



Asia Pacific Institute on GBV presents

# PACIFIC DIASPORA REPORT

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## Table of Contents

<b>REPORT FIGURES</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>THE PROBLEM</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SCOPE OF REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS</b>	<b>7</b>
Domestic violence	7
Gender-based violence	7
Direct, Structural and Cultural violence	8
Direct violence	8
Structural violence	8
Cultural violence	8
<b>REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>THE UNITED STATES AND THE PACIFIC: AN OVERVIEW</b>	<b>15</b>
Understanding Oceania	15
United States in Oceania: A snapshot	15
Compact of Free Association (COFA)	17
Unincorporated Territories of the United States	18
U.S Present day presence in the Pacific	19
<b>Migration to the U.S</b>	<b>19</b>
First wave: Kanaka Hawaii	19
Second wave:	20
<b>The Current Pacific Diaspora in the United States</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>What are the forms of violence that victims of DV &amp; GBV in the Pacific diaspora experience?</b>	<b>24</b>
Direct violence (visible)	24
<b>What are the institutions/structures (indigenous and adopted) &amp; cultural ideologies that justifies and normalizes DV &amp; GBV in the USA?</b>	<b>28</b>
Cultural and Structural violence (invisible)	28
<b>The family</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>Urbanised Pacific: Acculturation</i>	29
<i>Language &amp; Customs</i>	31
<b>The Church</b>	<b>33</b>
<i>Respect &amp; loyalty</i>	35
<i>Religious trauma</i>	36
<b>Chieftanship</b>	<b>38</b>
<i>Patriarchy &amp; Power</i>	38
<i>Impunity of men in Pacific culture</i>	41
<i>Women's rights</i>	42
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>43</b>
Galtung violence triangle: We need to think upside down	44

GIVT vs GVT	45
3R approach: Reframe, Relocate, Restore	46
Reframe	46
Relocate	47
Restore	47
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>48</b>

## REPORT FIGURES

Figure 1 Asian and Pacific Island Population in USA	5
Figure 2 Domestic violence rates in the world (Source: statista.com)	11
Figure 3 Source: worldpopulationreview	12
Figure 4 Source: pasefikaproud.co.nz	14
Figure 5 The Pacific Archipelago	15
Figure 6 Source: nationalgeographic.com	17
Figure 7 COFA in the Pacific (Source: manage.thediplomat.com)	18
Figure 8 U.S presence in the Pacific (Source: gorhistory.com)	19
Figure 9 Illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom (Source: nea.org)	20
Figure 10 Geographic location of Pacific Island populations in the USA	22
Figure 11 Source: health.hawaii.gov	27
Figure 12 Religion in Micronesia	33
Figure 13 Source: usccb.org	34
Figure 14 Source: vawnet.org	38



## THE PROBLEM

There is a paucity in Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Domestic Violence (DV) research for the Pacific diaspora in the United States. More specifically, there has not been an extensive research approach that examines and analyses current and existing narratives of contributors to the GBV and DV problem within Pacific Island (PI) communities in the United States. This scalable research, seeks to provide a comprehensive research plan that looks deeply into the cultural and institutional contributor to the GBV and DV problem.

