

A Way Through The Thicket: Why understanding gender and colonisation is key to eliminating family violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

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The Auckland Coalition for the Safety of Women and Children¹

Introduction

This paper is designed to inform the development of the national strategy and action plan for the Joint Venture leading the Government's work on family violence and sexual violence. While the paper focusses on family violence (which includes sexual abuse and sexual assault perpetrated by a family member or ex/partner), many of its points also pertain to non-family sexual violence.

Last year (2019) was the worst year for intimate partner homicides in New Zealand in a decade (Ensor et al, 2020). In order to develop successful interventions to respond to and eliminate family violence, it is necessary to understand key underlying causes and enablers of family violence. These include gender inequity and ongoing colonisation.

Executive Summary

- Gender strongly influences family-violence experience and outcomes. If there is family violence within a relationship between a woman and a man, it typically takes place within a context of a long-term pattern of power and control by the man over

¹ The Auckland Coalition for the Safety of Women and Children is made up of 12 preventing-violence groups: Auckland Sexual Abuse HELP, Auckland Women's Centre, Eastern Women's Refuge, Homeworks Trust, Inner City Women's Group, Mt Albert Psychological Services Ltd, North Shore Women's Centre, Rape Prevention Education – Whakatu Mauri, SHINE Safer Homes in NZ Everyday, The Backbone Collective, Women's Centre Rodney and Women's Health Action Trust. This paper was commissioned by the Coalition Coordinator and Auckland Women's Centre manager Leonie Morris and drafted by Janet McAllister; thanks to all reviewers and other advisors including Debbie Hager, Deborah Mackenzie, Puawai Rudman, Alison Towns and Geraldine Whiteford. All correspondence to Leonie Morris akcentre@womensz.org.nz.

the woman, in the context of a society where women live with greater social and economic disadvantage than men.²

- The false assertion that “men and women perpetrate family violence similarly” was popularised by one flawed research methodology.
- Understanding gendered patterns of behaviour and experience of family violence is vital in order to develop successful elimination strategies. Causal explanations include the effects of entrenched assumptions about gender roles (such as male = powerful/controlling; women = passive/submissive), and long-term gender and ethnic inequalities and discrimination, including the ways in which the justice system responds towards allegations of such violence.
- Wāhine Māori bear a particularly heavy burden of family violence, and a key causal factor is colonisation as role model and enforcer. Patriarchal norms were imposed on Māori society by British colonisers, and family violence has been exacerbated by New Zealand’s well-documented (and continuing) history of government harassment and neglect of Māori over generations. This harassment and neglect causes deprivation, intergenerational trauma, and mistrust of social services which fail to appropriately support and protect, and are often seen as threatening to break-up whānau.

Our conclusion is that family violence will continue to be a chronic problem in New Zealand until our society treats all people equitably. There is a need for men as well as women and non-binary people to be freed from certain harmful gender-role expectations. Systemic discrimination and bias against Māori and women – including belittling or not believing their experiences, failing to provide access to services and casting them in stereotypically racist and/or sexist ways – need to be halted.

Relevance of gender and colonisation to eliminating family violence

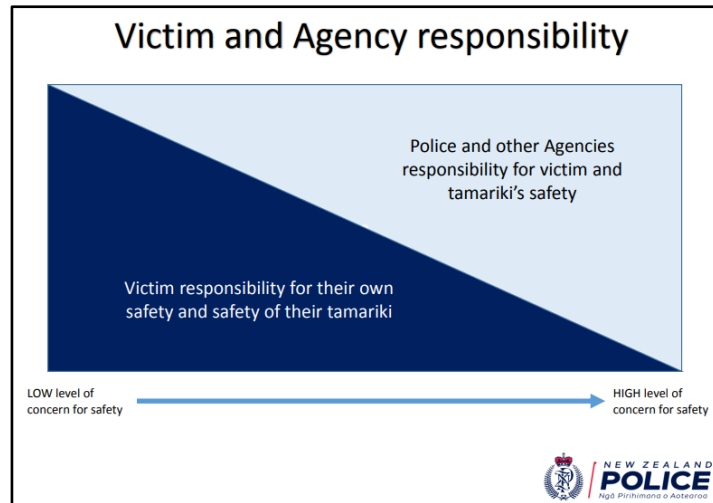
In order to be effective, responses to social ills need to be informed by knowledge of their causal factors. Therefore, in order to correctly identify productive and counter-productive arenas for interventions to eliminate family violence, it is necessary to understand that gender inequity and ongoing colonisation are causal factors for family violence. For example:

