption that she knew what to do with a new born baby. Further complicating the situation was the fact that Jennifer did not have enough breast milk to feed Tama. Helen and Jennifer both assert that the nurses were accusing her of not feeding Tama enough, and disregarded her low milk supply. Because there was little rapport built by the nurses with Jennifer, she did not respond well to

them. Jennifer believed that she was experiencing postnatal depression and it was not identified by hospital staff. This is a difficult situation as postnatal depression does not always develop straight after the birth of a child. Jennifer did not have the support of a private midwife to rely on as she had been seeing a community midwife who was not able to be present at the birth. Instead, she had to use the on-duty midwife at the hospital. Upon discharge, as Jennifer's mood was not identified as something to monitor, she did not get referred to a maternal mental health service postpartum for monitoring.

Co-parenting issues with Sione

Despite Jennifer's repeated confirmation of Sione's paternity, he continued to question if Tama was his and did not meet him until he was three months old. The first time he saw Tama, Sione reconsidered his denial of paternity (Tama "looked just like him") and requested that his name be put on the birth certificate. He also said that he wanted to marry Jennifer, going so far as to discuss this with John. His re-entry into Jennifer's life caused her significant stress;

> *I hated having feelings for him still, and I knew he was never gonna leave his girlfriend for me. And for him to lie to my family and say that he still loved me and he wanted to marry me and for him to lie like that…he lied to my Dad! It really hurt me.*

Although Sione requested permission to marry Jennifer, he had not been honest with either John or Jennifer. His attempts at reconciliation were short lived, largely due to still being in a relationship with another woman who was unhappy with Sione having contact with Jennifer and Tama.

Jennifer told me that when she feels overwhelmed, she needs to remove herself from the stress; so she went to the Cook Islands to get away from the stressful situation in New Zealand. Jennifer felt happier there, but when she returned to New Zealand, so did her feelings of stress and depression. It was now that she met Tevita, Sione's brother. Jennifer and Tevita had a sexual encounter, and over time their relationship developed, largely influenced by Tevita expressing the desire to play a fatherly role to his nephew. Within four months Tevita had professed his love for Jennifer and that he wanted to marry her. His intentions were attuned with

Jennifer's wish to have a strong family unit for her son. Jennifer entered the relationship with the knowledge that Tevita had "anger issues". According to Jennifer, Sione and Tevita were raised in an abusive home with an alcoholic and experienced serious violence themselves. Jennifer attributed childhood abuse as the cause of his anger issues. However, she minimised this as she saw in Tevita a young man who loved her child. Jennifer and Tama moved into Sione and Tevita's family home where Sione also lived whilst Jennifer was living there. The situation became untenable because Sione was angry that Jennifer was now in a relationship with his brother and verbally abused her regularly. Jennifer wanted a safe environment for herself, Tevita and Tama so she asked her parents if they could move into her family home.

The Assault

One week after Tevita moved in, the couple attended the 21st birthday party of Sione's girlfriend. Tevita was drinking heavily and became frustrated when his family would not give him more alcohol. They decided to leave and got into the car with Jennifer driving. This is when Tevita attacked her. It was a prolonged assault yet Jennifer managed to keep driving as Tevita had threatened to kill her if she stopped. As she drove, Tevita repeatedly kicked and punched her in the face and head. Tevita's sister in law, Mele, was also in the vehicle and when she tried to intervene, Jennifer told her not to because Mele was pregnant. They eventually got home and Helen came outside because she could hear Jennifer's screams as Tevita continued to attack her. Helen tried to restrain him but she too was assaulted. Tevita proceeded to smash the windows of Helen's vehicle which they had been in. His attention returned to Jennifer and he pushed past Helen to get to her. Jennifer was now on the ground struggling to breathe due to having inhaled large volumes of blood. Tevita fled the scene to a nearby family member's house, where his mother was visiting for a family funeral.

Over and above the physical and emotional trauma of being victims of such a serious assault, Helen and Jennifer were distressed that nobody in their neighbourhood came outside to help them. They lived in what they

thought was a close-knit community with people they thought they could rely on, especially the men. When nobody came outside, Helen and Jennifer felt hurt, scared and angry. As was raised in Teuila's case, inaction from bystanders has left the women feeling trapped and at the mercy of their attacker. Helen later found out that there were 27 phone calls to the police notifying them of the incident.

Issues with Service Provision

Jennifer found the approach of the police who attended the incident to be problematic. The officers tried to question her while she was seriously injured and being tended to by ambulance personnel. It could be construed as inconsiderate and un-empathetic (as well as unproductive) given that Jennifer was struggling to breathe at the time. Jennifer was transported to hospital for further treatment for her injuries.

At the hospital, blood tests were done, and the results showed that Jennifer had low levels of alcohol in her blood stream. Jennifer believed that there was a shift in attitudes from police and hospital staff, after the blood test results were returned. Again, Jennifer felt that she did not receive adequate care from the hospital. She felt ignored by the medical staff and asserted that she was denied pain relief. By this point in time, Jennifer felt exhausted by having to answer the "same" questions repeatedly from police and medical professionals. Eventually she refused to answer questions at all. This could have been perceived as Jennifer being uncooperative, which in turn could have influenced how she was treated.

Familiar feelings of feeling blamed and disbelieved resurfaced the following day when she was asked to give another statement to the police. During this round of questioning, Jennifer felt that the police accused her of lying about what had happened the night before. Responding to someone differently because they have consumed alcohol is an example of the victim blaming culture that is insidiously present, both systemically and socially (Hayes, Abbott, & Cook, 2016).

The police issued a one-day police safety order and advised Jennifer that she should apply for a temporary protection order. During the conversation about the protection order, the police raised the option of what could happen if Jennifer and Tevita were to remain in a relationship;

> *After what happened, if the police [hadn't said] if I was to get back with him, I would never have thought of that. Because he said to me, as an option in the future, if you two be together or still continue the relationship you could get a protection order…and I was thinking, why did you say that?*

Jennifer's quote illustrates how vulnerable she was. The officer discussing different relationship scenarios appeared to have subtly implanted the notion that returning to an abusive partner is a viable option. This is technically correct; however, it is problematic advice to give to a young woman who has been the victim of a vicious assault, and has little to no understanding about how orders work. When asked in the interview about how much she knew about how a Police Safety Order (PSO) functions, she was told;

> *He's not to hurt me or my baby. If he does then I ring the cops and he will be arrested straight away and goes to prison.*

Jennifer was conflicted about such a scenario. She was afraid of Tevita having to go to prison. At the same time she was also afraid that if he does not go to prison that he will follow through with his threats to harm her family.

While Jennifer was in hospital, she was visited by people from multiple agencies. Staff from a victim support agency visited Jennifer, once, but she did not hear from them again. Jennifer felt she was not offered support from anybody. Finally, a case worker from a youth advocacy service met with Jennifer. The service provides support and advocacy services for 16-19 year olds. Jennifer decided to access this agency's support as they had informed her they would guide her through the protection order application process. Unfortunately, Jennifer felt that they did not fulfil their commitments to her and Helen felt they had to navigate the court system unaided. Jennifer is still not clear about what protections a protection order

legally guarantees. At the time of the interview Jennifer was still working through the application process for a protection order.

Tevita turned himself into the police the day after he had assaulted Jennifer and Helen, and was charged with Male Assaults Female. Unfortunately, despite being his victims, Jennifer and Helen were not informed by the courts or police of the proceedings nor the outcome. He was remanded on bail with one of his conditions being that he was not to contact Jennifer in any way. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced.

To add to Jennifer's confusion and feelings of being overwhelmed by the number of people attempting to engage with her, she also did not understand the non-contact conditions of Tevita's bail. Due to her lack of knowledge about such clauses, Jennifer was left vulnerable to Tevita's attempts to win her back. She also was unaware that she was not to visit him at the family home. On one occasion when she did visit him, the police arrived for a bail check on Tevita. Upon discovering Jennifer there, Tevita was subsequently arrested. He resisted arrest and was charged with breaching the non-contact condition of his bail and resisting arrest.

Child Youth and Family Service (CYFs) were also notified about the assault by Tevita. It was unclear to Jennifer and Helen why CYFs were investigating them as Tama was not present. However, James (Jennifer's younger brother) was present when the assault took place. Again, lack of communication and transparency has been an issue. At the time of the interview, Jennifer and Helen did not know why CYFs were involved, or whether they were still being investigated. Jennifer and Helen also did not know that it is police procedure to notify CYFs when any children are present in a domestic violence situation.

Return to the Relationship with Tevita

Typical of an abuser's behaviour, Tevita began to send Jennifer flowers and gifts accompanied by apologies, to get her to return to the relationship. He also got his family to communicate messages on his behalf. All were breaches of his bail conditions. Jennifer reflected on why she returned to the relationship with Tevita; she struggled internally with

how she was such a “forgiving” person. Combined with her forgiving and naïve nature, she experienced pressure from his family for her to forgive him. Jennifer minimised Tevita’s responsibility for his actions and ability to make his own decisions, instead she placed the blame on his family and upbringing. Not seeing his actions as his responsibility, Jennifer felt she needed to help him. Jennifer’s reaction is a common reaction in response to abuse, that she thinks she can help her abuser to change without recognising that it is a dangerous position to take (Towns & Adams, 2016). Her self-proclaimed forgiving nature has potentially been influenced by the message from her wider family, and from Tevita’s family, to forgive those who harm her.

Because of his charming nature, combined with threats, Jennifer returned to Tevita again. Jennifer presented as conflicted about her decisions relating to her relationship – she fluctuated from a place of needing to fix and help Tevita, to a place of fear because of physical, mental and emotional abuse.

> *I told him, you know I can’t stay like this. I can’t. How can you love me and be like that toward me? Because when we are happy we are happy, he’s fine and everything is amazing. But then when alcohol gets involved that’s when things get bad.*

Jennifer feels Tevita is inconsistent regarding when he wants Jennifer to be with him. He mainly wants her with him when he is drinking. Tevita often becomes aggressive when he is intoxicated and when Jennifer is present; his family blames her for his outbursts.

Jennifer’s decision to remain in a relationship with Tevita had placed a strain on her relationship with her mother. Jennifer also finds it difficult living in the house where the assault happened. She also struggled with the knowledge that her community networks were not what she thought they were. Jennifer wants to move away, but she does not want to cause her mother further worry as Helen worries whenever Jennifer is away from her.

Supports

The two people (other than her mother) that Jennifer identified as supportive in her life were maternal mental health support worker, Ani, and her high school counsellor.

Mental health social worker

Ani's role was to support Jennifer to work through her feelings of depression and self-harm. Jennifer liked that Ani equipped Jennifer with the skills to communicate her feelings verbally and in writing in the form of daily journal entries. Jennifer was appreciative of Ani's ability to act as the intermediary between herself and her parents. Ani's practice indicated that through understanding the significant role that family plays in Pasifika people's lives, she knew that it was important to establish good communication with all parties involved to enable a positive and supportive outcome for Jennifer's social and emotional wellbeing.

High school counsellor

Because she felt depressed Jennifer decided to go to see one of the school counsellors for support. Jennifer initially went to the counsellor as a way of getting out of class. However, this evolved into a strong support for her. The counsellor was Tongan and a member of the same church. Jennifer felt that this helped because she understood her social and cultural context and world views. The counsellor's strength-based approach resonated with Jennifer. She felt that she learned to see that she had inner strength. Jennifer ended up feeling empowered enough to speak to her peers at school about her experiences.

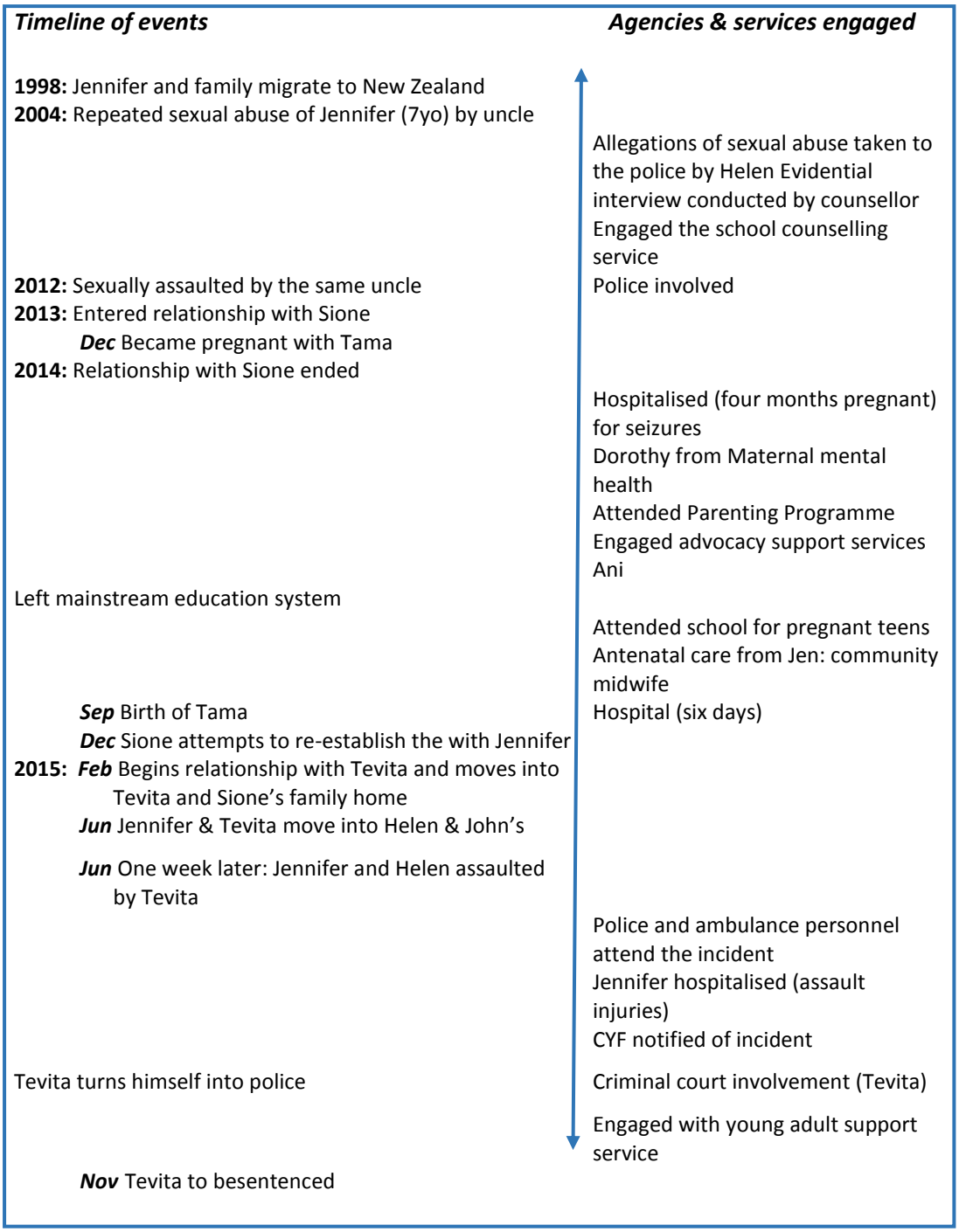
Summary

Jennifer's case demonstrates the cumulative effect of being consistently disempowered and feeling let down by those who she expected would keep her safe. The resulting attitudes have influenced Jennifer's feelings of disappointment with the majority of people in her life. The pattern of professionals mandated to protect Jennifer, who have instead left her feeling vulnerable, continued the cycle that began with her family.

After first being ignored by victim support agencies, and then misunderstanding the nature of a Protection Safety Order, which drew unwanted attention from child protection services. Jennifer's loved ones were feeling threatened. Jennifer has been left feeling like "pass the parcel" around multiple agencies. It seems to Jennifer that "good luck" rather than "good support systems" helped her connect with a good high school counsellor and then mental health social worker in order to process the violence.

Unfortunately, the lack of cohesion and interagency communication has meant systems and processes still remain mysterious to Jennifer and Helen. Jennifer believes services and supports are meant to help people not further traumatise them.

Figure 3: Sequence of events in Jennifer's life



Chapter 8: Kelly

Kelly is a 25-year-old New Zealand-born Samoan woman who has three children aged 10 and under. In this case, Kelly's story about the domestic violence she experienced in her relationship with current partner, Aaron, and her experiences with multiple services and agencies is presented. Kelly's narrative described some of the challenges and barriers that Pasifika women face when seeking support to navigate their way to safety. Kelly's experiences of lengthy delays and perceived inaction from service providers and professionals, lack of interagency cohesion and poor client-professional relationships has culminated in Kelly feeling cynical and at times endangered by those tasked to support her.

Upbringing

Kelly grew up with domestic violence – her father was violent towards her mother. Kelly's father was physically abusive to Kelly and her siblings. She did not perceive this as abuse as she believed it was the normal way to be raised.

The Relationship

When Kelly and Aaron met, Aaron had already had extensive experiences with the justice system. Aaron had spent two and a half years in prison for a wrongful conviction. As will be presented throughout the case study, Kelly and Aaron's relationship is punctuated by escalation in the domestic violence and subsequent engagement with support services and state agencies.

Kelly explained that Aaron had significant addiction issues (drugs, alcohol, and gambling). Kelly also believes that he has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of his time spent in prison. It was unclear if this was an official diagnosis or how Kelly made meaning of Aaron's moods and behaviour. Kelly described their relationship as volatile, exacerbated by Aaron's substance abuse and gambling. Although Aaron had completed addiction treatment, he has continued to have relapses throughout the relationship; one such relapse will be discussed later in the

case. His addictions not only placed added strain on limited financial resources, his violence towards Kelly was at its worst when Aaron was coming down from a drug binge. Kelly would try to manage this by trying to keep Aaron high, however it made it worse.