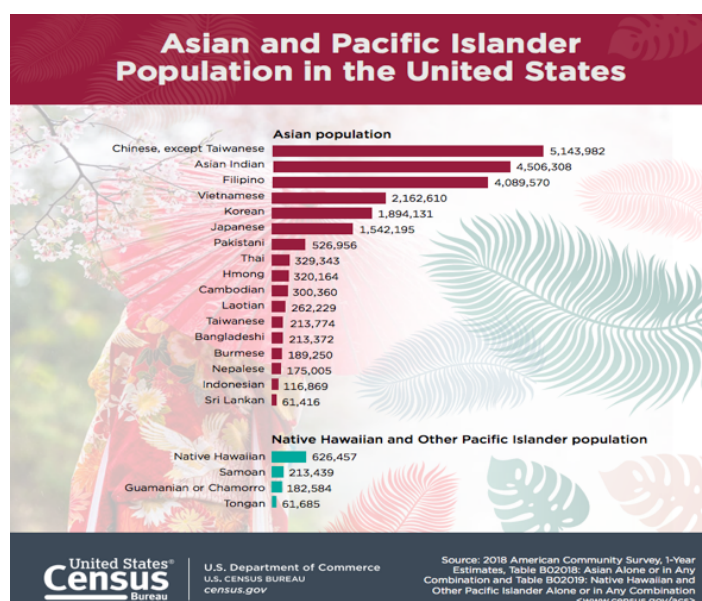


Figure 1 Asian and Pacific Island Population in USA

Family violence is not a new phenomenon; rather it is a phenomenon that has been tolerated for too long and neglected by the wider society.<sup>1</sup> UN Women estimates that 60-70% of Pacific Island women and girls experience physical or sexual violence by a partner or others in their lifetimes.<sup>2</sup> According to the US Census Bureau, the United States is home over an estimated, 1 million Pacific Islanders (please refer to figure 2). The Samoan diaspora make up nearly 20% of the Pacific population in the USA making it the second largest Pacific diaspora living in the USA.

Domestic violence among U.S Pacific Islanders is not well-studied. Because the populations from each Pacific Island and Asian nation are so small in the U.S., data from those groups are often collected together, forming the Asian Pacific Islander (often called API) group. But if the larger API groups score better in wellness surveys – such as reporting low rates of domestic violence – their data can obscure problems in the smaller groups.<sup>3</sup>

Of API women in the U.S., 18.3 percent reported being a victim of domestic violence, the lowest rate of all ethnic groups in a 2010-2012.<sup>4</sup>

This figure stands in stark contrast with the rates of intimate partner violence in the Pacific Islands: 64 percent of women in Fiji, 46 percent in Samoa and 40 percent in Tonga reported

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/unite> for further information.

<sup>2</sup> "Violence Against Women (VAW) in the Pacific." UNFPA Pacific Sub-Regional Office. January 8, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Please refer to <http://peninsulapress.com/2018/09/10/behind-closed-doors-how-domestic-violence-among-pacific-islanders-remains-in-the-shadows/> for further information

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReportBook.pdf> for further information.

experiencing intimate partner violence in their lifetime, according to research released by the United Nations Population Fund.<sup>5</sup>

Tonga and Samoa passed their domestic violence and family safety bills in 2013. But their effectiveness has not been well evaluated. In Aug. 2017, the United Nations announced it would launch an investigation into violence against women in Samoa after their rates of reported domestic violence went from 200 in 2012 to 723 in 2015.<sup>6</sup>

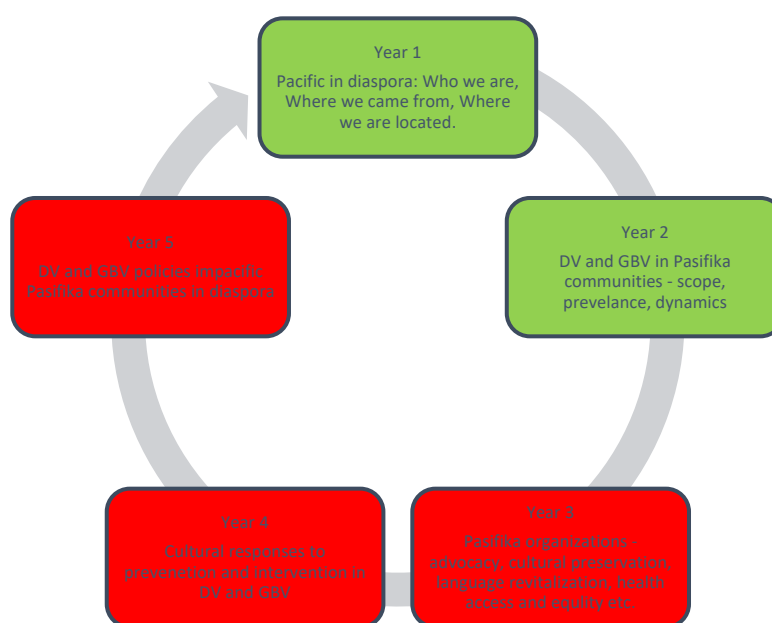
Currently, there is no extensive research on the cultural, structural/institutional contribution to GBV and SV. This report seeks to examine these factors.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF REPORT

The aim and object is influenced by the first and second year of the reports scope.