- Initiatives which either do not acknowledge or which actually *support* systems of gender inequity can exacerbate the problem:

² In addition, “sex-, sexuality- and gender- diverse communities are increasingly recognised as vulnerable to intimate partner and sexual violence.... Dynamics of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and gender policing underpin intimate partner violence and sexual violence in Rainbow communities” (Dickson, 2016). We endorse Sandra Dickson’s 2016 recommendation to “Include sex, sexuality and gender diverse people’s experiences of partner and sexual violence at strategic, policy and service planning levels.”

- Any supposed support programme for women that focusses on encouraging women to “keep the peace” by submitting to their male partners as a long-term solution helps entrench the system of male power and control responsible for the endemic nature of family violence, including exacerbating the dangerous power imbalance within the immediate family situation.
- Any anti-violence counselling which focusses *solely* on perpetrators’ previous trauma (for example, childhood trauma) as the prime causal factor, without also acknowledging that our sexist society enables male violence, is far less likely to succeed at reducing that violence.
- Structural racism and unconscious patriarchal views/ gender biases within agencies need to be overcome, including agency policies and practices which entrench male privilege such as excusing controlling and/or violent behaviours.
 - For example, the Family Violence Death Review Committee found that agencies blame women for “failing to protect” their children while the agencies themselves fail to hold men responsible for their behaviour (FVDRC, 2020). Such practices are informed by unconscious, socially-entrenched and culturally-supported views that mothers have more responsibilities toward their children than fathers, and that male violence is ‘natural’ and difficult to control (even though the vast majority of men do not engage in violence).
 - In a specific example, the New Zealand Police’s freely downloadable “Victim and Agency Responsibility poster” (reproduced below) does not mention perpetrator responsibility once; but instead explicitly mentions victim responsibility “for their own safety and safety of their tamariki”, as if male violence is a force of nature that perpetrators have no control over or responsibility for (NZ Police, n.d.1).
 - This is part of a wider Police approach which refers to family violence as family “harm”, a euphemism which reduces the agency and responsibility of the perpetrator (“violence” requires a human agent to cause it; “harm” does not) (NZ Police, n.d.2).
 - Given the commendable increased Police resources being committed to training new recruits in family violence response, and the fact that 40% of Police time is spent attending family violence incidents (Lawrence, 2018), it is important that Police family violence approaches are as effective as possible; for this to be the case, a clearer emphasis on gender is required here, just as it is also required in other government agencies.

Fig 1: Where is the perpetrator? NZ Police “Victim and Agency Responsibility poster”



Source: *"Family Harm approach (with resources)" webpage (NZ Police, n.d 2)*

- A woman who is physically violent in self-defence should not be treated the same as a man perpetrating an ongoing campaign of psychological and physical abuse; women are commonly terrified of men who use violence against them, and the ways in which women enact self-defence will be different to the ways in which a man enacts self-defence towards another man (Tolmie et al, 2018). Women in fear of their lives commonly need to use weapons in order to fight off a man in self-defense.
- In order to lower rates of abusive relationships, researchers recommend educating young people in how to critically assess popular culture which sexualises girls and women for male consumption, treats women as male possessions and limits men's identities (Towns & Scott, 2008; Towns 2009).
- Mistrust of Oranga Tamariki and the reasons for it must be taken into account when developing initiatives aiming to assist Māori women who are afraid of reporting abusive partners, in order for such initiatives to have any chance of being successful. (Parahi, 2019; 1news, 2020; Kaiwai et al, 2020; OCC, 2020)
- The safety of women and children needs to be made a priority by courts and police.
 - In the case of murderer Edward Livingstone, the courts and police did not take into account the system of gender inequity and how it manifests in long-term psychological abuse.
 - Police and the courts downplayed the seriousness of Livingstone's multiple protection order breaches, and therefore missed opportunities to protect his family before he murdered his two children in order to punish his ex-wife (MacLennan, 2015; Brown, 2016).