Making sense of the violence

By attributing his behaviour to external factors, Kelly essentially absolves Aaron from taking responsibility for his actions. Further diminishing Aaron's responsibility is the fact that Kelly attributes blame to herself for some of the violence perpetrated against her as she said she can be aggressive towards Aaron. Kelly and Aaron would argue frequently and the arguments would escalate to physical violence. Aaron has never called the police. Kelly believes this is because of his mistrust of the police and the justice system. Conversely, Kelly would call the police out of desperation when "it got too much" for her to cope with.

It was during one such domestic incident that Kelly called the police as she could no longer cope with the violence in her relationship with Aaron. At this point in time, Kelly did not share Aaron's mistrust; instead she felt that the police could provide them with the help they needed to address the abuse. On multiple occasions Kelly expressed frustration about the perceived lack of help for Aaron. Although Kelly stated that they both wanted to work on their relationship, Kelly appeared to prioritise Aaron's needs and unaddressed issues over the importance of her needing support to address the impacts of domestic violence. For example, she has never undertaken a victim's domestic violence programme to gain insight into the dynamics of domestic violence and the impact this has on her and the family unit. This particular call to the police signalled the beginning of lengthy engagement with multiple agencies, it was a decision that Kelly now has come to regret.

Child Youth and Family service (CYFs)

As per police procedure, the police made a notification to CYFs because Kelly's eldest daughter (from a previous relationship) was present. Jamie was interviewed at school about the incident and life at home with Kelly and Aaron. Kelly was angry about CYFs processes: for example, not

informing her when they would be interviewing Jamie. The reason for this has never been explained to her. Kelly felt angered by the child interviewing process as she felt disregarded as a mother and found the overall process to be disempowering. Kelly said that the male social worker had made her feel like a criminal who beat her child, when she too was a victim of the domestic violence in the home.

Kelly and Aaron were directed by a CYFs social worker to complete a parenting programme, with the promise that their case would then be closed. Both Kelly and Aaron did a parenting programme but neither of them found it to be of use. Kelly's primary complaint was access to and completion of the programmes took too long.

Ineffective client-professional fit

The programme Kelly was mandated to do was completed in her home in one-to one meetings with a newly qualified social worker. This is the first time that Kelly expressed her mistrust of inexperienced key workers, particularly those who do not have children themselves. Kelly did not respond well to the formal approach of the professionals who were "too technical". Also problematic was the fact that the programme did not address domestic violence which Kelly identified as being the issue they needed help with. The issue that Kelly raised about root causes of domestic violence is a relevant one, like the other women, Kelly felt that the issues associated with domestic violence were not adequately addressed.

Kelly acknowledged that the impacts of exposure to violence have serious impacts on a child. She admitted that her children had been exposed to the violence between herself and Aaron. She maintained he had never been abusive to the children and was a good father. However, the content in the parenting programme did not address what she perceived to be the urgent issues. Because there was little to no emphasis on building rapport or a relationship with Kelly, important messages were being lost. Kelly was still in crisis mode and needed to work through what she perceived to be the immediate issues before she was ready to be receptive about the long-term impacts domestic violence in the home could have on children.

Despite completing the programme as directed, Kelly stated that CYFs did not close the case as they had been lead to believe would happen. These experiences with CYFs and the parenting programme facilitator signalled the beginning of a cumulative impact of mistrust of frontline professionals for Kelly. It also was the onset of a lack of transparency, a sense that the "goal posts were being shifted", and processes and systems seeming mysterious to Kelly.

Pregnancy, Birth, and the Escalation of Violence

When Kelly fell pregnant with Dylan, her first child with Aaron, Kelly thought that if she was to have a child with Aaron, it would calm things at home. For a period, things were calm between them, but this changed when Aaron relapsed, and began to abuse drugs, alcohol and gamble. This time the violence escalated in intensity. By the time Dylan was six months old, Kelly had reached breaking point, and called the police. Kelly described being desperate for help – not for herself but for Aaron. Kelly's desire to get Aaron help has emerged to be a pattern in Kelly's help seeking behaviour. Her focus was rarely on her own needs. It is possible that she has become so colonised by Aaron that she accepts his excuses and reasons for his actions and blames herself for some of the violence in their relationship. On this occasion, Aaron was charged with Male Assaults Female. He was convicted and placed on home detention at his parent's place.

Pasifika specific service provision

The police referred Kelly and Aaron to a specialised Pasifika domestic violence Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO 1). Although Kelly expressed her desperation to get help for Aaron, Kelly also felt forced by the police to engage with NGO 1. Approximately three days later, social workers met with Kelly. Although they were a Pasifika specific service provider, Kelly did not respond well to the social workers or the service provided. She felt the social workers were judgemental her and responded to what she was saying as if she was making excuses. Kelly stated she would have disengaged from this service if she had not been so desperate for help. Kelly believed that they deliberately sent a "big tough lady" to

force her to do what they wanted her to. One such task was to obtain a protection order against Aaron.

Protection Order

There were multiple issues and barriers pertaining to the complicated processes Kelly experienced in order to obtain a protection order. Kelly felt "bullied" into having to apply for a protection order by her social worker. Kelly was under the impression that if she did not get a protection order then the social worker would notify CYFs, and this time the CYFs process would escalate to having a family group conference to discuss the care and protection of Kelly's children. Potentially Kelly could have had her children uplifted and placed into state care. As discussed in the literature review, and by the other participants, the threat of CYFs involvement to coerce women into completing agency/service provider goals has been identified in previous research and by the other participants as a significant barrier to victims of domestic violence seeking professional help .The fear of losing their children often results in women jeopardising their own safety by staying in an abusive relationship rather than potentially have their children removed (Flood & Pease, 2009; Ministry for Women, 2015; Powell & Murray, 2008). Kelly also suspected that the police and the social worker wanted her to get a protection order so that they could use it to lay further charges against Aaron. Because Kelly did not want CYFs involved again she agreed to apply for a protection order.

Kelly thought that all that was involved in obtaining an order was "signing a piece of paper" nevertheless the process she had to go through was much more involved. Kelly had to obtain the services of a lawyer to write an affidavit for her application. She then had to see a second lawyer to sign the affidavit. The process was confusing for Kelly and she did not understand the processes or functions of a protection order. The confusion was not helped by receiving conflicting information.

> *I didn't really understand what it was. They just said that this protection order is, you can say anything, if you don't want your partner there he can't be there. Whatever, is up to you. Like, if he goes out of hand you just ring the police. I said okay. So, then I went to his court case and another lady that was there to support him was like, 'oh do you*

> *understand a protection order?' She was like' the protection order states that you can't have any contact with him'. And I'm standing there thinking, 'what?' Well that's not what I got told by all these people that are meant to be helping me.*

Kelly believed that the protection order was meant to give her more control over her life; for example, control over Aaron's access to the children, not as a "bargaining tool" over her to lay "stronger charges" on Aaron. Kelly was also required to obtain a parenting order to formalise the day to day care of the children. Over and above engaging a lawyer for herself, Kelly had to communicate with the assigned lawyer for child. The parenting order allowed Aaron to have access to the children with Kelly's consent. Although Kelly felt that getting the orders made things worse for her, she did it to try and maintain some sense of control in her life, particularly relating to her children. Despite her engagement, the court system remains mysterious to Kelly. She does not understand how the family court and criminal courts operate in silos and do not communicate with each other. For example, she does not understand how Aaron can be charged in the District Court for breaching a protection order made in the Family Court.

Impact of Service Provision on Daily Life

Kelly was angry about the quality of the services she received. After having already completed a parenting programme, Kelly and Aaron were referred to another one. The programme was located a significant distance from Kelly's home and required a lot of travel to attend it. Kelly does not drive and she found it very disruptive to her and her children's routine. She commented on the irony of having to attend programmes and family court hearings where she could not take her children, thus impacting on her ability to parent her children. She was exhausted by all the tasks she had to complete and felt that she was doing the job for the people who were meant to be supporting her. Kelly also feels that she was treated as a source of funding. She said she was often signing forms and completing questionnaires to ensure funding for the agency was maintained.

Another issue Kelly had with the services she engaged with was the lengthy delay between referral dates and accessing the service they had been mandated to do. Through the Pasifika organisation, Kelly and Aaron have been referred to multiple programmes, but they had to wait 6-12 months to enter the programmes, which will take a further six months to complete. From referral to completion there can be an 18-month total time frame, from there they must go to court to report on their progress. Kelly feels their life has been “on hold”. Aaron is not allowed to reside with Kelly until the programmes have been completed, thus thwarting Kelly’s desire for them to live together as a family. This issue will be discussed later in the case. Again, Kelly felt that her request for help to stop Aaron from being abusive was ignored and instead she was “being prepared to be a single mother”. Kelly has come to this conclusion as she feels like they are only working with her. Kelly believed that they would be working on their relationship with their respective social workers at NGO1 facilitating that process. Instead Kelly has had to attend courses to get her driver’s licence and obtain passports and birth certificates for her and her children.

Kelly reflected on the broader impact on others that lengthy court processes have. Kelly felt that it meant that things move too slowly to give help to people when they need it. For example it took 6-8 weeks to get the parenting order. While she was waiting for the order she experienced pressure from other agencies

> *CYFs were on our case for the parenting order. Where is it?! Protection order, where is it?! I had to call, I had to get information from my lawyer to call the social worker to [get them to] call me and then for me to call my lawyer.*

The above quote also illustrates Kelly’s previous point of feeling like she had to do the job of the professionals. It also highlights the added pressure on victims of violence who are trying to manage daily life with children with added other pressures of systemic processes while in a state of crisis.

Kelly said she was very clear with the agency workers she dealt with, she wished to stay in a relationship with Aaron and that they need help to address the domestic violence. Despite this, Kelly felt “pressured by everyone” to end her relationship with Aaron. Kelly has spoken to the

sergeant in charge of their case, as well as another officer who regularly visited Kelly, advising them that she felt it was not fair what was happening and not what she wanted.

> *I still want my family to be together. But for my family to be strong again my partner needs help. If he goes back into jail this time, he'll be ten times worse when he comes out. No matter how long. If he's in there for six months or what, he'll still come out with the same problem. And yous haven't found a proper solution for what yous managed to do to him*

Kelly spoke on many occasions during our interview about how she feels abandoned by the system, especially the police. After Aaron's wrongful conviction and subsequent imprisonment, the police have refused to apologise to Aaron for their actions and the impact these have had. She believes they should have put Aaron through programmes to help him, and others who have been incarcerated. Kelly believes this would reduce recidivist offending. As it is, she thinks that by not providing interventions the system is making offenders worse. Kelly is of the view that the police are hypocritical in their actions and attitudes. She provided the example of a conversation she had with a sergeant who talked about the need for Aaron to take responsibility for his offending and the need for him be accountable for his actions. The stance of the sergeant may be appropriate but the sentiment is lost on Kelly because of the police refusal to apologise to Aaron:

> *But they just look at it, especially the sergeants, they just look at it like he's an adult now, he's responsible. I keep telling them, well so should you be responsible. The sergeant said to me 'he needs to come face to face with you, he should be apologising to you for what he's done'. I said 'okay, well for him to get inner peace do you think the prosecutor that sent him to jail the first time, do you think it's fair, that he should come and apologise to my partner face to face? So, you know he's at peace with it'. He's [sergeant] like, oh I don't think that's necessary.*

Kelly believes that even though Aaron's record has been cleared, that is not enough when dealing with people. There is a need for empathy and compassion. When these are lacking, already traumatised people can be left feeling re-victimised.

Kelly is disillusioned with the police who have even left her feeling intimidated and endangered. Kelly lives in a housing complex where there is suspected drug dealing. The police have visited Kelly unannounced in uniform and driving marked cars. They were doing random checks on Kelly's residence to see if Aaron was at Kelly's house which is a breach of his conditions. At the time of the interview Aaron was on home detention and he had never been to Kelly's residence. Despite Kelly expressing her feelings of vulnerability about living there on her own with her children and the potential for neighbours to perceive her to be a "snitch", the police appeared to disregard her concerns. On occasion the police threatened to charge Kelly for obstruction of justice if she did not give them the answers they wanted to hear about Aaron. As a result of her experiences with police, Kelly would advise other women not to call the police for help, primarily because of the way they spoke to her and their disregard for her concerns about safety. She posed the question – why should women call the police when they speak to women like abusers do? Attitudes and judgemental approaches by professionals will be examined further in chapter 10.

On many occasions Kelly, has felt pressured by police officers to end her relationship with Aaron and to end contact with his family. This sort of advice could be damaging to the children's relationships with their extended family and is culturally ignorant of the role that family plays in Pasifika people's lives. Family is very important to Kelly, and she said she refuses to stop her children having contact with their father or his family. Aaron's mother is a strong source of support for Kelly, providing respite and babysitting when she needs to attend programmes and court hearings. Most of Kelly's family lives overseas.

Kelly and Aaron are still in a relationship but live in different residences. They are working on their relationship themselves because they are unhappy with the services received from the agencies involved. Because of their experiences thus far, Kelly feels that when people want help it's hard to know where to go. Although she has sought help from the police, the courts, Victim Support, NGO 1, parenting programme providers and

other programmes, she feels that there has been nothing to help her. All Kelly wanted was to be treated with compassion, empathy and to feel supported. Instead she has been left feeling that support services are quick to pick you up and quick to dismiss you. She used the example that the police pick you up, they drop you at a refuge and that is their job done or the police attend an incident, identify what happened and then pass you on to CYFs or an NGO.

Kelly refused the services of the women's refuge as her family run the one she would have gone to. This is a barrier identified relating to Pasifika specific service provision, the community is small in New Zealand, so some Pasifika people are wary of dealing with one's own as they are afraid that confidentiality may be breached. For Kelly, she wanted to keep her situation "manageable". Kelly was protective of how others perceived Aaron, so she did not want her extended family to view Aaron negatively. She also wanted someone to give Aaron a chance to address his issues. Kelly was clear that if he was to relapse again then she felt he should be charged and face the consequences. Kelly believes there needs to be a stronger focus on rehabilitation, if perpetrators of violence continue to harm others then at least all avenues have been explored – by helping Aaron/perpetrators it ultimately helps the family.

Kelly feels she has changed as a person because of the abuse by Aaron and her experiences with frontline personnel. She has been left feeling that people with power have given her little support and hope. Kelly feels that those working with victims of domestic violence victims come down hard on both the abuser and the victim, which is difficult and unhelpful to the victim. Kelly presented as conflicted in her views about seeking help.

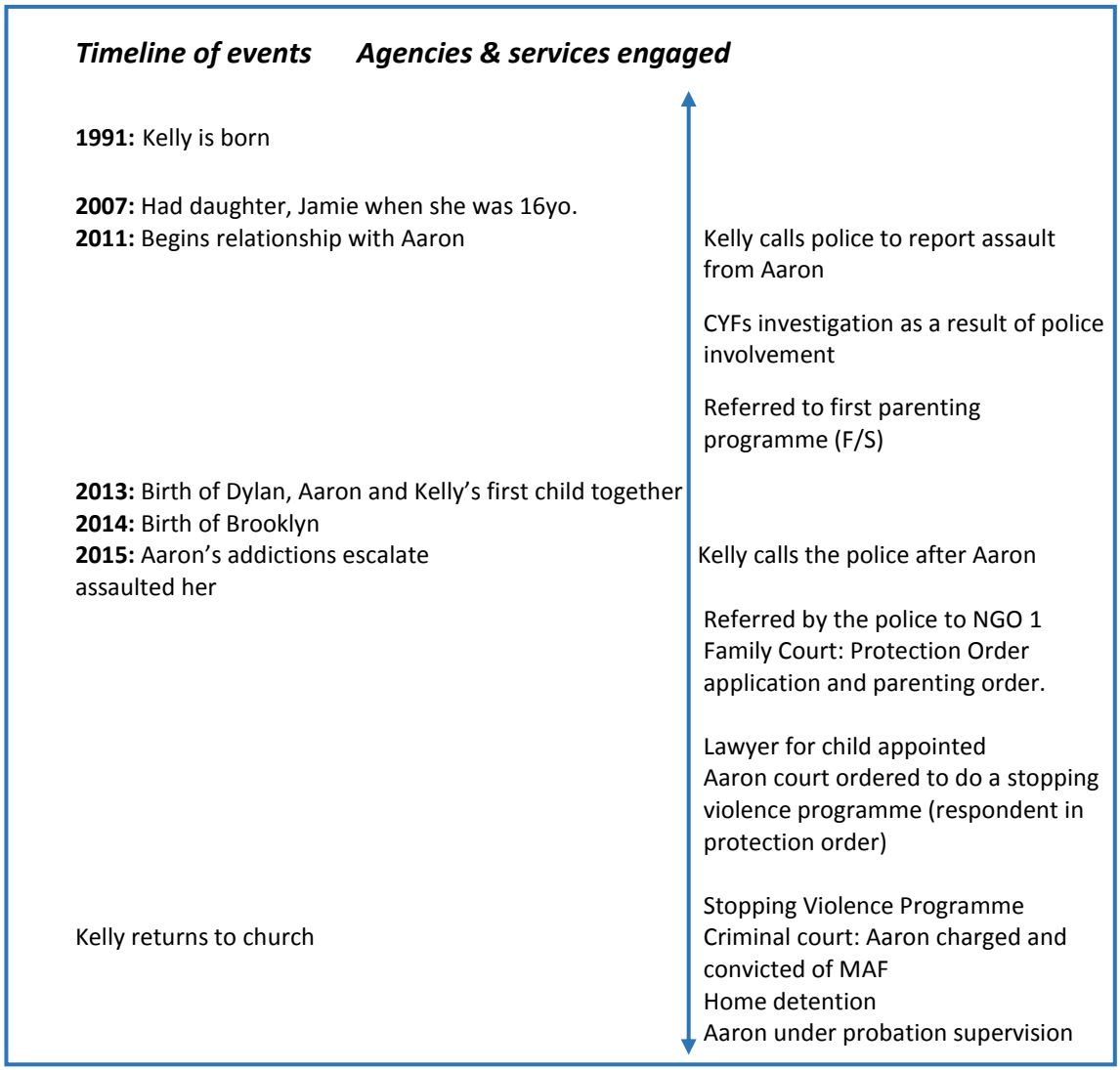
Summary

Kelly has become disillusioned by the lack of transparency and the mysterious nature of supposed systems and services charged with providing victims with support. Sadly, Kelly still does not feel as though she has had appropriate workers assigned to work with her. The 'silo' approach to service provision which was so focused on following procedure has distanced professionals from the very people they are

supposed to help. Despite the negative engagements Kelly has had with the Police, she is still glad she called them.