## SCOPE OF REPORT

Initially, the report was informed by a five year study on understanding the prevalence of DV and GBV within Pacific communities in the United States. However, this report will only focus on the year 1 and year 2 of the five year research plan. The flow chart below articulates the aim, object and scope of this report.



<sup>5</sup> Please refer to <https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/VAW%20Map%20September%2014%202017.pdf> for further information.

<sup>6</sup> Please refer to <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-samoa-women-violence/un-investigators-examine-rising-domestic-violence-in-samoa-for-first-time-idUSKBN1AJ239> for further information.

## THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overarching research question informing this report is ***What are the forms of violence that victims of DV & GBV in the U.S Pacific diaspora experience?*** While this questions provides the foundational lens for this study, additional secondary questions are employed for further the possible answers to the primary research question. These questions are:

1. What are the **institutions/structures** (indigenous and adopted) that justifies and normalizes DV & GBV in the USA?
2. What are the **cultural ideologies** within Pacific cultures that justifies and normalizes DV & GBV in the USA?

It is intended that throughout this report, the primary and secondary questions will be explored to disentangle potential narratives, justifications, cultural and institutional contributions to this social problem impacting the Pacific diaspora in the United States.

The following section will provide definitions of key terms and concepts that will used throughout this study. This is important to establish because the scope and parameters of these terms can be wide and complex. Operationalizing the terms acknowledges the loaded nature of the terms, but for the sake of this study, also enables specificity and context to the used terms.

## DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

### Domestic violence

Domestic violence (DV) or sometimes referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV) is a form of family violence. DV can occur in any intimate of familial relationship, irrespective of whether the parties are living together or not, whether they are married or cohabiting or living in three-generational extended families.<sup>7</sup> It is the relational element, rather than location that defines the violence as ‘domestic’, because while it commonly occurs the home, it can spill out into the streets, bus stops, bars or even result in road traffic accidents. It is the fact that the perpetrator and victim are not only well known to each other, but are (or were) in intimate or familial relationships, that makes it particularly hard to deal with by the survivor or victim, support and criminal justice agencies and the law.<sup>8</sup>

### Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to the harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. In doing so, this form of violence is rooted on gender inequality, the abuse of

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<sup>7</sup> Radford, J., & Harne, L. (2008). *Tackling Domestic Violence Theories, Policies and Practice*. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education.

<sup>8</sup> Please refer to footnote 7

power and harmful norms.<sup>9</sup> GBV violates the human rights of victims. One in three women will experience GBV in their lifetime.<sup>10</sup>

#### Direct, Structural and Cultural violence

In his 1969 seminal article entitled *Violence, Peace and Peace Research* Galtung introduced to society fundamental concepts for understanding violence. Galtung broadened accepted notions of violence by suggesting that it can be perceived as threefold – direct, structural and cultural. According to Galtung, direct violence is influenced and reinforced by structural and cultural violence. Direct violence, is physically visible (hitting, murder, rape, torture) while structural and cultural violence, according to Galtung, are harder to identify.

These three forms of violence form the definitional platform for the term violence that will be used in this report. Commonly referred to as the violence typology or violence triangle, Galtung defines direct, cultural and structural violence as;

#### Direct violence

The use of physical force, like killing, torture, rape and sexual assault and beating. Verbal violence, such as humiliation or put downs, is also becoming more widely recognized as direct violence.

#### Structural violence

Structural violence exists when some groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc are assumed to have, and in fact do have, more access to goods, resources, and opportunities than other groups and this unequal advantage is built into the social, political and economic systems that govern societies, states and the world. These tendencies may be overt such as apartheid or subtler such as traditions or tendency to award some groups privileges over another.