- Patriarchal power is upheld by any court order that prioritises the right of a parent to have access to his children over concerns for the safety of the children due to that parent's past perpetration of family violence (Backbone Collective, 2017).

All our communities, as well as individual families, will continue to shoulder the heavy burden of family violence until there is a concerted effort by Government and other agents to bring about a broad and significant shift in attitudes to gender and ethnicity throughout New Zealand society. That is, family violence will continue to be embedded in society:

- until our society treats all women, including Indigenous women and women of colour and trans women, (as well as non-binary people and trans men) as equal to all cis men;
- until men as well as women experience freedom from certain harmful expectations (e.g. for men to be tough) which are embedded in society as normal by our institutions and cultural media;
- until the State eliminates its systemic discrimination against Māori.

Definitions: “family violence” and “gender analysis”

“Family violence” is defined by New Zealand law as physical, sexual, and psychological abuse against someone who is, or who has been, in a family relationship with the perpetrator. Family violence can include patterns of such behaviour, which are coercive or controlling and/or may cause cumulative harm (Family Violence Act, 2018). In other words, family violence is about power and control, where there is a power imbalance within a relationship. The victim is generally fearful of the perpetrator.

A “gender analysis” of family violence does *not* mean blaming all men as a group for family violence, nor is it to say that men are never subjected to such violence, nor is it to say that women are never perpetrators of such violence. Instead, gender analysis acknowledges that different genders experience family violence and sexual violence differently (both as victims and as perpetrators), and the analysis seeks to understand how and why these differences happen. Such an analysis can assist with our understanding of *all* family violence, not just that majority which is perpetrated by men against women. Similarly, an understanding of the ongoing effects of colonisation is necessary in order to understand Māori experiences of family violence.

Gender is a strong influence on family violence perpetration and outcomes

Locally and internationally there is an understanding that family violence is a gendered crime, primarily perpetrated by men against female partners, embedded in patriarchal culture.³

- **For every man seeking a protection order, nine women seek the same.** (Ministry of Justice, 2020)
- **Men account for around 90% of family violence arrests.** Women arrested for assault against a male partner account for around 6% of such arrests, and most of those women are likely to have experienced sustained and severe violence from their male partners in the past (Mackenzie, 2009).
- The arrest statistics may actually *underestimate* the proportion of primary perpetrators who are men. Experienced workers in the field estimate that **men are the victims of female perpetrators of ongoing family violence in only 1%-2% of cases.** In a 2009 *NZ Herald* opinion piece, two representatives from Preventing Violence in the Home, a support agency in Auckland (now SHINE), explained this statistic:

There is a widely believed myth that a large number of men are abused by their female partners and are too ashamed to come forward for help. The referrals we receive do not support this myth, as family violence is often brought to the attention of these agencies by neighbours, schools, family members, hospitals, midwives, Plunket nurses, passers-by and others, i.e. by people other than the victim.

Out of the 100+ family violence referrals we receive weekly, approximately 15% are male victims. About half of these are victims of male perpetrators, and most of the rest are historically the perpetrators themselves who have rung the police and been recorded as “the victim” when their female partners have retaliated or acted in self-defence. We usually know this because of previous referrals showing the man as the perpetrator, or less frequently, because we assess this dynamic in a phone conversation initiated to offer support. Tell-tale clues are that the alleged victim has no fear of the alleged perpetrator, and does not actually want or need our services.

This leaves approximately 1-2% of referrals where men are the victims of female perpetrators of domestic violence. These men deserve support and safety as much as women and our agency provides this to all in need (Carrington and Neilson, 2009).