Lengthy delays in service provision from multiple agencies left Kelly “hanging” and feeling as though she is “doing their work for them”. The resulting feeling of exhaustion from the workload of keeping up with the agencies, providing her with support services, is impacting on her parenting skills and behaviours. Poor parenting has already been noted as a common threat to victims of domestic violence who are fearful of losing their children while under the watchful eye of government agencies charged with helping them. While it seems that little has been done to help Aaron, he has been referred to support programmes and is starting to receive some assistance.

Figure 4: Sequence of events in Kelly's life



Chapter 9: Lily

Lily is a 45 year old New Zealand-born Samoan Māori woman who has a. 10-year-old son from her relationship with Steve. In this case study, Lily's relationship with Steve is presented and her extensive involvement with state and community agencies is explored. Lily's experiences differ to the other women interviewed due to extensive multi-agency involvement in Lily and Steve's lives. Lily estimated that she has engaged with "more than 200 professionals" over a 10 year period in order to navigate herself and her son to safety.

Lily and Steve's Relationship

Lily and Steve met when living as flatmates. Approximately six months later Lily and Steve's relationship changed to a romantic partnership. Initially Lily thought that Steve was a "good catch"; he was well-connected socially, successful in his career, and came from an upper middle class family. Lily too was successful in her career field, the daughter of a faife'au (church minister), and was raised in a strict but loving home. From an outsider's perspective, they appeared to be the "ideal couple" – successful careers, living in a nice home in a good suburb. According to Lily, their relationship did not fit the common stereotypes, including her own, associated with domestic violence. Lily believes the combination of having strong Christian values (such as always seeing the good in others) and Steve's "charming persona" meant she did not ever entertain the idea that Steve could be abusive. In hindsight, she thinks he "was too perfect".

Over time, Lily came to learn that Steve had Bipolar Disorder and a history of periods of psychosis. Lily said that she had limited knowledge about mental illness and Steve "drip fed" information about his mental health status and history. He also told Lily that a side effect of his medications was that he could no longer father children nevertheless he had a son, Jamie, from a previous relationship. Lily believed Steve's explanation about his fertility status and was pleased she did not have to worry about contraception. Approximately three months later, Lily was shocked to discover that she was pregnant to Steve.

Pregnancy and the onset of domestic violence

It was when Lily fell pregnant that Steve began to be violent. The first incident happened while Steve was cooking dinner; he threw a wooden spoon at her and then kicked the cat because he was angry that she was late home from work. Lily was in disbelief that someone could be aggressive towards a pregnant woman; she said she did not have "a radar" for domestic violence" and attributed his outburst to his mental illness. As the case progresses, Lily's minimisation of Steve's violence and rationalisation of his abuse as being caused by mental illness will be discussed to illustrate how Lily made meaning of the violence.

As Lily's pregnancy progressed, the abuse escalated and Steve began to work less and less. Instead, he stayed home with his friends and, according to Lily, smoked marijuana, which, in Lily's opinion, exacerbated his mental illness. What money he did earn was put into his personal savings. Steve justified this by telling Lily that it would be used when the baby came. Lily's income paid for all of their day-to-day living costs which meant that Lily had to work until her pregnancy was full term to provide for her and Steve. Raising a child in a two parent family unit was important to Lily. Because of this belief, she convinced herself that at 34 years old she had essentially made her bed and now had to lie in it: that she had to make things work with Steve;

> *…Us girls have to be strong. We have to hold it together. We have to anchor our families. I was actually, in hindsight, really scared, but because no one around me seemed flustered… I told myself you know you need to get your big bras on girl and just handle it.*

Growing up, Lily had been taught that women need to be strong. Lily's reference to no one around her appearing flustered related to their flatmates who witnessed the abuse in their relationship. Lily described incidents such as when Steve head butted her and spat in her face during an argument. Their flatmates never intervened and Lily would have to lock herself in the bathroom to escape Steve. The flatmates' non-response served to further encourage Lily to minimise the violence. Moreover, although she had little exposure to domestic violence and mental illness

outside of her relationship with Steve, Lily did know of an Uncle who would abuse her Aunt, but here too the violence was minimised as the family would excuse his behaviour because was “a lovely man” who was good to the family. Lily said such excuses were made to enable the family to “turn a blind eye” to domestic violence. Lily deemed her family’s attitude to be reflective of cultural and social and gender norms where men are privileged over the safety of women and children.

Lily was influenced by social cues and actions of others. Steve’s mother, Awhina, would regularly intervene when Steve was having a bipolar episode. Awhina would call the mental health Crisis Assessment Team (CAT); they would attend, medicate Steve and leave without interacting with Lily. Apparently because of patient confidentiality, she was never told anything about Steve’s illness or his treatment. This left Lily feeling mystified by what she was dealing with. Lily said if she had been fully informed she would have “been on the first plane to China and got lost in the mountains somewhere” with her child. Lily would frequently call CAT because she knew of no other way to manage Steve’s behaviour; especially when he threatened to commit suicide. According to Lily, the response from CAT staff was “again…what do you mean again? Oh he always does this”. Such responses were the beginning of many years of Lily feeling isolated, and not listened to by those whose job it was to help.

First experiences of inadequate support by services

According to Lily, Steve abused her no matter the situation or event. Lily tearfully described her experiences of childbirth as “ruined” by Steve;

> *How f’ed up is it that he decided he was going to have fun with me whilst I was having his child?*

What should have been one of her happiest life milestones was marked by prolonged verbal and emotional abuse from Steve. From the time Lily started having contractions until the birth of their son, Steve was angry with her. As his anger escalated, Lily again took refuge in the bathroom. Steve subsequently kicked the bathroom door in to get to her. Lily managed to make a phone call to her mother, Mere, asking for her help. At the time, Lily attributed his anger as being the onset of a manic episode.

Although Steve had said he was angry because her onset of labour had made him late for work, she still could not recognise the difference between the dynamics of domestic violence and what is attributed to mental illness.

Mere, Lily and Steve eventually went to the hospital. At the hospital, Lily said Mere tried to balance keeping her safe from Steve while trying to stop him from getting "completely out of control". Steve got angrier and angrier each time Mere tried to keep him out of the room. Lily told the nurses she did not want him there but felt her needs and safety were not prioritised by hospital staff;

> *I was telling the nurses [what he was doing]. I don't know what he is telling them in the foyer but he is back in again. I'm trying to ignore him but he is harassing me the whole time. Then when I'm about to push baby out-24 hours later-he's whispering and chanting in my ear. I'm trying to push and I'm crying at the same time because this isn't the way it's supposed to be. I'm trying to tell these people to keep him out and they have let him back in. That is where the hospital needs to be onto it with DV, even if she gives you a hint that she doesn't want him around, follow it through.*

Lily's childbirth experience is one of many examples of feeling unprotected by professionals charged to ensure she is safe and secure. The quote also makes reference to Lily's concern about professionals' lack of knowledge and/or training about the dynamics of domestic violence. Lack of knowledge will be explored later in the case. Steve's behaviour during Lily's labour is also an example of how Steve is highly skilled at manipulating professionals to meet his needs. Lily described Steve as a highly manipulative person who employed any tactic necessary to control people. Feeling like the hospital staff had sided with Steve contributed to the cumulative effect of Lily feeling ignored, vulnerable, and professionals siding with Steve against her.

Further violence

Steve's abuse of Lily continued after the birth of their child and according to Lily, he was also abusive to his children. Contrary to Steve's promises to use his savings to provide for Lucas, when Lily asked him for money for

nappies and other necessities he refused and told her to ask her family for support. Lily was concerned about his treatment of his older son Jamie; who she described as always being “angry and dishevelled”. Steve blamed Jamie’s mother, Cherie, for Jamie’s’ mood and appearance. Steve portrayed Cherie as crazy. Lily also felt that he played herself and Cherie off against each other. An example of this was Steve would make Lily listen to phone calls where he would lead Cherie on to get what he wanted. Lily later learned that Steve was having an affair with Cherie while he was still in a relationship with Lily.

Over time, the intimacy in Steve and Lily’s relationship ceased. Lily was uncomfortable with what he wanted Lily to do sexually. Lily attributed this to Steve’s abusive childhood – allegedly both Steve and his siblings had been sexually abused - and, as a consequence, Lily felt conflicted as to how she should treat Steve and make meaning of his treatment of her. Lily empathised with his traumatic upbringing and his “child within”; on the other hand, she could not stand the man in front of her and felt he was a “heinous human being”. Lily felt unable to determine how safe she was in her relationship.

Police inaction and professional minimisation of violence

Lily frequently called the police throughout her relationship with Steve. Towards the end of the relationship, she was calling for help weekly. On multiple occasions Lily felt fobbed off, some officers told her to call when “he was really giving her a hiding.” If they did attend, Steve would “sweet talk” the police outside, while she was inside hiding. He also had friends who were police officers and Lily observed that he would talk with other officers like one of the “bros”. Lily was surprised by attending officers’ responses. Comments were made like: “it’s just a domestic” or “you’re right she is looking a bit unhinged.” Lily said she was surprised the most by female officers’ reactions to her disclosures of abuse. According to Lily, they would ask her if she was sure that was what had happened. Eventually Lily became so disillusioned by what she interpreted to be police inaction that she gave up calling them. Lily recalled a conversation with a police officer, in which she asked;

> *Why would I be ringing you? I'm not the kind of person that likes to have the police in my home. I wouldn't be ringing you if I wasn't frightened. They can come out, say those kinds of things to us women, and actually know that we are too vulnerable to actually tell anyone.*

Lily's descriptions of her treatment by the police align with the other women's experiences, particularly Kelly. Lily felt blamed and colluded against. The minimisation and questioning of the validity of Lily's experiences by social services personnel and police officers, further entrenched Lily's feelings of being let down by the people and systems that are meant to protect victims of violence.

It wasn't just the police who minimised the violence. Lily recounted an occasion when she and Steve met with his mental health social worker. Lily raised her concern about Steve being verbally abusive and throwing things at her, to which the social worker responded "at least Steve isn't hitting you". Such a reaction minimised her experiences, and there was no further enquiry as to whether Lily and Lucas were safe.

Lily's Initial Attempts at Separation

Although Lily said she struggled to comprehend the abuse she was enduring from Steve, she knew she needed to escape him. Lily approached a violence prevention organisation for support. They took Lily's case on because of the number of police call outs to Lily and Steve's home. Lily initially found their service to be useful but she changed her opinion when she felt they were not acting quickly enough; neither did they inform her adequately about the processes involved. Lily was advised to obtain parenting and protection orders but she did not know what any of it meant. She felt like they identified all that was wrong with her home environment but did not follow up with the support they said they would provide.

Lily went so far as to approach a lawyer about obtaining a protection order in preparation for her departure from the home but abandoned the idea when Steve became aware of her plans. The response times from service

professionals, police, and lawyers felt too slow for Lily to feel safe enough to leave Steve and be protected from him.

Barriers to Leaving the Relationship

Steve had been seeing a counsellor for approximately one year when he requested that Lily take part in his therapy sessions – an invitation Lily believed was prompted by her plans to leave. The counselling sessions made Lily feel uncomfortable. She felt that the counsellor was making excuses for Steve.

> *The counsellor said to me 'Oh come on Lily, you know guys drink, they smoke, they cheat…don't worry, things will get better.*

The counsellor's excuses for Steve's behaviour aligned with patriarchal norms and double standards – Lily was expected to be supportive and nurturing while submitting to accepting Steve's toxic behaviours. Further, Lily felt excluded from decision-making processes that impacted them as a family. An example of this was when Steve announced he would be going to university, a decision made with and supported by his counsellor. Lily felt like she was expected to support him with little to no consideration of the impacts on her;

> *So I became the enabler that needed to support him, needed to make excuses, needed to see the bright side, needed to see that he had this history [of abuse]. So it was heavy. And I am just getting more and more depressed.*

Lily attended these counselling sessions for one year. Despite feeling excluded and unsupported, Lily still confided to the counsellor about being "freaked out" by Steve and she needed to go away for a while with Lucas to keep safe. Unfortunately, the counsellor informed Steve of her plans and he subsequently applied to the court to prevent Lily from leaving town with Lucas. Steve's application was successful, Lily was labelled a flight risk, and the Family Court ordered her to remain where she was. This was the first of what would be 10 years of litigation in the Family Court system. Lily's experiences with the justice system will be explored further later in this case study.

After confiding in a friend about what was happening for Lily in the counselling sessions' the friend advised her to see a counsellor of her own and independent of Steve. Lily approached a support service and was allocated to Lorraine (community support worker) Lorraine's background in working with children, and in the education and disability sectors resonated with Lily. Lorraine's collaborative approach to practice meant Lily's wants and needs were heard. For the first time Lily felt heard and that her safety was top priority. Lily responded to Lorraine's commitment to her needs and feeling included in the process.

Education, Empowerment, and Separation

Lorraine's use of the Duluth Power and Control wheel (Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, n.d) led to a "light bulb moment" for Lily. This resource enabled Lily to identify that Steve's abuse was not a result of mental illness, but was linked to power and control issues;

> *I looked at her and I was shocked. I could tick every box. She said "I think its domestic violence". I was like "No". First thing I thought of was Jake the Muss and I was thinking, "No he don't fit that. He's not down at the pub hammering people over the head, let alone throwing eggs at me." I said "No", because Steve can be nice. And Lorraine said "Jake the Muss could be nice too". I was just thinking it just didn't compute. But the model did.*

Such a realisation counteracted Lily's beliefs about what domestic violence looked like, and who were stereotypically victims. Such beliefs can be barrier to seeking help because of not being able to reconcile one's own experiences with the messages received socially and in the media. Further, Lily linked the power and control dynamics to a socio-cultural level specific to Pasifika women; she stated that it is important to not be seen as weak. Domestic violence is seen as a private issue. One is expected to keep it secret and not to 'air dirty laundry in public'. Partly, Lily feels, this is because "we need to prove to them [Palagi] that we are not savages who are incapable of raising good families."

As Lily processed the new information and developed new insights into her relationship, she became angrier and angrier thinking about how she had "wasted" two years rationalising Steve's behaviour. She also began to

question why many of the people who had been involved in their lives did not have “a damn clue” about domestic violence. Lorraine worked with Lily on how to make such distinctions; one example of this was when Steve would instantly cease his abusive behaviour whenever anyone in authority was present. Lorraine told Lily “that’s where we move from bipolar to domestic violence”.

As a result of her work with Lorraine, Lily realised that she had entered the relationship with Steve with high hopes: intellectually and professionally they were on a par and together they could have done great things. But now she realised that she hated the reality of what the relationship had become.

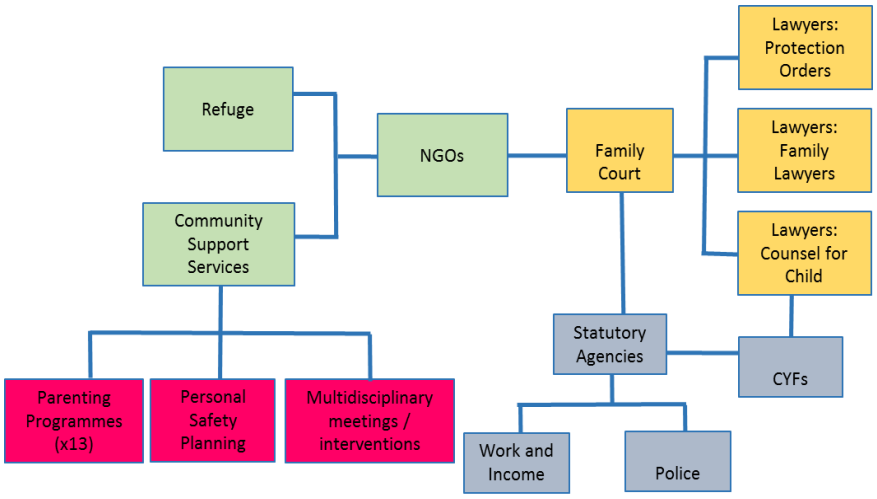
The Separation

Eventually Lily ended her relationship with Steve and went to the Women’s Refuge. Whilst at the refuge, Lily had a meeting with the lawyer for child allocated to advocate for Lucas- the meeting was ominous.