#### Cultural violence

The aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion, language, and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence. The prevailing attitudes and beliefs that we have been taught since childhood and that surround us in daily life about the power and necessity of violence.

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<sup>9</sup>Please refer to <https://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html#:~:text=Gender%2DBased%20violence%20refers%20to,threatening%20health%20and%20protection%20issue> for further information.

<sup>10</sup> Please refer to footnote 3

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section briefly reviews the literature associated with domestic violence. First, a discussion on the issues and challenges associated when trying to define and contextualize the term ‘domestic violence’ is provided. This is followed by a snapshot of the prevalence of the domestic violence problem globally, in the United States and the Pacific.

### *What is domestic violence?*

Domestic violence is a broad and loaded concept incorporating many forms of physical violence, sexual violence and a range of coercive, intimidating and controlling behaviors. Generally, domestic violence is understood to suggest that the term ‘domestic’ should be changed to family violence because it takes on the belief that this form of violence occurs in the homes. In doing so, it tends to down play or even trivialize the violence. The word ‘family’ also needs to be broadened contextually and in meaning to include a range of living situations that go beyond the mythical nuclear family of ‘mum, dad and the kids.’ Furthermore, the parameters associated with existing definitions do not take into account the rapid social changes, complex cultural boundaries and ideologies that families currently experience.

The United Nations define domestic violence as;

A pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. It can occur within a range of relationships including couples who are married, living together or dating. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.<sup>11</sup>

From a feminist perspective, the definition of domestic violence derives from the context of power and control in the context of a patriarchal society. This school of thought argues that

“Domestic violence reflects men’s need to have complete control over their female partners in particular and social control over women in general...Advocates of this view believe that domestic violence is not a private problem but rather a societal problem with structural roots.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Please refer to <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/what-is-domestic-abuse> for further information

<sup>12</sup> Straka, S. M., & Montminy, L. (2008). Family Violence: Through the Lens of Power and Control. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 8(3), 255–257. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10926790802262499>

The U.S Department of Justice further defines domestic violence to include:

“...felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of victim, by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction receiving grant monies, or by any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person’s act under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction.”<sup>13</sup>

The diversity of definitions reflects the complex nature and characteristics of the problem. It addresses and re-emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to understand this protracted problem. In doing so, “all of these definitions remain contested, and efforts to end domestic violence are, in no small part, efforts to control the definitions of the problem. Regardless of how we define the problem, violence within the domestic sphere continues to take its toll on women, children, men, and society as a whole.”<sup>14</sup>

The breadth of the terminology can be problematic when trying to describe the epidemiology of violence against women and in planning surveillance systems for monitoring its occurrence. In the context of research:

“Different conceptions of violent behavior directed toward women raise crucial definitional issues to address in formulating research and surveillance in this field. Given differing referents for the imprecise term violence used by researchers and their differing theoretical perspectives, that researchers can differ in a range of behaviors and experiences they include in the term violence provided they are explicit about their operationalization of this term in reporting results of empirical and theoretical studies and in interpreting such studies. Thus, some researchers may adopt a broad definition including many types of abusive, coercive, and controlling behaviors and other can restrict the term violence to physical aggression or to serious physical aggression in relationships. However, they should be explicit in their operational definitions and describe characteristics of their samples so that sample ignitions of violence against women, however, have implications explanatory conceptualization for violence against women, and prescribing what type of data indicative violence against women

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<sup>13</sup> Please refer to <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/domestic-violence> for further information.