- **The higher the risk of serious injury or death, the more likely it is that the family-violence victim will be female.** Women make up at least 85% of the victims referred

³ For example see: Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 2011; Brown & James, 2014; Frawley et al., 2015; Heise & Garcia Moreno, 2002; Heise & Kotsadam, 2015; Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 2011; Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth, 2015; Pihama et al., 2003; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; United Nations, 1993; Walsh et al., 2015; World Health Organisation, 2010.

by police to SHINE, a leading New Zealand family violence service specialist. That percentage goes up among clients assessed as high or extreme risk of serious injury or death (due to a history of violence, threats, injuries and hospitalisation, possession and past use of weapons, military or martial arts training, and so on) – these clients are about 99% female (SHINE, n.d).

- **Violence and abuse perpetrated by men and victimising women kills both women and men.** When intimate partner violence (IPV) between men and women leads to the death of one or both partners (and/or a new partner), in an overwhelming (98%-99%) of cases, it is the man who has been the predominant aggressor in the relationship's history of abuse (FVDRC, 2017).
- **Intimate partner violence perpetrated by men is a risk factor for fatal family violence against children.** Between 2009 and 2015, over three-quarters of the male offenders convicted of fatal physical abuse and/or grossly negligent treatment deaths of children were known to the police for abusing the mother of the deceased child/female partner and/or a prior female partner(s) (FVDRC, 2017, p.10). Children are more likely to be killed by their stepfathers if their stepfathers have a history of IPV: twelve of the 15 step-father offenders were known to police for abusing their current female partner (or the mother of the child who was killed) and/or one or more previous partners (FVDRC, 2017).
- **Disabled women are at higher risk than other women of experiencing intimate partner violence** (NZFVC, 2012).

Popularisation of the myth of gender-equal perpetration of family violence

The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) – a quantitative research instrument first developed in late 1970s and later modified to CTS2 (in a failed attempt to address gender bias) – has been used in multiple studies worldwide, including in the longitudinal Christchurch Health and Development Study (Fergusson et al, 2005; 2008), which used a slightly modified version of the older CTS. Unlike virtually all other studies (including studies using different methodologies from each other), studies using CTS and similar or modified tools have consistently concluded that women are equally likely to use violence in relationships (Orr, 2007).

However, the CTS is not fit-for-purpose as a research tool for gender comparisons of intimate partner violence. As the US National Institute of Justice (2010) cautions: CTS “does not measure control, coercion, or the motives for conflict tactics; it also leaves out sexual assault and violence by ex-spouses or partners and does not determine who initiated the violence.” The exclusion of non-cohabiting couples from most CTS samples misses violence

by former partners (Johnson et al., 2014; Orr, 2007) and a significant proportion of women experiencing such violence (Walker et al, 2004).

The CTS provides a flawed mechanism for measuring the relative severity, and no mechanism for measuring injury caused, or impact of violent acts (Straton, 1994), all of which are greatly affected by gender, as evidenced in the section above. Most importantly, Hamby (2015) has found that the problem with the CTS or the revised CTS2 is that it does not distinguish between what she calls “horse play” – or fooling around – and harmful violence, and therefore the scale lacks construct validity: it does not measure what it purports to measure.

Using population-based samples in combination with CTS is also not a targeted enough methodology to understand the most serious intimate partner violence (IPV). For example, the researchers investigating the Christchurch cohort contend that “the spectrum of violence committed by men and women seems to be similar” yet also admit that “the range of IPV studied within this cohort was confined to relatively mild or moderate incidents of violence and that extreme violence involving severe injury or death was not present with sufficient frequency for analysis” (Fergusson et al, 2008). These two statements – made within the same article – are irreconcilable: one makes an assertion about spectrum, while the other admits that the most concerning end of the spectrum was not available for study. Furthermore, given the isolation that victims of such violence experience, the people within this birth cohort who were lost to follow-up could be the group experiencing more severe levels of violence.

Causes: Violence and its outcomes follow patterns of gender power

The evidence in the sections above indicates that most family violence, and certainly nearly all serious family violence, involves predominantly male aggression toward women and children, with traumatic and tragic outcomes for the principal victims and, sometimes, for the principal aggressor.