> *The lawyer for child made comments such as “I get women like you come in here all the time.” I thought, shit, I have got a bit of an uphill battle. I know they are trying to look for the truth, but you have got to rely on the lawyer for child for that and if he is going to start with that, then what the hell are we going to do? Then he decided to let me know just how much power he has. For our first Christmas, we had to stay in the refuge while everyone leaves because the days didn’t suit them [Steve’s family] for the days, we were going to my family. So my son has not had a full day with them for the last 10 years.*

Again, Lily was made to feel powerless over her own life and that she was at the mercy of others making decisions that impacted her and Lucas. By now she was enmeshed in a complex web of services (see figure 5).

Figure 5: Web of services Lily was enmeshed in



From the time Lily left Steve, he has been unrelenting in his efforts to obtain full custody of Lucas. According to Lily, he took similar action against Jamie's mother, Cherie. Because Steve has the financial resources to keep returning to court (his mother pays his legal costs), it is one of many actions that Steve employs to maintain control over Lily. Lily's description of the actions of Steve's family suggests that they collude with Steve against her, sending the message that his behaviour is sanctioned by them, including being offered large sums of money for her to stop fighting to maintain custody and supervised access in court.

Lily estimated that she has engaged with approximately 200 professionals over a 10 year period. Some contact was mandated; in other situations, Lily reached out for help. The extensive nature of agency involvement in Lily's case aligns with Sina's earlier comment (in chapter 4) that victims sit on a spectrum of help seeking behaviour. Lily's case is a good example of being on the extreme end on which women approach anyone and everyone in order to feel supported and safe. Lily experienced many barriers while navigating her way through the justice system, which has had long-term impacts on her personal health and wellbeing. The focus of the case study will now be on the systemic and social obstacles that Lily had to overcome.

Barriers to Access of Services

Several barriers to accessing services were identified by Lily. While not all the barriers were directed towards Lily, some services were supposed to be working for her, the impact on Lily and Lucas meant the barrier was very real for her while trying to escape a violent relationship.

The Family Court system and legal professional practice

Lily has had extensive involvement with the Family Court system regarding custody, visitation, and protection order applications. Having multiple issues to be resolved in the court systems has meant that Lily has had interactions with multiple lawyers – lawyers acting for her, against her and on Lucas's behalf. Lily recounted multiple experiences where she felt even her own lawyers were not acting in her best interests; she went so far as to describe them as having colluded against her with Steve, his lawyer, and lawyer for child. Lily believed that the lawyer for child "had it in for (her)"

> *He should have been our saviour, but [like Steve], he had a history of mental health. He had an ex-wife – same story. You've got me, same story. He's got access to police files. The police file is like this [big]. You've [Steve] broken a women's jaw. He's done all sorts of heinous things and what does he [lawyer for child] say? "Steve is fine. Nothing wrong with him, these girls are colluding, they are coaching their kids."*

According to Lily, the lawyer for child has a similar personal history to Steve and has a personal agenda against women. Despite the lawyer for the child having access to Steve's extensive police file, he continued to advocate that Lucas's supervised access visits should change to being unsupervised. Lily feels that the information contained in the files should have been "red flags" about the threat Steve potentially posed to Lucas and Jamie's safety.

Lily expressed frustration about having to fight continually to keep her son safe, partially motivated by concerns about potential sexual abuse. Lily feels Steve is sexually deviant as he "looks at bags of porn and he looks at young girls even". Lily also had concerns about Jamie's behaviour; she had observed him "trying to check out" her "niece's private parts". Lily

often found it difficult to distinguish between what is normal behaviour and what behaviours are symptomatic of having been abused.

In response to her observations, Lily has taught Lucas from a young age about sexual abuse and how to respond if he felt unsafe with anyone. Subsequently, Lily has been accused by professionals of coaching her son and advised not to discuss matters of sexual abuse with him. Lily has continued to teach Lucas how to keep himself safe to ensure that he felt safe to talk to her if something does not feel right. According to Lily, Lucas presents as terrified after access visits with his father, strengthening her resolve to continue to fight for supervised access.

Protection Order Application Processes

After abandoning her first attempt, Lily again sought to obtain a protection order. She engaged the services of the same lawyer she had approached in her initial attempt. Lily deemed the service she received from her lawyer to be inadequate, that she did not feel believed that she would follow through with leaving Steve this time. The lawyer wrote a “half baked” affidavit that resulted in her application being put on notice. Lily stated that the lawyer did not explain to her what having an application put on notice meant. She believed that she would be safer by applying for an order but when Steve was notified of her application, he immediately went to her house and threatened her. Lily did not notify the police. A short period of time later Steve assaulted Lily. Her injuries were so bad that she required crutches. Lily tried to contact her lawyer: however the lawyer was on holiday. Lily felt abandoned. She again found herself in a situation where processes, procedures and her rights were unknown – Lily’s perception of the professionals involved was that because they had been paid, as far as they were concerned they had done their job. Lily’s reality was different; she felt endangered by the legal proceedings taken in her name.

Eventually granted a Protection Order, Lily still had to continue to fight to protect her and Lucas. Not only was Lily having to respond to Steve’s regular challenges for custody, she also had to return to court to respond to Steve’s challenges to have the protection order revoked.

The processes had multiple impacts on Lily. Firstly, the financial toll of lawyers' fees and other court costs was significant for Lily who was reliant on Work and Income benefits/support.

> *So that kept me bust, going to court saying I don't feel safe without it. That was their own agenda again because they needed to cut back on all the litigation.*

Secondly, Lily felt pressured by lawyer for child and others to stop fighting to keep her protection order in place. Not only was it a financial strain for Lily, it was also mentally and emotionally exhausting. She felt it was yet another way that Steve was trying to have control over her;

> *He's freaking me out. He is under the house. I've got a baseball bat and all that next to me, so no sleep. I am waiting around on autopilot going "Help, help, help". Then I get a lawyer who disappears to the States for a holiday. I don't even get to talk to her in person.*

Child Youth and Family Service

After six years of continual fighting, Lily had become so concerned about Lucas's safety and wellbeing that she reached out to Child, Youth and Family service (CYFs) to seek support to protect Lucas from Steve. Lily described how she felt when making the decision to go to CYFs and not knowing who they would allocate to her case:

> *You get some real dingdongs that run off, don't know what they're up against. Next thing they find themselves up against investigation because he has complained against them. Then of course they are compelled to say that I am the problem. Once they get cornered themselves, they get ambushed and he makes sure he has got his henchmen and his enablers to help him out.*

Like Kelly, Lily was wary of "rooky" frontline personnel as she feels they are more prone to manipulation by Steve, or they looked at her like she was "potty". Her dissatisfaction with social workers extended to more experienced front line personnel she met. To Lily, they presented as uninterested and looked at her with "blacked out looks", more focussed on writing their notes than interacting with her: they failed to build rapport with Lily. The social workers concluded their interactions by advising Lily they would get back to her. Lily felt beaten down and distressed by CYFs social

workers' responses because she was in crisis at the time and needed to know then and there what the course of action would be to protect Lucas. Their lack of urgency and failure to respond to Lily compounded her stress.

Lily had Lucas assessed by a counsellor and subsequently a psychologist (because the court did not accept the counsellor's assessment). Lily felt this was necessary as Lucas had started to wet the bed amongst other concerning behaviours.. She was unimpressed with the social worker's response to the bed wetting concerns, Lily felt the social worker was more intent on trying to "make out the kid was the problem". Lily had reached this conclusion because of the social worker's repeated references to a book had recently read about children with mental health issues. Lily was frustrated with the focus being on Jamie's behaviours, in her view the social workers never acknowledged or investigated the domestic violence in their home or Steve's culpability in the situation.

Fear of losing custody

Although Lily feared losing custody of her son, particularly with CYFs involved, she still encouraged Lucas to express his feelings about how Steve treated him. Lily believed that because Lucas expressed his concerns, they were punished by the courts realising her biggest fear - Lucas was placed in Steve's care where he remained while Lily fought this decision. After one month with Steve, Lucas was returned to Lily's care. Lucas was distressed by the time spent living with Steve: he would cry and hit and punch Lily to her head. According to Lily Lucas was angry at her as he thought she did not care about him because as a consequence of her advising him to speak out about how Steve treated him, he was sent to live with Steve. Because of this experience, according to Lily, Lucas felt that nobody would help and that he had been put in Steve's care to teach him a lesson. Lily does not want her son to believe these things. She has tried to explain to him that people do want to help them: they just have limits with what they can do. Even after years of stress, trauma, and exhaustion from fighting Steve and the system, Lily still can have a balanced perspective on systems, processes, policies and the professionals charged to help people.

Lily believes that Lucas was removed from her care because she was portrayed as being too crazy to adequately care for him. She was frustrated that nobody would recognise that the systemic delays and Steve's ongoing abuse was having such a detrimental impact on her wellbeing. It is ironic that the very systems and supports that are designed to help women like Lily, were in fact putting her through further trauma.

> *Everyone kept saying "You should be grateful that your son is in your custody, because if he wasn't in your care he would be under mental health or he is going to end up like his Dad. So I am doing you a favour actually." I kept [access] for Lucas supervised for the first four years but I fought very hard and in the end I ended up having a breakdown. It didn't matter but I had a massive breakdown for two years but at least my son was safe. Now, I'm just SO angry that I was put in that position. Like I'm not even worthy to be a victim, why?! I rock up to the court. I have all this evidence from my counsellor. She is prepared to come in and I am saying to the lawyer for child "We just need a psychologist to talk to all of us. You've got Jamie, his Mum [Cherie], you've got everyone wanting to get in there and say our kids need to be protected". He turns around to me and said "Where's your money?" So that's the access to protection. Money!*

The above quote from Lily was her reflection on her own lawyer advising her to have the protection order discharged. It highlights many issues at play. Primarily, not even her own lawyer appeared to have her best interests and safety to the fore. The processes had (and continue to) worn Lily down mentally and physically. She was made to feel unworthy of protection and that she should be grateful for the help she had received. She was worried about how many of Steve's victims were being ignored, leaving him able to move on to further relationships and victimise more women and children. Lily felt that the system enabled perpetrators of violence to use it to their advantage, to be used as a tool to control her/women/victims. Again, Lily was made to feel guilty about the costs incurred (legal aid), and in the same vein, she felt that the lawyer for child, and her own lawyer, did not genuinely care about their case because care or not they were getting paid anyway.

Cultural Competence

Lily feels that a further barrier to achieving justice was practitioners' lack of cultural competency which undermined good client-professional relationships. Of specific concern for Lily was practitioners' lack of insight about the intersectionality of culture and domestic violence. Lily stated that in her experience, professionals struggled to "get" culture and the cross cultural differences between Pasifika and mainstream New Zealand cultures, let alone grasp the cultural contextual influences on the perceptions of domestic violence. Domestic violence is seen as being part of Pasifika cultures, not understanding that in pre-colonial/missionary contact time violence against women was not tolerated. It was dealt with publicly through the village matai systems and relational covenants, men were expected to protect, not harm, women and children (AhSiu-Maliko, 2016; Rankine et al., 2015).

Lily encountered problematic cultural attitudes from various professionals which led to her feeling judged and marginalised. It was so much of an issue that Lily dismissed one of her lawyers and engaged the services of young Samoan female lawyer who had recently graduated from university –despite Lily's reservations about "rookies". Lily's rationale was she thought her new lawyer would understand her culture as well as the dynamics of domestic violence. Instead, Lily was unhappy with her new lawyer as she was made to again feel like she was the problem, she needed to stop "dragging her heels", and stop upsetting everyone.

> *She told me not to go in there and get all smart on us. But I am smart. How do you think I protected my kid through all of this? Battling with people that should know, how do you think I got through this? I worked aspects of it out and I just had to play it at their own game.(began to cry). That was more hurtful, as it was my own [Samoan]. No cultural context. That is what I was looking for. She had a couple of articles she printed off on DV, but that was hardly going to help us. When I went back and looked at her submission, there was no way it would work. So access [with Steve] ended up unsupervised, and Lucas came home a mess a lot of that time. I couldn't help him!*

Lily was upset and angry that her lawyer had subscribed to dominant (both Samoan and Palagi) cultural views and practices about women and violence whilst at the same time being influenced by contemporary

Samoan gender norms expecting Lily to be submissive and silent about her trauma. Lily believed that her new lawyer too colluded with both lawyer for child and Steve's lawyer. Lily felt that she had been "stitched up" by all parties involved. She alleged that her own lawyer ensured that evidence went missing and was told to go into court and do as she was told. Her lawyer's lack of insight and knowledge about the impact of domestic violence affected how she approached Lily's case. All of the identified issues with the practice of the lawyers encountered by Lily left her feeling like she was in a position of uneven power and control dynamics in the client-practitioner relationship akin to those who are in an abusive relationship.

Undeterred by her experiences with her lawyer, Lily approached another domestic violence intervention service for counselling and was assigned to a Samoan counsellor. Lily thought this could be a good thing. She reasoned with herself that maybe the lawyer was a "one off" with poor cultural competency. Unfortunately, she was disappointed yet again. Lily felt that the counsellor's attitude towards her amounted to being "well what's your problem? He's the father: why are you fighting him?" Lily was also advised by this counsellor and other staff at the agency that they could not understand what her issues were and that she just needed to talk to Steve and work things out between them. Such advice angered Lily: it did not factor in the power and control imbalance in abusive relationships and placed the expectation on the victim to 'fix' the problem herself. Lily later found out that the Samoan woman she was assigned to for counselling was still in training. Upon learning this, Lily terminated the counselling sessions. Linking to previous experiences described in this case study; this example highlights the lack of insight/training/knowledge of the dynamics of domestic violence. It also links to Lily's feelings of having to do people's jobs for them. In this situation, Lily said she felt like she had to educate frontline personnel about domestic violence. She also felt that the client-practitioner relationship was rarely reciprocal in nature.

Impact of Service Provision

Having to retell her story "hundreds of times" was emotionally taxing for Lily. Her experiences are a good example of the silo effect on service provision. Minimal information sharing between service providers means that women have to constantly repeat their traumatic stories causing emotional exhaustion (Payne & Robertson, 2015). She felt that some of the agencies and other professionals treated her like she was a "box to tick for funding", meaning that follow up on her case was slow/minimal and in some situations (like Kelly and Jennifer) expected to do the work their support workers were meant to do. Again Lily was made to feel like a drain on resources. She believed that if front line personnel had engaged fully with her and worked proactively then protracted cases like hers could be prevented.

> *It's totally preventable, all these agencies came in, they ticked all their boxes, got their bloody funding, not one of them except the social worker [Lorraine] that hung out with me for five years. Not one of them actually thought we want this resolved. We want this nailed. In that context you needed an advocate. I don't know what the job description is for social workers…but it should be for the needs of the family. They come with different needs. I had pride. I had shame. Someone with a cultural context can get [that]…*

The above quote captures the complexity of the role culture plays. If the front line personnel had adequate cultural competency skills when working with Pasifika peoples, they would have been able to identify the influence that shame has on decision making processes. As discussed in the literature review, bringing shame to the family is to be avoided at all costs. Victims of domestic violence factor the avoidance of shame into their decision making process – whether that be disclosure to others that they are victims of abuse or that they want to leave an abusive relationship.

Lily had participated in multiple programmes and seen many different counsellors, social workers, and psychologists over the 10 year period she had been engaged in the fight to keep herself and Lucas safe. She was "screaming out to anyone" for help, to make the ongoing fight stop. Lily described the impact as sinking into depression and was exhausted from people "constantly threatening to remove my child" or warning her that

they would place Lucas back into Steve's care. On many occasions, when Lily approached agencies for help, she was required to complete a programme, usually a parenting programme.

> *It was the only way they could hook me in. Look I'm all parented out! I'm such a good parent. No one advocates for their child like I do. In this economy with very limited funds and still be able to maintain a standard of living the way I have done and being creative doing it, there is no one. I should run these courses [laughs]. But I would always have to sign up to something unnecessary. There was no need for it.*

Lily estimated that she had completed 12 or 13 parenting programmes.

Financial Strain

Over and above the multiple programmes described above, Lily reflected on the impact of engaging with multiple counsellors voluntarily and as mandated by the court. Lily was court ordered to see two different counsellors as part of the custody process. This was over and above the counsellor she had seen independently, who had submitted reports to the court which were not accepted as evidence. Lily felt like the two court-approved counsellors were going through the motions and did not seem to be overtly interested in engaging with her or her situation. The counsellor's reaction was reminiscent of her experiences with CYFs social workers, demonstrating a lack of rapport building and a lack of insight of the importance of this, particularly for Pasifika people. Lily was frustrated that their court reports essentially said the same things that her counsellor had noted about the situation. Lily was further frustrated that she was then expected to obtain assessment reports from a psychologist, at her own expense, over and above the counsellors' assessments. The psychologist's fees were significant, and required Lily to find a part time job to raise the money. The costs of the ongoing custody court processes became so great for Lily that at one point she had to obtain a bank loan to meet them.

Although Lily fought for four years to maintain supervised access for her son's time spent with Steve, this was not without a cost. Supervised access was ordered to take place across town. It was a long way for her to

travel. Emotionally it took a toll on Lily as she said the location held too many traumatic memories related to her time with Steve. Despite these issues being raised by Lily, not only were access visits ordered by the court to take place across town, their case itself was also transferred to at the Family Court there as it was more convenient for Steve. The decisions made by the judges in the Family Court made Lily feel like her needs were not important and that Steve's needs were privileged over hers. She felt silenced, her voice unheard.

Support to Access of Service

Despite all the barriers to access of service, one key support to access that has made all the difference to Lily is discussed below.