<sup>14</sup> Burrill, E., Roberts, R., & Thornberry, E. (2010). *Domestic Violence and the law in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa*. Ohio: Ohio University Press Athens.



should be collected in surveillance systems and how it should be collected.”<sup>15</sup>

Domestic violence is a global problem and is not isolated to one country, culture or people. Irrespective of race, culture, religion and socio-economic status, violence against women is considered the least recognized human rights abuse in the world.<sup>16</sup>

Globally, one in three women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Most of this violence is intimate partner violence.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, all women who were the victims of homicide globally in 2012, almost half were killed by intimate partners of family members, compared to less than six per cent of men. 10 million girls worldwide (slightly more than 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced acts at some point of in their lives. By far the most common perpetrators of sexual violence against girls are current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends.<sup>18</sup>

As awareness of domestic violence increased the international community also responded by establishing new conventions and declarations on violence against women, sexual abuse and gender equality. To address the issues of gender inequality, in 1979 the United Nations General Assembly, through the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), brought the issues of women’s discrimination to global attention.

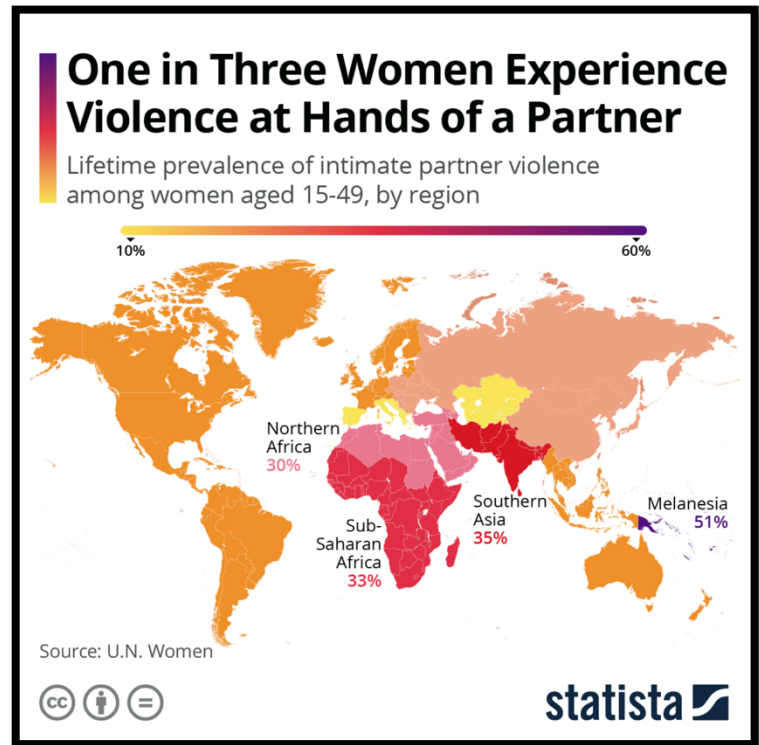


Figure 2 Domestic violence rates in the world (Source: statista.com)

<sup>15</sup> Freeman, M. (2016). *Domestic Violence (The family, law & society)*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor, C. A. (2016). Domestic Violence and its Prevalence in Small Island Developing States- South Pacific Region. *Pacific Journal of Reproductive Health*, 1(3), 119–127. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.18313/pjrh.2016.903>

<sup>17</sup> World Health Organization. (2013). *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*. 2013. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13398-014-0173-7.2>

<sup>18</sup> UN Women. (2016). Ending Violence Against Women. Retrieved March 23, 2017, from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

Since its introduction in 1981 over 180 countries have ratified the convention commonly referred to as the international bill of rights for women. The 30-article treaty defines discrimination against women as well as setting up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the implementation of these international conventions on protecting women, some have argued that these laws need to be less complicated and more transparent. An example of this is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which was adopted by the United Nations in 1948. While some of the provisions in this declaration could be extrapolated to apply to gender-based violence and discrimination, some maintain that this is insufficient and does not provide the special protection women need by virtue of the different nature of their body and reproductive functions.<sup>20</sup>

In the United States of America alone, 11,766 women were murdered by current or ex male partners between 2001 to 2012. To give this number some context, 6,488 American troops were killed in Afghanistan during that same period. This equates to three women who are murdered everyday by a current or former male partner.<sup>21</sup>

Pacific Island societies are not immune from domestic and sexual violence. In fact, the region has one of the highest domestic and sexual violence rates in the world. Almost 70% of women and girls experience rape or other sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>22</sup>