As a Scottish Executive briefing paper (Orr, 2007) puts it, this imbalance does not mean that “men are biologically and irredeemably ‘hard-wired’ for coercive controlling behaviour” – indeed, most individual men in New Zealand choose to eschew abuse and violence. Instead it is important to “examine links between the individual behaviour of some men, and prevailing social/structural conditions” as we learn what is “appropriate for masculinity or femininity” through society around us.

The reasons for the patterns of male aggression towards women include society’s gender expectations which can be problematic and destructive for both women *and* men (Towns et al, 2012) – such as the idea that showing emotions or crying is unmanly, or that, if you are male, conflict should be resolved with aggression (FVDRC, 2020). Even more significantly,

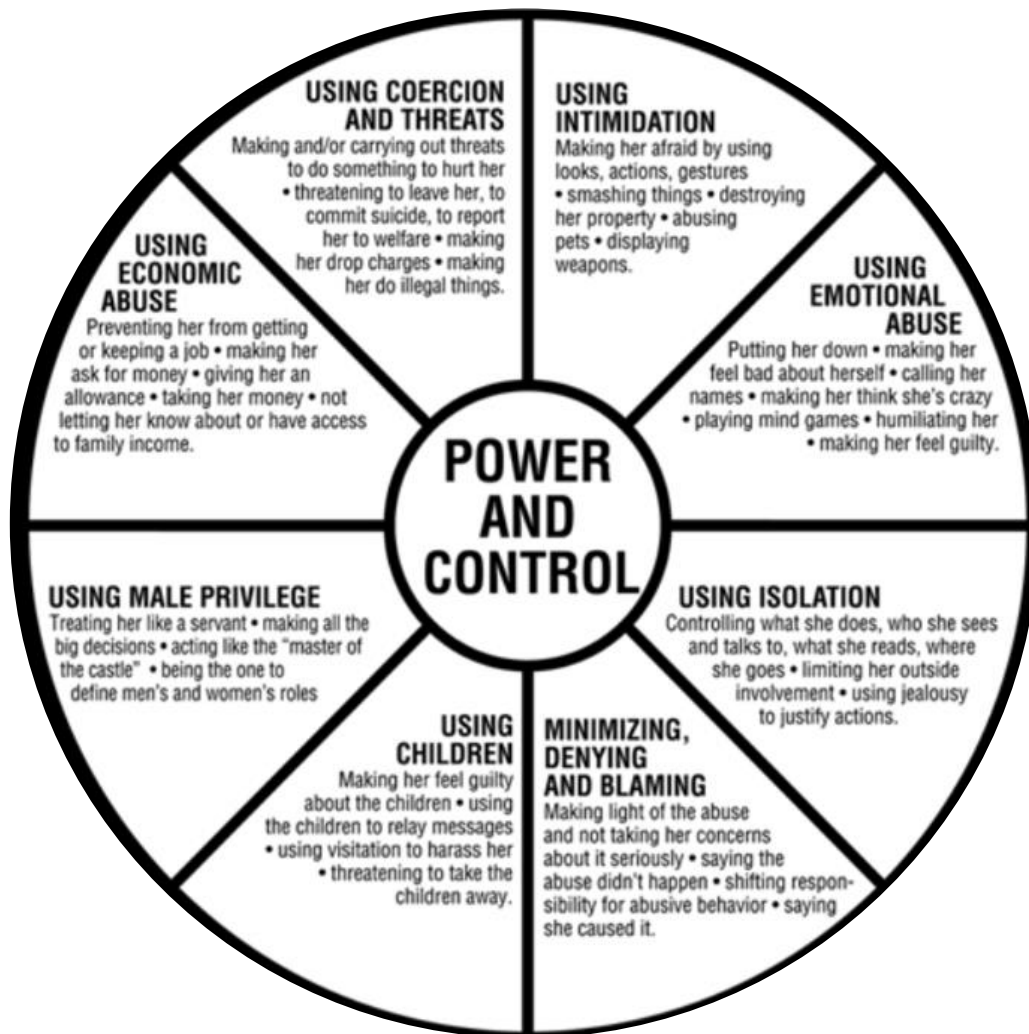
long-term gender power imbalances in our society are real and currently ongoing, whether or not we wish them to be so. New Zealand’s Ministries of Health, and of Social Development, acknowledge in their family violence assessment guidelines that “beliefs that women are subordinate to men” are a risk factor for family violence – but only identify it as such for Pacific people (Ministry of Health, 2016). In fact, those beliefs are a strong enabler of family violence wherever they are found, not just among certain ethnic populations (Leibrich et al, 1995; Garcia-Moreno et al, 2005) – and the fact that official family violence assessment guidelines mentions this belief only in relation to a minority community is part of the structural racism that we wish to challenge here. Many of New Zealand’s economic, social and cultural constructs, including Pākehā constructs, continue to perpetuate lower status for women, in practice if not in theory: in corporate board representation, to take but one example (McGregor & Davis-Tana, 2017). Family violence is part of a continuum of notions of male entitlement (less housework; more cinematic protagonists (Adams et al, 1995)), coercive behaviour (eg financial decision-making (Towns & Adams, 2018)) and socially-sanctioned male aggression (boys will be boys; expectations of sexual “assertiveness” (Towns & Terry, 2014)).