Family Court Judge

At the time of the interview, Lily was finally nearing some resolution to the ongoing litigation in the family court. One advantage of having the custody hearings transferred was that it meant that the case was heard by a Samoan judge who, according to Lily, recognised the power imbalances and that the case had continued for far too long. The judge spoke with Lucas and subsequently dismissed the lawyer for child. The lawyers were chastised for treating tangata whenua (Māori/Indigenous people) so poorly, and reminded them that aiga and whanau should drive the law not the other way around. The judge's actions and position spoke to Lily's "cultural context", she finally felt acknowledged, heard, and empowered.

Summary

Lily's upbringing taught her the message that women had to be strong and be the anchor for their family. Within this case study, Lily has shown how she has gone above and beyond that call of duty for Lucas.

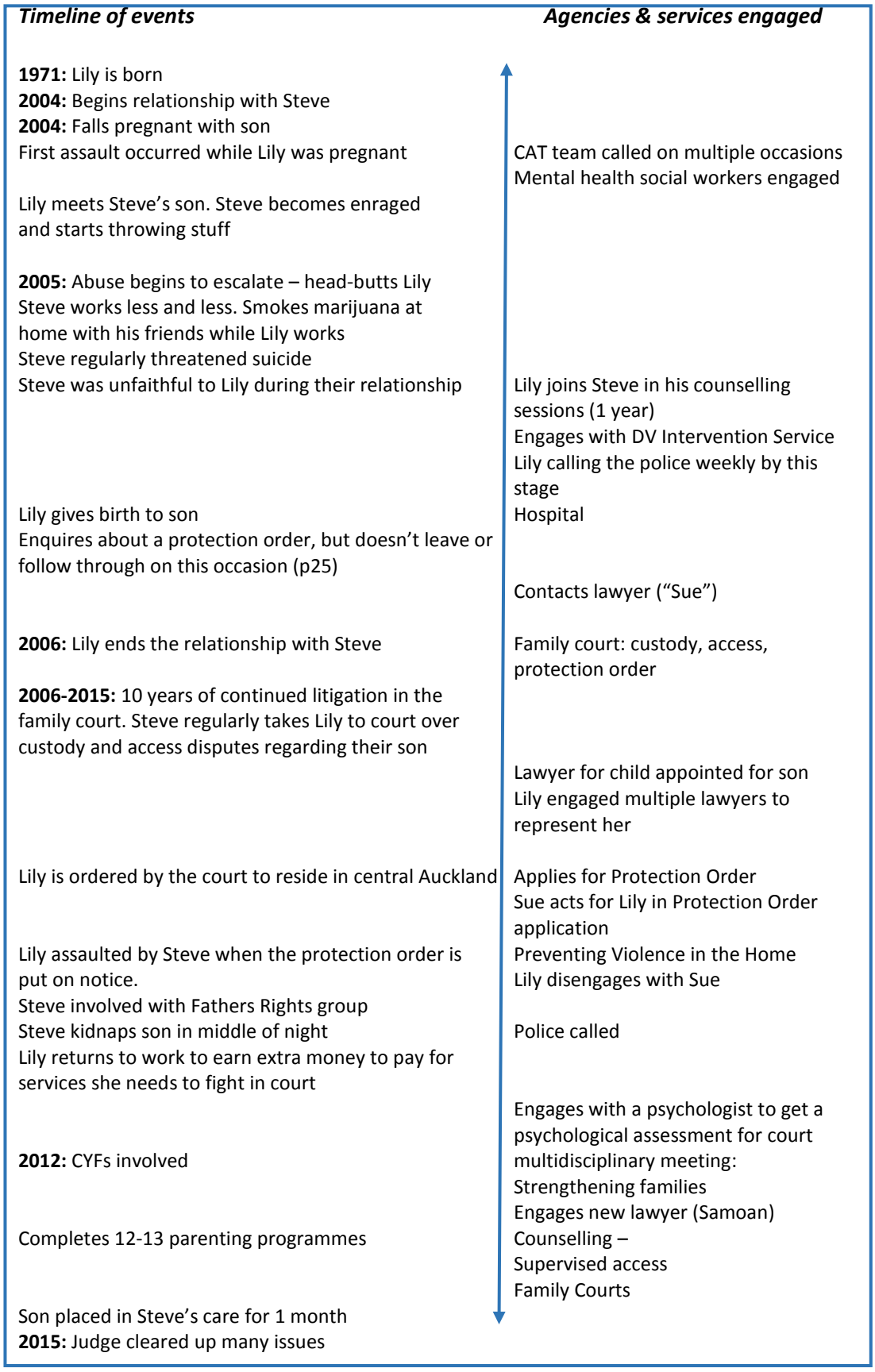
Although there were witnesses to Steve's earlier violence upon Lily, no one intervened on her behalf. Because she initially followed the social cues and actions of others who did nothing to stop the violence, Lily was delayed in realising the violence was wrong.

Multiple services that were supposed to protect Lily and other women like her, failed to keep her safe, such as:

- hospital staff keeping Steve away during the birth of her son,
- police minimizing the level of violence during calls for assistance,
- counsellors making collusive comments ‘that’s how men are’,
- services basing the quality of their service on the presentation of her home during site visits
- Lawyer for the child lobbying for unsupervised access despite reading file notes containing history of violence towards him.

Within Lily’s case are examples of how victims of domestic violence are treated so negatively and blamed for the impacts of domestic violence, while the perpetrator is largely left alone. Responsibility to prove wrong doing rests with the victim. The impact of trying to get away is as traumatic. Even when Lily tried to be protective of her son, she was threatened with having her son taken away. The silver lining of this case is placed solely at the hands of the Family Court judge. It should not be such a long road to get to that point.

Figure 6: Sequence of key events in Lily's life



Chapter 10: Discussion

E poto le tautai ae sese lana atu I ama[1]

In this chapter, I explore the common themes, barriers, supports, and recommendations that emerged from the interviews with both participant groups. The cross-case analysis is structured into four sections: In the first section the impacts of domestic violence and coping strategies will be explored, including how this influenced health, wellbeing, and help seeking behaviours (or not). Secondly, I will discuss the barriers to help seeking that the women experienced, as well as the perspectives of the key informants. The third section is focused on barriers experienced whilst help seeking from both the systemic and societal contexts. Finally, supportive factors and influences will be presented as examples of what worked well and what both participant groups believe there should be more of.

Impacts and Coping

All of the women interviewed experienced physical abuse, although it varied in frequency and severity across the participants. In conjunction with the physical violence, they also experienced emotional, psychological, and financial abuse which further impacted them in various ways. In addition, Teuila, Jennifer, and Lily all experienced partner infidelity. The consequences of all forms of violence often "flowed over" to their children and were sometimes exacerbated by the way members of the abuser's family often colluded with him.

It has been widely established that domestic violence has serious detrimental effects on physical, mental, and emotional health (Fanslow, 2005; Fanslow & Robinson, 2004; Haldane, 2009; Magnussen et al., 2008; Simon-Kumar et al., 2017; Wilson & Webber, 2014). The experiences of the women in this research reflect these previous research findings. As a

[1] The Samoan proverbial expression derives its meaning from the tasks involved with a fishing expedition, particularly the important role of the master fisherman. That is, despite all the preparations, navigational skills, and perceived knowledge and care to ensure a successful malaga (expedition), they will sometimes fall short. Thus, s/he seeks the grace and humility for any offence that may be experienced in the journey.

result of prolonged abuse from their current and former partners, Kelly and Jennifer, for example, reported experiencing strong feelings of depression at various times which impacted how they responded to the violence and whether or not they sought help from sources external to their social/familial support networks. Bella described feeling numb, mourned the loss of her creativity for many years, and even physically lost her voice twice, for a year at a time. Bella's somatic reaction was symptomatic of how she was silenced throughout her life – firstly as a child experiencing parental abuse, then throughout her marriage, and finally from the traumatic incidents that occurred post separation with other people and situations in her life. Kelly reflected on how, prior to her relationship with Aaron, she was kind, generous, and willing to help anybody. Now, by her own assessment, Kelly has become guarded, jealous, less inclined to be generous or kind to others as she feels used rather than respected. Lily, Bella, and Jennifer also experienced depression and exhaustion as a result of their violent relationships, compounded by the difficulty of navigating complex issues such as childhood sexual abuse (Jennifer), pressure and harassment from their partners' families, and mental health issues (Lily).

Unsurprisingly, the women reported that the violence also had major impacts on their children. Bella, Teuila, Kelly, and Lily's children were exposed to varying degrees of domestic violence. Lily's son and Teuila's eldest child also directly experienced abuse from their father/step father respectively. As a result, both women became vigilant in observing changes in their children's behaviour which might indicate trauma or ongoing negative impacts. Bella, Lily, and Teuila reflected on how their relationships with their children had been affected by their violent relationships. Lily and Teuila were concerned about aggressive behaviours their sons exhibited, particularly after access visits with their fathers. Children are often used as tools of abuse by the perpetrator (Laing, 2016; Vivienne, Gavey, & Tolmie, 2012), and this was the experience for four of the five participants . Bella, Lily, Jennifer, and Teuila, each reported that their children were used as a tactic of power and control by their partner/former partner. As a result of manipulation,

Bella felt compelled to leave her children in the care of their father, Sam, when she left the relationship. While Bella was eager to regain custody of her children via the legal system she was dissuaded by her father, who had also abused Bella throughout her life. Bella's experiences are representative of victims' who are not in the position to make autonomous decisions. Bella felt forced into making decisions whilst in a state of crisis and under the control of two men who had abused her for decades between them. Bella's experiences represent the decisions that many women have to make when deciding whether they remain in an abusive relationship or whether they leave. If they stay, they are jeopardising their own safety and prolong their children's exposure to violence. If they leave the relationship they risk losing custody of their children to either their partner, or if CYFs are involved, into the foster care system.

In Lily's case, she was forced to repeatedly respond to a decade's worth of litigation instigated primarily by Steve in order to maintain full custody of her son, and to ensure that Steve's access time with Lucas remained supervised. Steve has been able to use the court system as a way to maintain power and control over Lily's life by filing custody applications year after year, an example of what is referred to as secondary victimisation or 'paper abuse' (Laing, 2016). She has felt disempowered as many aspects of her life, including where she is ordered to live, are decided by judges. Lily has been physically and emotionally exhausted by the lengthy processes involved. Steve has the financial resources to use the courts as a tool of control, Lily however, had to obtain personal loans, and find extra income to enable her to respond to Steve's persistent litigation. Lily and Lucas have also felt punished by the courts. When Lucas disclosed abuse, Lily encouraged him to tell the lawyer for child in the hope it would protect Lucas from Steve. Instead of limiting Steve's access, Lucas was instead court ordered to live with Steve as a consequence of Lily's approach to CYFs for support and Lucas's behavioural issues Lucas still expresses anger towards Lily for encouraging him to speak out as being sent to live with his father was traumatic. Lily is concerned about the long-term impacts on her son as his already aggressive behaviour towards her worsens post visits with his

father. Sina too is concerned about the toll that shared care arrangements take on women and children. For Teuila, she was silenced and essentially coerced into not seeking help to protect herself because of the custody case regarding her step-son. She was forced to choose between her own safety and the success of their case before the courts and her individual safety. The lawyer who represented them in the custody dispute knew that the police had been involved with Tom and Teuila on at least one occasion because of a domestic violence incident, yet instead of establishing whether domestic violence continued to be an issue in the relationship (thus a risky environment to place Nico in), she instead did her best to ensure it was not raised during the custody case. Again, the intersection of the family/collective wants and needs are prioritised over individual safety aligning with Sina and Lily's position that psychological and emotional supports are not prioritised or focussed enough to meet the needs of all parties involved.

The consequences of violence in the home on children often has immediate as well as longer term impacts (Boshier, Wademan, & Dewar Szirani Letts, 2013; Stainton, 2016). For instance, when Bella was leaving Sam, she attempted to talk to each of the children to explain her decision. However, she was only able to speak to her eldest son before being intercepted by Sam. Sam subsequently portrayed her to the children as a bad mother. This has particularly undermined her relationship with her daughter. Bella's daughter still harbours anger towards her mother about ending the marriage to her father. Further, Bella has long had concern that her children would enter relationships in which they become the abuser or the abused. Bella's concerns align with research findings that children exposed to violence are taught a value system that normalises and condones violence (Chapple, 2003, as cited in Robins, 2010; Stainton, 2016). Unfortunately, Bella's daughter is now a domestic violence victim herself, realising Bella's fear. The effect of the violence on children often leads to downstream impacts on the women. That is, as agencies started to intervene for the children, the women found themselves entangled in various programmes and processes which often had unhelpful consequences for them. For example Lily and Kelly felt that the impact of

meeting mandated requirements from CYFs, and the family courts in particular, inhibited them from parenting their children adequately, for example, meeting their day to day needs, additional commitments. These issues are discussed in the barriers while help seeking section.

Power and control tactics employed by their abusive partners influenced the length of time the women remained in the relationship, and therefore the ultimate decision of whether to leave or not, as well as the extent to which they sought help. Bella, Teuila, and Lily were regularly subjected to threats of suicide from their former partners and consequently had to navigate the conflicting emotional responses that this form of manipulation elicited. Threatening to commit suicide is a common tactic of control, used by an abusive partner to manipulate their partners to feel sorry for them or feel responsible for keeping them alive (Myhill & Hohl, 2016). Bella and Teuila's ex partners would pull knives from drawers to emphasise the threat. The threats appeared to have worked as none of the women reported this as being one of the reasons to leave instead they cited it as a reason to stay. Bella, Teuila, and Lily were also influenced by the pressure to keep their experiences private, and to remain silent; seeking help was too much of a risk to take. The factors of fear and silence will be addressed throughout this chapter as it is relevant in multiple circumstances.

Making Sense of the Violence

As the women tried to make sense of the violence, all five identified events and factors that they believed were the reasons why their partners abused them. Principal among these were addiction and substance misuse. The extent to which this played a role sat on a spectrum. Bella said her partner could not handle alcohol well when he did drink, whereas Kelly's partner had multiple addictions which escalated the level of physical violence in their relationship. Kelly would do her best to keep Aaron high to avoid the coming down period during when he would become very angry and violent towards her. Teuila's management of Tom's drinking was done by creating a house rule that alcohol was only to be consumed in the garage. Containing the consumption to an area away from the house enabled

distance (albeit small) for herself and the children. Such a rule was the only control over her living environment Teuila had. A commonly held perception is that women in an abusive relationship have all decision-making abilities removed from them. Teuila's case illustrates that this is not always the case yet the ability to make rules is dependent on the abuser's goodwill to allow this to happen (Towns & Adams, 2009). Jennifer believed that Tevita's violence was because he had "anger problems", and had been exposed to alcoholism and had sniffed gas during his childhood. Lily believes Steve's drug use exacerbated the abuse she endured. Identifying alcohol and/or addiction as causal factors for their partner's violence denies the abuser's responsibility for not mastering his own emotions, however, the responsibility for perpetration of violence falls on the abuser themselves (Towns & Adams, 2016) An abuser's ability to mask their abusive self in public, and only express violence towards their partners in the private domain demonstrates they do have control over their anger. However, they choose not to exert such control when dealing with their partner indicating it is a choice to be violent. Likewise, addiction and/or alcohol are often attributed as a causal factor for domestic violence, it can exacerbate violence, however, is not the cause of it.

Mental health problems were sometimes identified as causal factors by the women. For example, Lily's partner was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and had extensive engagement with the mental health system. The CAT team was called to their home on multiple occasions to attend to Steve during an episode. Lily had little knowledge about mental illness. When she asked for information about Steve's illness she was given little to no information or support regarding how to live with someone with bipolar. Lily was unable to distinguish between bipolar induced behaviour and domestic violence. She felt let down by mental health professionals and, to an extent, felt unsafe. Kelly described her partner as having post-traumatic stress disorder. It was not clear whether that was an official diagnosis or Kelly's interpretation while trying to make sense of Aaron's abuse. However, it is possible that such explanations minimised their respective partner's responsibility. For example, Kelly essentially took half of the blame for the abuse in the relationship as she described it as being mutual

aggression. Kelly's mutualisation of the domestic violence in her relationship is a form of minimisation, as when the interview progressed she identified her partner's use of emotional, mental and psychological abuse. Such a perspective is an example of how women create pictures of their experiences and mutualising the violence can leave one vulnerable to further abuse. Kelly's perception of her abuse skews the balance of responsibility to both of them. If practitioners or other frontline professionals do not recognise the possibility that women will minimise the abuse they experience then the underlying power and control issues remain unaddressed (Wilson et al., 2015).

All of the women noted that their respective partners had been abused as children, including physical and sexual abuse. They believed that because their partners had been abused and mistreated they had learned that violence was normal. Teuila spoke of violence being a part of everyday life for her partner throughout his childhood, she surmised that Tom had been choked as a child and had associated this behaviour as a form of control as choking her was his "go to move". This view was reinforced by witnessing the use and severity of violence daily when they visited Tom's family in Samoa, The women's accounts and reflections indicated that the impact of childhood experiences for their partners resulted in their partner's normalisation of violence as viable tools for control over intimate partners and children. Rationalising their abuser's behaviour in this way again deflects from personal responsibility as not all children who are abused go on to become abusers.