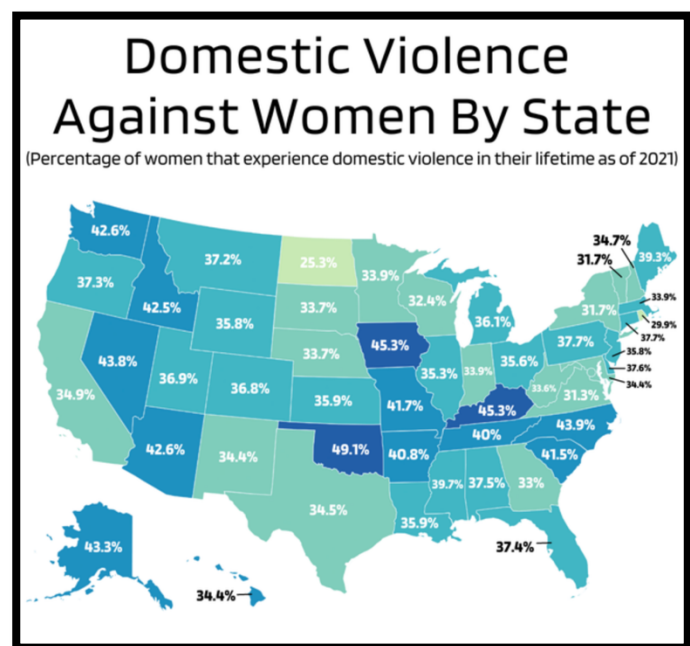


Figure 3 Source: worldpopulationreview

<sup>19</sup> United Nations. (1979). Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Retrieved March 24, 2017, from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Meyersfeld, B. (2010). *Domestic Violence and International Law*. Portland: Oxford, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>21</sup> Vagianos, A. (2015). 30 Shocking Domestic Violence Statistics That Remind Us It's An Epidemic. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/23/domestic-violence-statistics\\_n\\_5959776.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/23/domestic-violence-statistics_n_5959776.html)

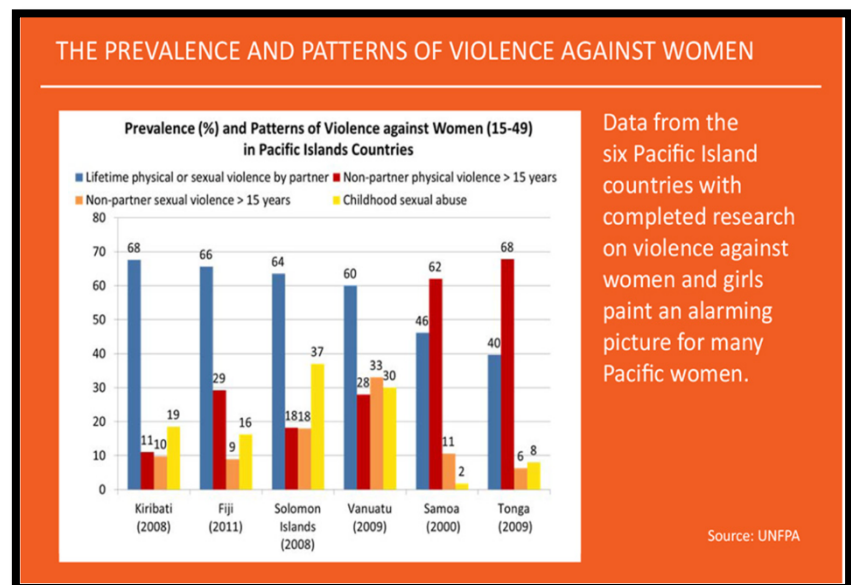
<sup>22</sup> IFRC. (2011). The Red Cross Red Crescent approach to Promoting a culture of non-violence and peace. Retrieved May 8, 2017, from [http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/53475/1205900Advocacy%20report%20on%20Promotion%20of%20culture%20of%20peace-EN-LR%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/53475/1205900Advocacy%20report%20on%20Promotion%20of%20culture%20of%20peace-EN-LR%20(2).pdf)