For example, women in relationships with men are likely to earn less than their partners and so have less economic power in the relationship; and when a couple has young children, the woman is likely to do most of the caregiving and consequently may have little or no access to any income at all.⁴ Her partner is in a position of family power in that he can decide which financial decisions he will allow her to make over the family income, if any at all. In other words, he has the ability to make executive rather than shared decisions and thus be economically abusive (see the power and control wheel in Figure 1 below). The vast majority of women will never be in a financial position where they have such power over their male partners.

Those men who do not share control over the finances (and/or who abuse in other ways) are likely to be encouraged by social norms and pop culture that can be interpreted as showing women as objects without decision-making power, to be owned and controlled by men (Towns & Scott, 2013). To take a small example of the pervasiveness of such messages, the top 5 singles in New Zealand on 30 March 2020 included a track with the lyric: “Took her to the forest, put the wood in her mouth/ Bitch don't wear no shoes in my house”; while in another top-5 track, the male performer (in a high-profile heterosexual marriage) sings “stay in the kitchen... you’re an asset” (NZTop40, 2020). Whether such lyrics are intended ironically or not, some people will interpret them to shore up their own power (consciously or not). Even people who are not seeking out such messages will hear them.

⁴ The payment of IRD Family Tax Credits to the main caregiver mitigates against this to some extent for many (not all) families, but the sums involved are not enough to eliminate it.

Figure 1: The Power and Control Wheel (Pence & Paymar, 1993)



New Zealand’s Family Violence Death Review Committee sees “intimate partner violence as a gendered form of social entrapment for women” in which men’s coercive control is aggravated by structural inequalities such as gender, class and racism. In addition, “a society that is inequitable for women limits a victim’s options for safety” (FVDR, 2020). Thus, the lower status of women in general contributes to family violence in at least two ways:

1. It can encourage men to expect servitude and acquiescence from the women in their family, and to see behaviour contrary to this expectation as an affront to themselves as the man, the “head of the house” (Towns et al., 2003).
2. It can encourage men to think that their violence against their family is their right, and will go unpunished.

Both of these toxic attitudes stem from an assumption that women are possessions of men. Indeed, “the key to understanding most abuse is... coercion and control, which ‘jeopardises individual liberty and autonomy as well as safety’, and is centred on ‘the micro-regulation of women’s default roles as wife, mother, homemaker and sexual partner’” (Orr, 2007, quoting Evan Stark).

The dominant presumption of men's possession of women extends to children as well. A key point from the Family Violence Death Review Committee is that "Children who are not the biological children of the mother's abusive partner are a physical reminder to him that 'his woman' has had sexual relationships with other men." In such cases, gender inequity and the objectification of women directly leads to child abuse and sometimes death (FVDRC, 2017).