Sina asserted that in her experience, Pasifika peoples have more often than not grown up in poverty and abusive social and systemic environments which has affected their view of violence. From Kiana's perspective, Pasifika peoples have learned to tolerate different levels of violence, thus reinforcing the message that violence is normal or acceptable. Such a perspective aligns with the women participants' experiences. Bella was abused by both parents. She saw her marriage to Sam as a way out of abuse. However, her marriage was abusive also. She knew nothing but abuse until she became a part of her husband's family. Teuila frequently referred to her childhood in the Islands as being

characterised by exposure to violence, socially and institutionally. Intervention only occurred when the violence crossed an unspoken yet socially acceptable line. For a long period of time Teuila thought that violence in relationships with Pasifika men is the norm and attributed it to being the fa'asamoa way, so much so she consciously chose to not enter into a relationship with a Pasifika man again. The role that culture and intercultural clashes play in Pasifika women's perceptions of violence will be explored further in the culture section of this chapter. Kelly grew up with a father who used belts or jug cords to "physically discipline" her and her siblings. Jennifer's experiences of sexual abuse and how her family responded to it (expecting her to forgive her abuser), including the continuation of her abuser being a regular visitor to her home, gave her the message that her safety was not paramount to her kinship networks and reinforcing abuse to be the norm for her. None of the women had knowledge or insight into the power and control dynamics at play in a domestic violence relationship. Kiana often questions how bad it has to get for women to do something about the domestic violence because it has become normal or viewed as part of life.

Coping With and Resisting the Violence

The strategies the interviewed women employed to enable themselves to cope with and manage the violence varied. Some of their coping strategies involved the mobilisation of family support for themselves and getting support for their partner. Other strategies involved re-framing the abuse in a way which seemed to make it more bearable. There can be a community expectation of keeping up appearances and not talking about abuse, thus contributing to domestic violence remaining a private issue. Disclosure of abuse by a victim can be viewed as bringing shame to the family. For Samoan people, shame is to be avoided (AhSiu-Maliko, 2016; Ministry for Women, 2015; Peteru, 2012; Rankine et al., 2015), seemingly at all cost when domestic violence is the issue. Shame is a multi-layered concept for Pasifika victims. Many women feel internal shame for 'allowing' their partner to abuse them. Furthermore, they fear how they will be perceived by family and friends for staying and putting up with abuse. An example of avoiding shame and stigma from the women in this research is Kelly's

refusal to access the Pasifika safe house because of personal relationships with those who manage it. She did not want anyone to view Aaron negatively.

The expectation to keep quiet about private issues teaches women that domestic violence is to an extent a normal feature of intimate relationships and is something to put up with. Bella's mother regularly instilled in her that men are "animals" and abuse of any form was to be "swept under the rug". Teuila was determined to not have her home life intersect with her career or for the abuse to become public knowledge. She fully subscribed to the notion that one does not "air one's dirty laundry in public" as the consequences are far reaching. Lily believed that if she went public about her abuse it would be deemed disrespectful to her culture as she would be perceived to be challenging her partner's status and authority as the head of the household (the assumed role of men in Samoan culture). Lily is part of a prominent family, adding extra pressure to avoid stigma being attached to the family name. Bella's reason for staying silent about her abuse was her attachment to Sam's family. Her ex-husband was raised in a loving environment, with him being the favourite child. Bella credit's her former in-laws for teaching her what love looked like. Treasuring this environment, Bella tolerated the ongoing abuse in her marriage to ensure that her bonds were not severed with the first group of people to ever show her kindness and love. Accordingly, Bella learned to detach herself psychologically: she spoke about her experiences as if it happened to someone else. She also minimised the fact that the people who loved her so much also colluded with her abuser by laying the blame on her, aligning with previous research findings that victims are also afraid that they will be blamed for causing their partners to be violent (Giles et al., 2005). Teuila feared the impact on her career if knowledge of her abuse became public. To some extent, her mother colluded with her abuser, again aligning with the pattern in previous research that victims fear. their families/support networks will minimise or deny the abuse, and even protect the perpetrator (Fanslow et al., 2010; Koloto & Sharma, 2005).

All of the aforementioned strategies resulted in the women normalising and rationalising their experiences of violence. In the next section, barriers to help-seeking, including perception and beliefs, will be examined.

Barriers to help seeking

Previous research (as discussed in Chapter 2) and the findings from this research indicate that the problematic responses to domestic violence can be usefully categorised as social barriers, and systemic barriers. Both make it harder for Pasifika women to navigate their safety. In some cases, the social and systemic barriers intersect, thus making it necessary to investigate the intersectionality of theory and practice, gender and culture, and the clash between different cultural paradigms (e.g. feminist interventions not acknowledging the dilemmas created for women because of such intersections). Social barriers will be examined first in this section, followed by systemic responses.

Culture

As was discussed in the literature review, navigating the women's intercultural clashes, disconnection from their Samoan culture, culturally influenced financial pressures, gender, the role of the church/faith/religion, and the role of family influenced not only their cultural identity, but also how they interpreted their experiences of domestic violence in a cultural context. Teuila, Lily, Bella, and Kelly spoke of many experiences which illustrated the numerous intercultural and intergenerational clashes New Zealand-born and/or raised Pasifika people experience. The relational and cultural dynamics at play in these clashes has influenced how they perceived and responded to domestic violence. Although all women interviewed acknowledged that domestic violence is not acceptable, they attributed this perception as having been influenced by their socialisation and education in New Zealand, not from the influence of their Samoan/Cook Island cultural world views and values. A further level of complexity was the impact that the abuse they experienced had on the levels of connection to their cultural and gender identities.

Sina and Kiana reflected on the impact of colonisation, societal and systemic violence and oppression, and cultural disconnections for Pasifika

peoples as reasons why Pasifika women do not seek help. Bella was completely disconnected from her Samoan culture until she met her ex-husband. Teuila grew to hate the Samoan culture because she felt that it was a culture of violence and hate. Lily felt significant pressure to adhere to Samoan cultural and gender norms. Such issues and barriers also contributed to how the women perceived and responded to the abuse they endured, it also influenced their informal coping strategies in response to domestic violence.

Dominant ideologies influence social practices in ways that may not be comfortable for a person who intellectually holds onto alternative possibilities within dominant ideology (Towns & Adams, 2009). The women were raised and educated in New Zealand and socialised in two worlds with conflicting values, norms, and expectations which influenced their interpretation of culture and violence. Lily and Teuila both spoke of how Samoan culture, as they experienced it, needed to change, particularly how women are treated and how domestic violence is responded to, especially by church leaders, yet had different reactions. Teuila felt it was too big to be changed. Lily on the other hand responded to this by becoming active in groups which are working toward ending violence against women and advocacy for victims of domestic violence.

I will now explore each of the aforementioned barriers in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Generational and intercultural differences

Age has been identified as a contributing factor influencing attitudes and perceptions of violence against women (Cribb, 1997; Flood & Pease, 2009). Cribb's (1997) research made delineations between New Zealand-born and Island-born Samoan women, their ages, and how this influenced their attitudes and acceptance of domestic violence. Younger New Zealand-born women were less likely to accept domestic violence due to exposure to higher education and other influences (Cribb, 1997; Flood & Pease, 2009). Such findings applied to an extent to the women who were interviewed in my research. Teuila stated she knew that the abuse she endured was not acceptable yet she felt there was nothing she could do

about it as she associated violence with fa'asamoa culture. Lily too knew that in the New Zealand context domestic violence was not acceptable. However, her reflection on her lack of knowledge about, and exposure to, domestic violence growing up contributed to her ability to rationalise Steve's abuse.

Kelly grew up with parents who would use excessive physical force as their primary method of discipline. Their exposure to violence extended to witnessing their father's abuse of their mother. From a Western perspective, Kelly was a victim of child abuse herself, however, from her cultural lens/perspective, Kelly attributed it to be normal disciplinary methods of Samoan parents – essentially normalising and condoning violence as a viable response to various situations. The acceptance in contemporary Pasifika cultures of physical violence as an accepted form of discipline is another example of the colonial and missionary influence which has disrupted the cultural protection of women and children (AhSiu-Maliko, 2016). As discussed in the literature review chapter, the relational space in the parent-child relationship is protected by the brother-sister sacred covenant (Peteru, 2012) but physical abuse of women and children disrupts the relational space.

Bella knew no other way of life than that of abuse, both in childhood and subsequently in her marriage. When they arrived in New Zealand, Bella's parents settled in a small town, severing all relationships with their family. After marrying Sam and experiencing a loving family environment for the first time, she realised what she had missed by not having relationships with her grandparents and extended family. Bella did not want this for her children, despite significant concern about the negative influence her parents could have on her children's views about relationships and men; she actively encourages the maintenance of grandparent-grandchild relationships. It was not until engaging the services of a Samoan therapist that she realised just how disconnected from her cultural heritage she had been. The healing and supportive reconnection to her Samoan culture will be discussed further in the supports section of this chapter.

Jennifer's experiences of sexual abuse and her extended family's expectations to forgive her perpetrator sent the message that her emotional and physical wellbeing was secondary to the value placed on forgiveness. Jennifer came to understand this when her father maintained his relationship with her uncle, the man who abused her, by continuing to allow him into the family home. Moreover, her extended family disregarded her mother's instruction to never leave her alone with her Uncle. The message that Jennifer took from these events was that although her family acknowledged that the abuse was not acceptable, it is more acceptable to forgive and remain silent about one's suffering. Jennifer's mother reported her abuse to the Police, but nothing proceeded further than an investigation.

Lily, Kelly, and Teuila's reflections on their role as women indicated a clash between the influence of mainstream New Zealand and what was expected of them as women in a Samoan context. Further, family members' who are aware of abuse occurring, are also expected to remain silent and not report it as it is considered to be a private matter to be dealt with by the family (AhSue-Maliko, 2016). The intersection of gender and culture will now be explored.

Gender

Due to the gendered nature of domestic violence it is important to understand the attitudes that prevail, regarding the perpetration of violence against women, specifically within a Samoan/Pasifika context. It is important to discuss the influence and intersection of culture, social and/or financial status, and gender roles norms and the resultant expectations placed on different aspects of relationships, including culturally influenced attitudes and perceptions of violence, and the systemic responses to Pasifika female victims of domestic violence. The attitudes that men and women hold about violence against women influence their actions and decision making when domestic violence is present in the relationship. Women's reactions to abuse are shaped by those around them (Flood & Pease, 2009).

When men adhere to sexist, misogynistic, and patriarchal values, they tend to have hostile perceptions of women and condone violence against them (Flood & Pease, 2009). Such values were at play in the relationships of the women interviewed, particularly the patriarchal and religious perspectives that women are to be chaste and not to engage in relationships (other than marriage) of any form with a member of the opposite sex. Teuila's ex-husband would become enraged if she maintained any form of contact with her male friends. He would check her phone to see if she was sending text messages to such people. Infidelity was an issue in Lily's, Jennifer's, and Teuila's relationships. Lily's former partner was unfaithful to her on multiple occasions. She viewed this as using sex as a further form of manipulation to gain what he wanted. In Teuila's case Tom's family even encouraged him to have a girlfriend because Teuila was deemed as not behaving like a good fa'asamoa wife. Jennifer tolerated Sione's repeated infidelities because she strongly believed in maintaining a nuclear family unit in which to raise her son. Nuclear family units are upheld as the ideal by communities, the state, and the church (Stewart-Withers, 2011). Jennifer was one of the only ones actively involved in a formal religious community. The role of religion will be discussed later in this chapter.

Gender roles and the expectations of what women should tolerate and how they should behave was a barrier to the women seeking help. Patriarchal /colonial traditional ideals place women as responsible for persevering with a relationship and being expected to solve the relationship problems, effectively not allowing women an alternative way to make sense of what is happening to them. Teuila's experiences taught her that if she was to be viewed as a good woman (e.g. not too Palagi) and fa'asamoa wife, it was not acceptable to challenge her husband and cultural obligations. Challenging their partners to achieve equitable status in the relationship was constructed as being at the expense of their man's essence: men must be seen to be in charge (Towns & Adams, 2009).

There was a duality to what was expected of Teuila. Because of her higher academic achievement she was valued and viewed as a source of pride to aiga, and of income to Tom's Island-based family. However, if she did not

agree with a decision or practice of her husband's she was derided as being too much of a know-it-all (fia poto) and getting above her station. Teuila was expected to earn a higher income, contribute more in the form of remittances and fa'alavelave yet be submissive to her husband, despite her considerable skills and her ability to navigate life in New Zealand. Lily subscribed to the expectation that when there are problems within an intimate relationship including domestic violence, a woman was expected to be strong, be the family anchor, remain silent about her trauma and, ultimately, to stop fighting. In summary, the dominant idea about gender to emerge from the women's stories and confirmed by the key informants was that the woman's role is to look after one's family, to fulfil one's cultural financial obligations via remittances and fa'alavelave, remain in family units. Essentially it is viewed as the woman's role to assume the responsibility to keep the family together.

Western interventions and perceptions of domestic violence are not compatible with ethnic communities. The feminist individualistic notion of empowerment operates from the belief that women will approach an agency for help (Haldane, 2009), privileging their identity as a woman over their cultural identity. Such an approach is ineffective as what it does not acknowledge is that a Pasifika woman does not see it as being in her best interest to seek help outside of the family: instead, the focus for the woman is on what is best for her family (Haldane, 2009; Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Rankine et al., 2015). The conflict between dominant feminist discourses regarding domestic violence and collective cultural influences can lead to an ideological dilemma for women (Towns & Adams, 2009) creating a climate of fear and silence. One's purpose within Pasifika/collectivist cultures is derived via the role one plays within one's family and broader community. In contrast, individualistic cultures, such as dominant Palagi New Zealand culture, place responsibility for safety and wellbeing on the individual. Specific to domestic violence, women are viewed as autonomous individuals who if empowered enough can navigate their way to safety.

Church/faith/formal religion

As was discussed in the introduction, the migration process has had a significant impact on the wellbeing of Pasifika people in New Zealand. The inability to adapt culturally has been identified as a significant risk factor for violence. The migration experience has resulted in the breakdown of cultural norms and social supports whilst resettling in New Zealand. There have been many challenges to negotiate including addiction issues, low socioeconomic status, and housing issues that disrupt the traditional support systems of their home communities. It has been challenging to maintain traditional practices such as va tapuia, feagaiga, and va fealoalo'ai relationships (Ministry for Women, 2015). In New Zealand, the church is the central hub for maintaining community and spirituality for Pasifika communities. The church primarily maintains stability within increasingly challenging lives in a land where they are treated as strangers (Ah-Sue-Maliko, 2016).

In Pasifika communities, the church is widely perceived as the answer to addressing serious social issues, including domestic violence. The five women interviewed for my research had varying levels of involvement with formal religion and the associated communities. Lily, the daughter of a faife'au, has returned to attending church regularly. However she is critical of the attitudes of the church leadership towards violence. Bella no longer attended church as she had mixed experiences (both positive and negative). She was critical of the obligations associated with church membership, especially the financial commitments which placed financial pressure on families. She also struggled to process how she and her ex-husband were asked to talk to their congregation about domestic violence and the associated dynamics – whilst the violence was still occurring. She was hurt and surprised to learn that the congregation knew of the violence and prior to their presentation they had believed she was to blame for it. The role of church and religion for Teuila has meant she remains legally married to Tom which she attributes to the expectation that Catholics do not get divorced. Christian marriage vows are deemed sacred, and that the woman must stay in the relationship irrespective of her husband's treatment of her (Towns & Adams, 2009). Both Lily and Teuila could not

identify anyone in their wider family networks who had been divorced, let alone “just because” of domestic violence. Jennifer and Kelly, however, remain active in formal church communities; both have said this is a source of support for them.

Both key informants critique the denial about domestic violence within the church communities, and the blaming and shaming of victims supported by varying interpretations of the scripture to justify such a stance. The perception that domestic violence was an issue to be kept quiet or private persists within Pasifika communities. For many, churches included, it is uncomfortable to publicly acknowledge its existence in the community (Giles et al., 2005).

> *”A re-reading of the Bible ‘with fresh eyes’ is essential if the Samoan churches are to challenge the theological underpinnings of their complicity in family violence and thereby restore the relationships shattered by violence”(AhSue-Maliko, 2016, p.10).*

The above quote aligns with Kiana’s reflection on the use of scripture, she asserted there is nowhere in the scripture which condones hitting one’s wife, and advocated for the messages preached in church to align with messages of anti-violence. For some women, disclosure of abuse can in fact lead to the victim being punished further for speaking out about their experiences.

By and large spirituality plays a crucial protective role for many Pasifika people (Seiuli, 2016) which is confirmed by the role faith played in the lives of all five participants. Whether active or not in church congregations, all five women say that their faith has given them strength to cope with the abuse itself and their subsequent journeys to safety.

Family

In Pasifika communities, family and friends can be a significant source of support and often the first people women turn to when they seek help. However, some family members can respond in unhelpful ways, undermining women’s willingness and ability to make changes (Koloto & Sharma, 2005). Family was both a barrier and a support for the women who participated in this research. The supportive factors will be discussed

later in this chapter: for now, the focus will be on the problematic factors which acted as barriers to help seeking.

Family, specifically Sam's family were a factor in Bella remaining in her marriage. Initially, she saw her relationship with her ex-husband as an escape from the abuse she suffered from her parents. With Sam's family - for the first time - she experienced a warm, loving and accepting environment with people who accepted her with open arms. However, the love was conditional on her staying in the violent marriage. Teuila's mother played a similar role; Teuila would call Lisa (her mother) when the violence crossed the threshold beyond what Teuila could endure. Lisa would remove her from the situation, placate Tom, reassure him things would calm down but the abuse would resume. For Kelly, she did not want to be a single parent again. It was too much to cope with financially to remain on state assistance; instead she focused on actively seeking help for her partner and not herself. Jennifer too, prioritised maintaining the nuclear family unit. Jennifer and Kelly's beliefs aligned with previous research and the key informants' comments that Pasifika women are taught it is their role to keep the family together at all costs. Further, single motherhood has significant stigma attached to it. Nuclear families are upheld as the ideal by communities, the state, and the church (Stewart-Wither, 2011) thus invalidating the multiple manifestations of family. Such ideology strengthens fears that women have about leaving a violent relationship. Supporting their children on their own, providing for them financially, housing them, and so on, is a daunting prospect without having to face the stigma of being a single parent. Due to the church and its teachings in Pasifika communities, the prospect of single parenthood alone could be enough of a barrier or deterrent to leaving an abusive partner.