In a recent UNICEF report, it is indicated that one in ten women in the South Pacific are beaten while pregnant.<sup>23</sup> Discussions on a community and national level about domestic and sexual violence have been limited because the topic is seen by many as taboo. This attitude prevents people from even acknowledging the problem, let alone effectively dealing with it.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, a New Zealand study in 2007 suggested that “family violence is often severe and

ongoing and has a high impact on children...for those living in extended families, the impact extends beyond the couple and their children.”<sup>25</sup>

The relationship between abuse and discipline has always been a topic of debate amongst Pacific people. In the Pacific, discipline by way of physical punishment is an accepted “socialization tool.”<sup>26</sup> The paradoxical relationship between aggressive spanking followed by displays of affection promoted a culture amongst Pacific children that pain was associated with love.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, punishment and spanking was always seen by Pacific parents as an act that was done out of love, therefore if the parents failed to instruct their children, parents believed they were failing their children.<sup>28</sup>



<sup>23</sup> UNICEF Pacific. (2015). *Harmful Connections: Examining the relationship between violence against women and violence against children in the South Pacific*. Suva, Fiji.

<sup>24</sup> Papoutsaki, E., & Harris, U. S. (2008). *South Pacific Island Communication: regional perspectives, local issues*. Suva, Fiji: Singapore: Asian Media Information and Communication Centre AMIC and Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University WKKWSI-NTU; Auckland, N.Z. Pacific Media Centre; Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific.

<sup>25</sup> Lievore, D., & Mayhew, P. (2007). *The scale and nature of family violence in New Zealand: A review and evaluation of knowledge*. Wellington, New Zealand. Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/scale-nature-family-violence/index.html>

<sup>26</sup> Mageo, J. (1998). *Theorizing self in Samoa: Emotions, genders, and sexualities*. Michigan: University of Michigan.

<sup>27</sup> Howard, A. (1986). Samoan coping behavior. In *The Changing Samoans: Behaviour and Health in Transition*. New York: Oxford University.

<sup>28</sup> Schoeffel, P., & Meleisea, M. (1996). Pacific attitudes to child training and discipline in New Zealand: Some policy implications for social welfare education. *Journal of New Zealand Social Policy*, 6, 134–147.

The use of biblical scriptures to justify discipline and punishment within Samoan families has also been a contributing factor to domestic and family violence. Often, there are misinterpretations to what the bible teaches in relation to what is being practiced in Samoan society. The commonly referred Old Testament scripture teaches “*He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes*”<sup>29</sup> is often used to legitimize the punishment of children by Pacific parents. However, Reverend Nove Vailaau argues that smacking children has never been a part of pre-Christian Pacific beliefs and that the Proverbial meaning of the scripture suggests that “parents are the shepherds of their children...by applying the rod of protection, guidance, care, comfort and nurturance, they guide them into adulthood.”<sup>30</sup>

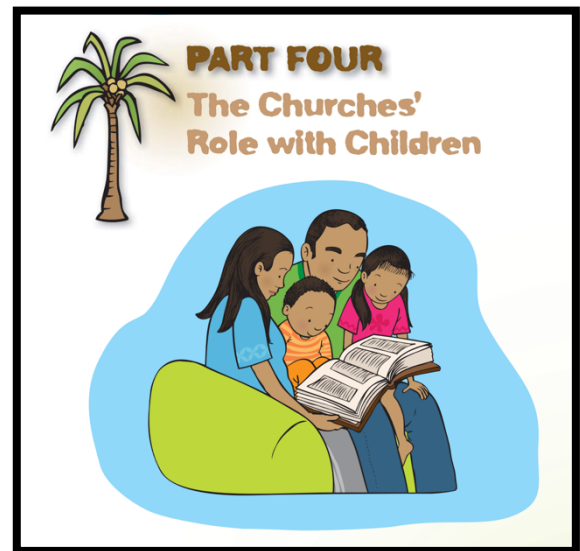


Figure 4 Source: pasefikaproud.co.nz

Despite global and regional initiatives to stop domestic violence the problem is persistent. In the case of the Pacific region, the complexity of the problem lies in the cultural overtones that intertwine through the domestic/family violence dilemma. Understanding domestic violence in the Pacific archipelago is different from understanding domestic violence in mainstream western society. Although the events in Port Moresby or Suva may appear similar to the incidents occurring in New York, the cultural meanings of those events are likely to be different. If we use the same terms to describe them, we must take care that resulting analysis is not misleading.<sup>31</sup>