When men feel they are losing the ability to control women and children as possessions, violence may occur. Writing in the wake of the February 2020 Brisbane familicide – in which Rowan Baxter murdered his estranged wife and their three children by burning them alive before fatally stabbing himself – researcher Denise Buiten (2020) noted that Baxter's estranged wife "experienced an extreme form of 'coercive control', with her dress and movements closely monitored and enforced by her husband", typical of an abusive relationship where the man behaves as if he "owns" the woman (see Stark, 2007).

Orr (2007) identified the following to be important to consider when aiming to eliminate family violence:

- 1. There is often a physical difference in size and strength which generally makes men's use of violence more effective as a means of control*
- 2. Strong gender socialization (in childhood play, certain sports, ideals of strength and courage, peer groups, gangs, media role models, popular music, video games, and the military) has associated the use of physical force and violence with masculinity. Indeed, in a variety of contexts men are actively socialized to enjoy inflicting violence. This makes the threat of physical violence more likely and more credible from men*
- 3. The complex but deep-rooted connection between sexual pleasure, coercion and men's violence (associated with notions of mastery and entitlement) makes intimate sexual relations a fruitful arena for abuse*
- 4. Individual misogyny, and general hostility to women, have been implicated (Holzworth-Munro et al 2000), while men with traditionalist views about sharply differentiated gender roles and status may also be more likely to perpetrate domestic abuse (Sugarman and Frankel 1996)... (Orr, 2007)*

Among other things, these factors suggest that the arenas for the prevention of family violence include shifting widespread cultural norms and the language that supports them, (FVDRC, 2020; Towns, 2015; Towns & Adams, 2016) and that those developing initiatives to mitigate the effects of family violence need to consider supporting the financial and emotional safety of women and children, as well as their physical safety.

Whānau Māori bear a particularly heavy burden of family violence

Indigenous women and children internationally experience a higher incidence of serious outcomes from family violence than other women and children, and it is the same in Aotearoa New Zealand. For example:

- Between 2009 and 2015, Māori were three times more likely to be victims and offenders in intimate partner violence deaths than non-Māori. (FVDRC, 2017)
- In 2008, seven wāhine Māori and four Māori children were hospitalised due to assaults for every one Pākehā woman and child hospitalised due to assaults (E Tū Whānau, 2013)
- 49% of Māori women experience partner abuse at some time in their life compared with 24% of Pākehā women and 32% of Pacific women (Fanslow, 2005)
- Māori students are twice as likely as Pākehā students to report witnessing adults hitting children and adults hitting other adults in their homes (Wehipeihana, 2019).

Causes: Colonisation as a violent role model and enforcer

The statistics above show that the consequences of family violence are particularly serious for whānau Māori. Family violence is not a consequence of Māori culture, nor is it intrinsic to Māori culture; rather it results from the collective experience of Māori of colonisation, exacerbated by the long-term and ongoing violence by the state toward Māori, causing inter-generational trauma and a current lack of appropriate agency support.

British settlers imposed “Victorian patriarchal cultural norms” rendering “women as chattels of men” on Māori society which hitherto enjoyed “complementary...reciprocal [and] mutually beneficial” gender relationships (FVDRC, 2017). In addition, multiple early European visitors and settlers in New Zealand documented close, nurturing and tender relationships between adults (both men and women) and children (Salmond, 2018; E Tū Whānau, 2018).

Since then, Māori have undergone the extreme violence of colonisation, including war, land alienation, tohunga suppression, and punishment for speaking te reo Māori, as well as the outlawing of non-violent resistance to this violence such as passive resistance and isolation (Kruger et al, 2004). This violence has been experienced personally as well as collectively (Wilson et al., 2019); and it is now widely accepted both that the trauma experienced by Māori during the time of colonisation of Aotearoa has been passed on to successive generations, and that the impact of the social change imposed on Māori during colonisation is ongoing (FVDRC, 2017; Pihama et al, 2019).