The expectation that family members should avoid bringing shame to the family name has played a part in keeping victims silent. It is a relatively new phenomenon that domestic violence has been bought into the public sphere. Prior to the 1960s and 1970s, violence against women was not openly discussed or challenged (Towns & Adams, 2009). Well known maxims such as 'you don't air your dirty laundry in public' or family secrets are to be 'swept under the carpet' conveyed the message that victims

must stay silent about abuse that they suffered (Towns & Adams, 2009). It was certainly the message that Bella, Teuila, and Lily had conveyed to them about the abuse they had endured. It was deemed improper as women, and shameful to the family to bring attention to issues that their families were experiencing.

In the first half of the discussion, the socio-cultural barriers as experienced by the women participants has been analysed further. In the remainder of the chapter, the barriers to safety and wellbeing while accessing available support services will be examined, including the women's suggestions as to what would have been more supportive and helpful from professionals assisting them to navigate themselves to safety

Barriers Once Help Seeking

In the policy and intervention sector, domestic violence is often described as "a wicked problem that is both complex and resists resolution" (Wilson et al, 2015, p.26). Domestic violence spans relationships, histories, experiences of colonisation, families, deprivation and structural barriers Whilst typically condemned in "official" discourse, domestic violence continues to be quite widely tolerated and normalised. Domestic violence policies are, by and large, developed from a mainstream, dominant cultural base. Although well intentioned, such policies fail to address the specific issues experienced by minority group women such as Pasifika women (Rankine et al., 2015). For example, women are expected to leave, and conversely women are often berated in western society for remaining. In addition, the women are then expected to send the children back to the men for visits because it is his 'right' as a father and children 'need their dads' thus making women and children continue to have contact with their abuser. Leaving a relationship for many Pasifika women can mean that one is also leaving wider family and support networks.

Such policy approaches are problematic for women who belong to collective cultures, such as Pasifika women, as the emphasis on individual agency carries notions of freedom that marriage and family still relates back to a woman's individual identity. Such constructs ignore socio-

political power imbalances, resulting in the perception that women who remain in abusive relationships are doing so out of choice (Kurri & Wahlstrom, 2001). Focusing on the importance of leaving an abusive relationship can unintentionally create more harm and damage to the wellbeing of women. Kelly's case is an example of professionals pressuring her to leave her relationship with Aaron, despite her clearly stating she wished to remain in the relationship but needed their help to make it a safe relationship. The reality for many is leaving a partner is the last option women can or want to do (Kurri & Wahlstrom, 2001). Leaving the relationship can lead to social isolation and cultural dislocation.

> *"…effective response to family violence in New Zealand is undermined by the complexity of the current system, by the raft of social issues that typically accompany family violence, and by the range of family members potentially affected or involved…an integrated, systemic multi-agency response, which is capable of addressing the unique circumstances of the people affected"* (Wilson et al, 2015, p.26).

In the following sections of this chapter, the barriers that the women encountered whilst navigating a complex system will be discussed. Although policy makers in New Zealand acknowledge domestic violence as a complex problem requiring complex solutions, in practice, policies tend to be overly simplistic and unsafe and offer remedies which are not readily accessible. Despite well intentioned efforts, some agencies and systems are still failing to provide seamless wraparound support for those needing it (Wilson et al., 2015). Next, barriers and responses specific to service provision and the approaches of frontline professionals will be examined.

Financial barriers and dependence

Seeking help is usually expensive. The cost of accessing certain services was identified as prohibitive by Kelly and Lily in particular. The cost of travel to access (often mandated) programmes was a problem for both Kelly and Lily. Transport costs were also identified as an issue by the key informants. Having to travel significant distances prevents women from accessing supports – both social and systemic. For example, the fees for lawyers and psychologists were too high for the two women who were

reliant on state benefits. Lily had to find extra work and even resorted to obtaining a personal loan to pay the professional fees required to obtain a court ordered report. As discussed later in this chapter, there are other problems associated with the Family Court. Conversely, the key informants' identification of financial barriers from a professional perspective such as inadequate funding to provide services beyond crisis level situations has contributed to limited options for women to access, contributing to victims having to travel to access the support they need.

Fear

When violence is not addressed within communities, effectively, the message conveyed is that violence is endorsed. When victims have spoken up, they have been made to feel that they have bought shame to themselves and their families. Fear of the repercussions of speaking out has already been discussed. However, feelings of fear escalated for the women once they engaged with the system that is meant to help them. A primary fear for the women interviewed was that their children would be taken from them, either because of their exposure to domestic violence and/or because the women are deemed to be non-compliant with service providers' instructions. This was a theme evident in the key informants' interviews and in previous research (Ministry for Women, 2015; Powell & Murray, 2008). Teuila was afraid of agencies knowing about the domestic violence as she was afraid it would jeopardise both her career and the custody case for her step son. Kelly was afraid to access the Pasifika women's refuge due to personal connections to the staff. She did not want them to know that her partner was abusive as she was afraid of the repercussions for him from her family. Kelly allegedly had also been threatened by NGO and CYFs staff that her children would be removed if she did not apply for a protection order and leave her partner. Sina reflected on such professional practices, the end result is women feel pressured to obtain protection orders and not to withdraw them. Such interventions leave women feeling disempowered, silenced and they feel they have lost more of the little autonomy they did have.

Framing experiences of abuse this way leaves victims shouldering full responsibility, placing them in a disadvantaged position whilst the

perpetrators are advantaged by having minimal expectations on them to be accountable for their actions. Lily for example had to complete 12-13 parenting programmes: no such expectation was placed on Steve. Imbalanced power and control dynamics in expert-victim relations recreate the abusive intimate relationship dynamics victims have with their abusers Approaches like this hide social and structural inequities by continuing to conceal the extent of the domestic violence. One such structural issue raised by the women interviewed was unresponsive and often inadequate service provision from those who are meant to support them.

Unresponsive frontline personnel and inadequate service provision

Most frontline personnel working in helping settings will inevitably work with victims of domestic violence. It is important that such people respond appropriately to abused women, particularly “case workers, social workers, counsellors, staff administering social welfare benefits, police, Ministry of Justice staff, church staff, teachers, doctors, and other health professionals.” (Giles et al., 2005, p.110). Appropriate and positive responses/service provision from helping professionals does not always occur, and relationships between professionals and victims are often marred by misunderstanding and mutual distrust. All five women who contributed to my research identified multiple barriers and issues which they encountered during many interactions with professionals. I will discuss the common issues across the professional groups, firstly, focusing on the women’s experiences with court systems and the impacts on their wellbeing.

Courts

The perception of the courts as being unfair, and favouring the perpetrator over victim, was strong and shared by Lily, Teuila, Jennifer, and Kelly, all of who had varying levels of engagement with both the family and criminal courts system. Managing access and custody arrangements, as well as applying for protection orders, was unsatisfactory at best. Traumatising, marginalising, and silencing at worst. Courts hold significant power over the lives of the people who appear before them. Their decisions have long term impacts on individuals and families, some positive, some negative.

As in other research findings (Pond & Morgan, 2005, 2008) presented , Lily, Jennifer and Kelly found the process of navigating the court system took a significant toll on them, on their role as mothers, on their ability to parent, and on the behaviour and wellbeing of their children. The lengthy processes and impacts of decisions made were the most significant barriers that the women reflected on.

Kelly found the court environment to be impractical: for example, having to appear in court without the provision of childcare or facilities for children within the court environment. The processes involved in custody and access disputes were lengthy and confusing, as was the process of obtaining a protection order. Having to return to court repeatedly took a toll on the women's overall wellbeing as often when they appeared in court a further requirement was mandated. Before exploring the impacts of family courts processes, it is important to discuss the protection order process and its associated impacts as four of the five women had negative experiences during the application process and also defending their order.

Ostensibly, the rules governing applications for protection orders make it possible to obtain an order without the services of a lawyer. However, the reality is that the process is difficult to navigate and judges increasingly expect that the required affidavits be prepared by lawyers, a costly and inaccessible burden for many victims (The Backbone Collective, 2017). Lily was denied in her first application for a protection order. Eventually one was granted, however, Lily was pressured by her lawyer to drop it because her ex-partner kept contesting it in court and she was made to feel like a drain on the system. Like many other perpetrators (Giles et al., 2005), Lily's ex-partner was well resourced and unaffected by the cost of ongoing litigation (an ongoing form of control over Lily also). Jennifer found the process to be confusing and those who had promised to help her with her application did not follow through leaving her feeling alone during a period of heightened crisis and trauma. Kelly had to see two lawyers to complete and witness the required affidavits, she did not understand why and has never had it explained to her.

Ultimately, the mysterious nature of the court processes and lack of transparency about the system meant the women did not fully understand the functions of a protection order. The five participants viewed protection orders as simply a piece of paper, with little worth. Inadequate knowledge about their legal rights and protections left the women vulnerable to further violence as they did not know to call the police when their former partners were breaching protection orders or bail conditions. Police and court responses to perpetrators breaching protection order conditions were generally viewed as ineffective.

Police

The women's interactions with the police were negative. Kelly and Lily even felt endangered by police procedures and officers' attitudes. The women's experiences also align with the broader themes of feeling blamed, silenced, colluded against, unimportant, and threatened.

Kelly had the most contact with police and as was stated in her case study, she would not recommend going to police for help, particularly reflecting on the way they spoke to her. She still questions why the very people who are mandated to protect victims of violence speak to women in the same way that abusive partners do. She felt threatened and was charged with obstructing justice for failing to provide the information they sought – despite not having the answers they were seeking. Kelly was critical of delays and ineffective communication, as was Jennifer. Both Jennifer and Kelly were left feeling unimportant and unprotected, like "just another file in the pile". Processes and procedures were inadequately explained to the women leaving them waiting in a state of distress – in Kelly's words "quick to charge and slow to follow up".

Women, including the five participants, believed that instead of protecting them and enforcing protection orders, the police in fact collude with the perpetrators. Bella, Lily and Jennifer spoke of feeling blamed for the violence they endured. For example, in Jennifer's case, even when the police observed her obtaining medical treatment, whilst choking on her own blood, they insinuated that because she had low levels of alcohol show in her blood tests she was lying and at least partially to blame for

Tevita's assault on her. The key informants too spoke of witnessing police officers blaming victims. Lily felt the police minimised the multiple breaches of her protection order, and often interacted with her former partner as if he "was one of the boys" – reinforcing for Lily that this was a pervasive attitude across her experiences with multiple professionals who were meant to help her. This will be explored in subsequent sections of the chapter. The minimisation by police and failure to breach her ex-partner ultimately resulted in Lily being seriously injured because her former partner repeatedly returned, causing her ongoing trauma and stress, knowing that there essentially would be no repercussions for him. By failing to adequately enforce court orders, police are minimising or denying the experiences of women. In doing this, the tactics employed by the authorities replicate the tactics of abuse in violent relationships (Giles et al., 2005). Women like Lily and Jennifer are left vulnerable to sustained victimisation by their former partners, and in Jennifer's case, his extended family. "Unfortunately, abusive men already understand the logic of punishment and purely punitive responses from the courts are unlikely to teach abusers alternative responses or healthy interpersonal skills." (Giles et al.,2005, pp.109-110).

Lawyers

Lawyers play a significant role in protecting women and children from domestic violence. Typically, lawyers prepare protection order applications and provide women with the legal advice and information necessary to navigate the processes involved (Pond & Morgan, 2005). Lawyers also represent women in custody disputes. In such disputes and in care and protection cases, lawyers may also be appointed as lawyer for the child to act in the interest of the child. Lily, Teuila, and Kelly had varying levels of engagement with lawyers. The three women raised many concerns about the way they were treated by the lawyers and lawyer for child with whom they interacted. Lily engaged the services of several lawyers to represent her. Lily felt the lawyers colluded with her ex-partner when they acted in neither her, nor her son's best interest. Instead, Lily was made to feel like a burden on the system, portrayed as manipulative, coercive, and hysterical. She felt that whichever way she turned, she was being

silenced. Teuila's and Tom's lawyer in the custody dispute over Tom's son, effectively hid and ignored knowledge of domestic violence being an issue at least once. However, their lawyer continued to advocate that Tom's son should be in their care, potentially placing him at risk of exposure to domestic violence and abuse. The lawyers' actions and the women's perceptions of their lawyers' practice indicated that they may not have adequate understanding or knowledge about the dynamics of domestic violence.

Previous research findings such as Pond and Morgan's (2005; 2007) indicate that not only lawyers, but also police and judges, hold attitudes that minimise and trivialise domestic violence. The findings of my research align with the literature focussed on this issue. Lily was distressed that she was portrayed as hysterical and that her ex-partners wants, needs, and accounts of their situation were seemingly privileged over hers. Lily had reached that conclusion because for many reasons, namely, she had overheard conversations between her lawyer, Steve's lawyer, and lawyer for child. Many women feel that the court system is gender biased culminating in the silencing of women's voices due to either not being enabled to tell their story fully and free from emotion (Lily and Teuila) or, from their experiences not being recognised as harmful (Pond & Morgan, 2005).

Again, like their experiences with the police, Kelly and Lily were made to feel like their cases were "just another file in the pile" and their worth represented in monetary value. Kelly felt like a revenue source, regularly "ticking boxes" on surveys so that funding was obtained. Lily in contrast, was made to feel like a burden on the system because she kept fighting to keep her protection order and the children's supervised access in place. That said, Lily too felt like she was a low priority client with one lawyer only dealing with her via telephone. Some lawyers were perceived as only being in the job for the money and less interested in the safety of the clients. Sina commented on this issue also, stating that best practice would mean referring clients to another lawyer who would be more competent at handling a woman's cases (e.g. cultural competency).

However, this rarely happens as according to Sina, the woman is viewed as “money walking out of the door”.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Health providers, and the social services sector

The women interviewed identified engagements with multiple service providers whilst trying to navigate their way to safety. Joining the dots to establish the overall picture for victims requires integrated service delivery and multi-agency perspectives as victims predominantly have multiple agencies involved. Lily, Jennifer, and Kelly, who had extensive agency involvement, spoke of how exhausting and frustrating it was to deal with agencies that operated in silos and having to repeatedly explain their situation; effectively reliving their traumas. There appears to be a disconnect between the different agencies that work with vulnerable women, where abuse is a defining feature in their lives (Wilson, Tolmie, & Haan, 2015).

Attempts have been made to combat the silo effect in New Zealand, however, in practice the isolated approaches have persisted. Kelly and Jennifer both felt like the agencies worked with only small pieces of the picture. Not only does this negatively impact service users, it costs the state significant sums of money to address the impacts of domestic violence. Sina has worked on cases with families who have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars via multiple agencies. She asserted that interagency cohesion and communication could contribute to the reduction of systemic costs.

Instead of feeling supported, Kelly felt judged, and threatened. Both Jennifer and Kelly stated that their case workers did not complete promised tasks to support them, both women felt they had to do the agencies’ work for them. Jennifer and Lily too felt judged by frontline personnel whom they deemed to be inexperienced and lacked training in the dynamics of domestic violence, an issue also raised by Sina. All participants were of the view that professional training does not adequately equip frontline personnel to safely and competently work with domestic violence victims, let alone Pasifika women. They identified the

need for better training and education about the dynamics of domestic violence as important to improve service delivery for women.

Inadequate service provision was an issue identified by the women. Inexperience and poor client-professional fit was a significant barrier to the women achieving support. Potentially, lack of resourcing, funding, and specialised Pasifika services contributes to this issue, as experienced workers may be beyond the financial capacity of some services. Kelly was often assigned to “rookie” case workers, some of who did not have children themselves, something that prevented her from “buying in” to services. Lily, Kelly, and Jennifer all felt disempowered by the services they received. Kelly and Jennifer did not feel listened to and thought that the professionals did not care about what they wanted or needed. Lily felt like there was a role reversal in that she had to teach the professionals about the dynamics of domestic violence. Lily was also disappointed by the minimisation of the abuse she experienced, and at times even blamed for the abuse. The key informant’s comments aligned with the women’s perspective of systemic issues with service provision. It is luck of the draw to who a woman gets assigned to. It is luck of the drawer whether complex cases are given to junior or inexperienced workers who are ill equipped to cope with the complexity of the cases. Some clients are pathologised, viewed from a deficit perspective and even blamed for services not achieving their key performance indicators.

Client-professional relationships

Lack of rapport building and a failure to establish positive therapeutic relationships was a barrier identified by all of the women interviewed. An effective practitioner builds rapport, establishes connection with one’s client, and, most importantly, listens to their client’s needs and wants (Seiuli, 2013). Establishing relationships with counsellors and other frontline personnel was problematic for four of the women. Kelly felt unheard and found that her requests to heal her relationship with Aaron were incompatible with the goals of the case workers. Teuila’s experiences with counsellors made her feel like the listener and not the one who needed to be listened to. Teuila needed to make meaning of her experiences. However, she felt that some of the counsellors she engaged

with were more focussed on their own issues and agendas. The learning Teuila took from her experiences is to find a counsellor who you feel a connection with and not feel obligated to continue a therapeutic relationship that is not working for you.