This *ongoing* history of alienation, suppression, discrimination and racism exacerbates and reproduces family violence for Māori in a number of ways identified by Māori scholars:

- **Role model:** colonisation promotes violence as a seemingly effective power move: “The risk is that we adopt what we have been shown (colonisation becomes the role model) and adapt the methodologies of violence to our own cultural practices” as Kruger et al (2004) puts it.
- **Cycle of violence:** “Those who directly or indirectly experience violence as children are more likely to become victims and perpetrators as adults. Over time, violence within whānau has become ‘normalised’ and (mis) interpreted as being a part of Māori culture” (FVDRC, 2017).
- **Deprivation:** Due to ongoing discrimination, Māori experience higher levels of unemployment, lower levels of education attainment and income, inequities across numerous health outcomes, poorer housing conditions, and less access to transport and communication technologies relative to non-Māori non-Pacific populations. For Māori, fatal family violence is strongly linked to extreme deprivation; seven out of ten Māori offenders live in areas in the quintile of the highest levels of deprivation (FVDRC, 2017).
- **Discriminatory services:** “Māori whānau (victims and perpetrators) can experience numerous barriers when seeking help and support from services. The barriers include ... the cultural barriers, racial biases and stereotyping that Māori encounter when seeking help... . When marginalised and disadvantaged people experience discrimination and victim-blaming, they are less likely to trust that, when seeking help on subsequent occasions, they will receive respectful and effective help” (FVDRC, 2017). Thus the State is not only violent towards Māori, it is also willfully neglectful of them, meaning many women feel abandoned and cannot access any structural support. One recent study highlighting the experiences of wāhine Māori found that “The greatest fear for the women ... wasn't the violent men. It was asking for help and their children being taken by Oranga Tamariki” (Parahi, 2019). As lawyer and justice advocate Julia Whaipooti puts it: “That is a problem, when the system becomes a perpetrator that a people cannot trust” (1News, 2020; see also Kaiwai et al, 2020; OCC, 2020).
- **Racist policy-making.** “If whānau violence interventions continue to be delivered from a Pākehā conceptual and practice framework that isolates, criminalises and pathologises Māori individuals, nothing will change” (Kruger et al, 2004).

“The structural inequities Māori whānau experience persist, in part, because of institutional racism at the level of governance and policy-making in the public sector. This is seen in the marginalisation of Māori perspectives, decision-making and

leadership in developing solutions to their health and wellbeing issues. Western paradigms of violence prevention are ill-equipped to prevent violence within whānau. The intersecting layers of disadvantage among Māori and the overlapping health and wellbeing issues (eg, violence, co-occurrence of substance use, mental health issues and poverty) require culturally informed solutions, responsive to the unique histories and requirements of each person, their whānau, hapū and iwi” (E Tū Whānau, 2013).

Conclusion

Gender and colonisation are critical to understanding the determinants of family violence and to finding solutions. Family violence has been described as a form of colonisation of women by certain men intent on imposing their domination, control and disciplinary practices on women (Adams, 2012). Thus wāhine Māori who experience family violence are exposed to a “double whammy” of colonising practices: they experience the full impact of the routine forms of colonisation that imposed gender inequity not experienced by Māori women traditionally or practiced by Māori men prior to the colonisation of Aotearoa, and they experience the coercive controlling practices of family violence which are designed to further erode their identity, whānau connections and independence. These are the understandings required to address family violence in Aotearoa/New Zealand. They point to the need to expose those forms of masculinity grounded in British Colonial traditional practices that some men draw on to use and support violence against women in Aotearoa. The social and cultural norms that inform these practices are imbedded in the language, cultural and gendered practices of our institutions, social structures, judiciary, sports bodies, educators and employers. They may be so embedded that they appear to be common-sense. We cannot prevent family violence by pretending that these gendered and colonising practices do not occur. The way forward through the thicket is to expose these gendered norms and colonising practices, and to unite all women and men in their contempt for the norms and justifications that support family violence, and increase their pride in supportive, positive and caring relationships and practices.

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