Cultural competence

In order to be deemed culturally competent, understanding of cultural differences of clients, as well as the cultural and structural needs of different communities is needed (Chung Yan & Wong, 2005 Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Further, understanding one's own cultural values and biases is important in order to identify what influences personal perceptions of issues faced by one's clients (Chung Yan & Wong, 2005). Addressing the psychological and emotional health of Pasifika people in New Zealand continues to challenge professionals (Seiuli, 2013). In order to recognise the disparity for minority populations, such as Pasifika people,

> *A cultured platform that takes into account this population's indigenous patterns, their ways of living, and their understandings of health perspectives, particularly if these endeavours are to make useful contributions towards supporting recovery and overall wellness* (Seiuli, 2013, p.50).

The key informants, Teuila, and Lily all reflected on professionals' understanding of culturally nuanced norms about gender, violence, and wellbeing which leave women feeling misunderstood and unable to connect with the helper. In Teuila's case, being assigned to a Maori counsellor inhibited her ability to form a relationship with the counsellor as this referral ignored the differences between the two cultures. As Teuila stated, they were both brown, but a "different type of brown". Teuila and Lily both needed professionals who understood the socio-cultural influences on how they perceived violence against women and subsequently how they made meaning of their experiences of abuse. Kiana and Sina's perspective aligned with the women participants' views. Lack of knowledge about cultural nuances inhibits the ability to adequately address women's needs: for example gaps exist between Eurocentric and Pasifika perceptions of violence (Rankine et al., 2015). The messages that some practitioners (both Pasifika and non-Pasifika in the experiences of

the women) conveyed - to Lily in particular- were collusive in nature, and reinforced patriarchal beliefs that women simply need to accept their ‘lot’ and submit to their partners. The women were left feeling blamed and silenced and perpetrators largely unaccountable for their actions. Effective practitioners and professionals understand that to seek alternatives to violence a collaborative approach is needed, incorporating family and community into the healing process (Peteru, 2012, Rankine et al., 2015).

Impacts of Service Provision on Wellbeing of the Women

Beyond the already discussed “downstream” effects of violence on the children, the lengthy and somewhat intrusive nature of interventions has had unhelpful consequences on the women. Agencies intervening in respect of the women led to entanglement in various programmes and processes impacting on their ability to adequately parent their children. The irony was not lost on the women. Kelly was angry about the disruption to their routines due to mandated requirements that she attend many programmes and appointments. This meant that, sometimes, she forgot to meet their basic needs such as feeding them on time. She also felt that her life was on hold because the goal posts were constantly shifting regarding the requirements placed on her by the professionals. Lily reached the point of contemplating putting her son into state care because she was so traumatised by the ongoing abuse from her former partner, ongoing custody and access disputes and feeling unheard and blamed for their situation by the large number of professionals involved in their life.

It could be easy to be overwhelmed by the negative experiences and impacts of the barriers to accessing safety and justice for themselves and the children. Fortunately, the experience was not all negative. Next, I will explore the supports that the women had on their journey to safety. The experiences the women encountered and overcame to navigate themselves to safety. Also included in this section are the suggestions the women and key informants made as to how existing strengths could be built upon to improve service provision for Pasifika women who have been victims of domestic violence.

Supports

Although the barriers identified by the women interviewed were numerous, their experiences were not entirely negative. They also identified the things that worked for them, more specifically the people that made a positive impact on their lives.

Bella, although not an active member of a congregation, identified that the people who helped her the most were introduced to her via church networks. The most significant was a Samoan therapist. Not only did this practitioner walk with Bella through the therapeutic journey to a place of healing about the abuse she endured, she also helped Bella to connect with her Samoan culture for the first time in her life. The re/establishment of cultural connection has been found to lead to healing, and facilitate meaning making of ones experiences (Seiuli, 2013), as was the case for Bella.

The key informants identified the power of practitioners, specifically Pasifika practitioners, those who build solid relationships with victims get better buy in from women. Jennifer, Teuila and Lily too found this to be a key factor in healing from abuse – when their counsellor, social worker or case worker they were working with took the time to listen to them, build a relationship with them and made them feel valued and believed. Professionals who were process focussed and formal in their approach were hard to connect with. In contrast the women responded positively to professionals who shared their stories with them which made it easier to connect. Professionals who maintained regular contact, equipped the women with tools to process their feelings, who acted as mediators, and who went above and beyond what their job description entailed were identified as being the most effective. Ultimately the women recommended that practitioners need to be empathetic, and well trained in the dynamics of domestic violence to ensure they do not further traumatise women.

Efficiency of service delivery was identified as an important factor to be addressed by the women. Remembering that for people in crisis, their life is not on hold and continues outside of office hours. Professionals need to follow up in a timely manner, particularly when they promise to carry out a

task for a client. Essentially, the systems need to back up the messages that are conveyed about domestic violence.

For Teuila and Bella, physical outlets such as boxing and waka ama were therapeutic and significant in their healing process. Bella built a positive relationship with her trainer who also had been a victim of abuse. This relationship in conjunction with feeling confident that she could defend herself physically was important to Bella. Teuila's healing from waka ama was twofold. The meditative nature of focussing on her paddling rhythm enabled her to relax and "tune out" from the impacts of her experiences. Furthermore, waka ama facilitated a strong relationship with her father and her culture. Prior to her return to the water, Teuila hated her Samoan culture as she associated it with violence and subservience but once she returned to paddling she connected at a spiritual level to her culture by reconnecting with her ancestors. Teuila descends from navigators and found that by being on the water, the solitude facilitated her reconnection at a spiritual level. Spirituality and faith was identified by the women as important to their personal journeys to healing.

Summary

In this chapter I presented the themes and patterns of the social and systemic issues navigated by the women. The barriers to help seeking and barriers whilst help seeking were presented in two sections in order to explore further the long term impacts on meaning making, decision making, and the journey of navigating oneself to safety. Finally, the supportive factors and people for the women were discussed. These factors counteracted what could have been overwhelmingly negative experiences and contributed to the women finally feeling heard and empowered

Chapter 11: Conclusion

In recognition of the limited attention paid to the influence of culture and minority status women's experiences of domestic violence and their experiences of navigating themselves to safety, this thesis research focused specifically on the barriers to accessing justice by Pasifika women leaving abusive intimate relationships – as well as considering things which helped them.

The complex interplay between socially normalised violence, patriarchy, the privileging of the sanctity of marriage ahead of the safety of women and children is made more complex when the values of faith, culture, a history of colonisation and migration are added. Together these contributed to a milieu of emotions, understandings and assumptions that have the negative effect of silencing and disempowerment on Pasifika women. Examining the socio-cultural influences and impacts of complex and mysterious systems and services as told by Pasifika women themselves was important to enable them to break their silence and have their voice heard.

Documented within the key informants chapter and the five case studies are accounts and reflections on the numerous detrimental long term impacts of marginalising discourses, policies, and service implementation.

The systemic context from a professional perspective was examined in order to identify cultural barriers to accessing culturally safe and effective support services. Also explored were the cultural influences of family and community networks which make women reluctant to access support services and legal protections. This included the influence of culture and patriarchy on gender norms and the condoning of violence against women and children. The expectation for women to be subservient to their partners and to forgive their abusers emerged as contributing factor to keeping women silent about domestic violence. Fears of being blamed, judged, and bringing shame to the family name by being open about abuse prevented women from disclosing their experiences and thus engaging in help seeking behaviours. The expectation to "sweep things

under the carpet" was interpreted by the women that they had to endure abuse in silence.

Socially and systemically, the women were treated negatively and blamed for the impacts of domestic violence. Some women found that their partner's abuse was excused because he "had never been like that until he met you". Some faced insinuations of lying about their role in assaults because they had consumed a small amount of alcohol. Such tactics shifted the blame for violence onto the victim while the perpetrators largely remained unaccountable.

Lack of consistent, cohesive and efficient service provision resulted in lengthy processes which delayed reaching resolution and negatively impacted their wellbeing. Minimal information sharing meant repeating and reliving traumatic events in their lives. The lack of transparency and in some cases minimal assistance with legal processes maintained the mysterious nature of supposed support systems and services charged with providing victims of support.

Inadequate and at times coercive methods employed by professionals left the women feeling fearful, unprotected and vulnerable. Pressuring the women to complete programmes and obtain protection orders while seemingly disregarding what the women wanted and needed left them feeling like "just another file in the pile". It felt like good luck rather than good support systems when the women engaged with professionals who helped them to heal.

Despite the many barriers Pasifika women have faced while seeking help from the justice and social services system, their courage and perseverance in order to do not only what is best for them, but for their children as well has to be recognised. Lily's relentless defence against Steve's ongoing secondary victimisation demonstrated the inner strength and resilience she has. She never gave up hope that she would find someone that would hear her and fight with her. The combination of inner strength, faith, and the support of workers who "went above and beyond" for them helped the women to make meaning and heal the hurt associated with abuse and marginalisation. The consensus from the women and the

key informants was practitioners and support workers who took the time to listen, build meaningful relationships, and demonstrated genuine care and compassion for Pasifika women impacted by domestic violence reduced the sometimes overwhelming fear and silence which had taken control of their lives.

Reflections, Strengths, and Limitations

The research process has been a significant learning journey for me. I am privileged to have met women with such generosity of spirit to share their deeply personal stories of domestic violence. I enjoyed the interview process and interacting with the participants. Selecting a research topic which aligned with personal experiences influenced the way I engaged with the women, I shared with them some of my own story in order to reciprocate and demonstrate empathy for shared experiences. As a result the depth and richness of their narratives has been a strength of this thesis. Conversely, the level of detail and complexity in their stories created conflict for me as I developed their case studies. I found it difficult to balance my voice as a researcher whilst maintaining the integrity of their accounts.

There are of course limitations to this study. Due to the small number of participants and the lack of diversity in terms of ethnic background means the findings cannot be generalised to all Pasifika women. Nevertheless, the women's narratives are consistent with existing research findings and point to significant challenges which need to be addressed if Pasifika women and children are to be better protected. .

Of course, many of the issues discussed in my thesis are not unique to Pasifika women. For example, many are evident in the recently-released report by the Backbone Collective[2]. However, I think that my research can provide an insight into the culturally nuanced experiences and

[2] The Backbone Collective. (2017). *Out of the frying pan and into the fire: Women's experiences of the New Zealand Family Court*. Retrieved from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/59386e6a15d5db8350f9157f/1496870522432/Family+Violence+Survey+report+080617+-+embargoed+until+1am+Thursday+%281%29.pdf

perspectives as told by Pasifika women themselves, enabling women who have been silenced for so long to have their voices heard.

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Appendix 1

Interview Guide – Key Informants

The interview style will be conducted in an open ended and flexible manner. The interviews will be guided with a light touch, prompting only when further information is required or to obtain the relevant information. The following guide indicates how the interview will generally proceed.

1) Background information

    a. Identify in what capacity they have worked with this specific group of women

2) Systemic issues

    b. Identify what, from their perspective, works well
    c. Identify from a professional point of view what they perceive to be the barriers which prevent women from accessing their services.

3) Recommendations
    d. Establish what they think needs to change/ could be improved to ensure that better service provision is delivered which will contribute to Pasifika women navigating their way to safety without further trauma/systemic victimisation.

Interview Guide – Women participants

The interview style will be conducted in an open ended and flexible manner. The interviews will be guided with a light touch, prompting only when further information is required or to obtain the relevant information. The following guide indicates how the interview will generally proceed.

1**)** Background information

- Age, ethnicity, family composition
    - Identify what agencies they have engaged with as part of their help seeking behaviour
    - If they have not engaged with professional services, establish why they chose not to
    - . Establish what support networks (if any) that they have access to
    - Invite them to tell their story – their experiences with domestic violence
- Experiences with the justice system e.g. Courts, Police, and NGOs etc.
    - Identify what court orders are in place (if any) e.g. protection orders, parting orders
    - Identify positive experiences
    - Identify the barriers they have experienced whilst navigating their way to safety
- Recommendations
    - Ask them if they have any recommendations which would make it easier/ more accessible/user friendly when seeking help
    - Ask if there are any other messages they would like to convey.

Appendix 2

Jessica Gosche
Phone: 021 246 7243
jgjg125@students.waikato.ac.nz

Appendix 3

CONSENT FORM

Research Project: <u>Barriers and supports to access of justice as experienced by Pasifika women affected by domestic violence</u>

Please complete the following checklist. Tick (✓) the appropriate box for each point.	**YES**	**NO**
1. I have read the Participant Information Sheet (or it has been read to me) and I understand it.		
2. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether or not to participate in this study		
3. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given regarding the study and I have a copy of this consent form and information sheet		
4. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I can withdraw from the research at any point up to two weeks after I receive my case study for comment.		
5. I understand that my participation in this study is confidential and that no material, which could identify me personally, will be used in any reports on this study.		
6. I have the right to decline to participate in any part of the research activity		
7. I know who to contact if I have any questions about the study in general.		
8. I consent to my interview being recorded		
9. I wish to view the transcript of the case study		
10. I wish to receive a copy of the findings		

Declaration by participant:

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Psychology Research and Ethics Committee (Associate Professor John Perrone, Tel: 07 838 4466 ext. 8292, email: jpnz@waikato.ac.nz)

Participant's name (Please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Declaration by member of research team:

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project to the participant, and have answered the participant's questions about it. I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Researcher's name (Please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4

Barriers and supports to access of justice as experienced by Pasifika women affected by domestic violence

Masters of Applied Psychology (Community) Masters Thesis Research Project

Information for women participating in this project

What is the project about?

Domestic violence is a serious issue which affects Pasifika communities. It has also been identified that Pasifika women's experiences when navigating their way to safety are overwhelmingly negative. The purpose of this project is to give women the opportunity to tell their story of these experiences and identify what could be done better and make the services more accessible and culturally competent.

Who are the researchers?

I am a post-graduate student from the School of Psychology at the University of Waikato. I am of Samoan/New Zealand European (Palagi) descent.

I will be supervised by Neville Robertson and Bridgette Masters-Awatere. Their contact details (and mine) are provided at the bottom of this information sheet. You are welcome to make contact with them if you have any questions regarding this research.

Why am I being asked to participate?

I believe that you can help this project by sharing your experiences of domestic violence. If you sought help, (e.g. from police, the court, social services) I'd be interested in knowing how that worked out for you. If you didn't seek help, I'd be interested to know what prevented you from doing so. This would be really helpful information for this research project. I will write up your story as an example of the experiences Pasifika women have when navigating one's way to safety.

What will I be asked to do?

I would like to interview you at a time and place which suits us both. You are very welcome to bring someone along to the interview with you. I expect that the interview would take about an hour.

What will I be asked in the interview?

I am really interested in your experiences, both the barriers and the supports, you have experienced when navigating your way to safety. I would like to discuss such things as:

- Your background information, including what made you decide to seek assistance
- Your experiences with any support agencies you may have used

- Identify both positive experiences and barriers encountered when accessing help
- Identify any recommendations that you think would make accessing help more user friendly
- Any general comments

What will happen with my information?

Our conversations will be audio taped. In addition, I may take written notes. From these, I will write up your case study which will tell your story and give voice to your experiences. I will provide you with your case study for comment and correction if necessary. You will also be able to withdraw any information you feel should not be included.

You will be asked to give any feedback within two weeks. If I do not hear from you by then, I will assume that you are fine with your story as it is.

Your story will be used with the other case studies I am collecting as part of my Masters thesis. These case studies will be used to identify overall themes (barriers and supports) in conjunction with interviews with key professionals working in this sector. There is also the potential for my findings to be used in presentations to write journal articles for submission to academic journals. Reports, theses and journal articles are all potentially accessible by the public. If you wish, a summary of the findings of this phase of the research will be made available to you when it is completed.

Will other people know who I am?

Generally, no. Unless you want me to use your real name, I will use pseudonyms to refer to you and other family members when I write up my research. I will omit or disguise potentially identifying information such as place names and easily identifiable events. However, while I will take all possible care in protecting your privacy, it is possible that you may be recognised by readers who know you really well (e.g. family members).

What are my rights and what can I expect from the researcher?

You can:

- Ask questions at any point during the study.
- Ask for the audio recorder to be turned off at any point during the discussion.
- Decline to answer any specific questions.
- Withdraw from the research at any point during the interview or after the interview up to two weeks after I send you the draft of your story for comment.
- Similarly, to have the information you have provided corrected, added to or ask to have information removed.
- Expect to receive a summary of the final report and be given details of how to access the full report.
- Expect that information you provide will be kept in secure storage. (We will keep it for up to five years after we've finished the research, in secure storage, and then ensure that it is destroyed.)
- Contact myself or my supervisors if you have any concerns, questions or would like further information about the study.

What do I need to do now?

If you would like to participate in this study, please contact me. (Contact information below.) Alternatively I will be in touch if I have not heard anything within a few days. We will negotiate a time and place to meet. **Contact Details** Team members are: Jessica Gosche, 021 246 7243,

Email: jg125@waikato.ac.nz

Neville Robertson (supervisor), (07) 8384466 ext. 8300. Email: scorpio@waikato.ac.nz

Bridgette Masters-Awatere (supervisor) (07) 8384466 ext. 8298.Email: bridge@waikato.ac.nz

This research has approval from the University Of Waikato School Of Psychology Ethics Committee. If you have any queries or concerns you may contact the convenor (Associate Professor John Perrone, Tel: (07) 838 4466 ext. 8292, email: jpnz@waikato.ac.nz).