Given the high rates of domestic and sexual violence in the Pacific region, it is important to understand what aspects within Pacific cultures influence this endemic problem. In doing so, the complexity of the problem implies that the approaches used to understand domestic/family violence in the Pacific should be culturally competent. The cause of domestic violence is in many ways pervasive and at times culturally justified. It is thus important that if preventative mechanisms are put in place, they are implemented with careful cultural consideration.

<sup>29</sup> Holy Bible: Proverbs Chapter 13 Verse 24 (King James Version)

<sup>30</sup> Vailaau, N. (2005). *A Theology of Children*. Wellington. Retrieved from [http://www.churchesfornon-violence.org/theology\\_of\\_children.pdf](http://www.churchesfornon-violence.org/theology_of_children.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Counts, D. A. (1990). Domestic Violence in Oceania Introduction. *Pacific Studies*, 13(3), 5.

## THE UNITED STATES AND THE PACIFIC: AN OVERVIEW

### Understanding Oceania

The Pacific Islands archipelago is divided into three regions – Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.<sup>32</sup>

Melanesia is the largest of the three Oceania sub-regions in both land mass and population. The region is home to the main islands of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and Fiji. It is rich in natural resources such as copper, gold, nickel, timber, and fish which is the backbone to the region's economic growth and sustainability. It is also important to note that the region is culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse. The region is home to “over 1,000 different dialects.”<sup>33</sup>



Figure 5 The Pacific Archipelago

The Marianas, Caroline's, Marshalls, and the Gilberts represent the four main island groups of Micronesia. Like much of the Oceania archipelago, natural resources are in abundance in this region. However, the economic wellbeing of many Micronesian states is heavily reliant on external aid from the United States to which many of these small island states (Guam, Palau, Marshall Islands, and Federated States of Micronesia) have political ties.

The last region is Polynesia. Its triangular borders are represented by Hawaii to the north, New Zealand to the south-east, and Easter Island or Rapa Nui to the south-west. Within this imaginary triangle lie American Samoa, Samoa, Tuvalu, Tokelau, Niue, Cook Islands, Tonga, and Pitcairn Island. Unlike the previous sub-regions, Polynesia is culturally and linguistically similar. It is home to some of the world largest EEZ (exclusive economic zones). Tourism and agriculture are the main forms of economic revenue for these island states.

### United States in Oceania: A snapshot

After 1853, the United States had completed the consolidation of its continental boundaries. However, despite this, the urge to expand was still strong and the geopolitical environment amongst the global powers of the time (Germany, Great Britain and France) began expanding its political and economic causes to the Pacific.

<sup>32</sup> Please refer to figure 1

<sup>33</sup> Ridgell, R. (1995). *Pacific Nations and Territories: The Islands of Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia*. Honolulu, Hawaii: Bess Press Inc.

At the time, one important and influential driver for the United States to venture into the Pacific was in search for Guano.<sup>34</sup> Obtaining Guano from the China and was too expensive and the United States needed to look for alternative locations to source this valuable resource.

In a landmark move, the United States federal law passed the **1856 Guano Islands Act** which enabled United State citizens to take possession, in the name of the United States, of unclaimed islands containing guano deposits.<sup>35</sup> The Act would allow any US Citizen to occupy uninhabited islands to obtained guano. The first section of the Act states that:

Whenever any citizen of the United States discovers a deposit of guano on any island, rock, or key, not within the lawful jurisdiction of any other government, and not occupied by the citizens of any other government, and takes peaceable possession thereof, and occupies the same, such island, rock, or key may, at the discretion of the President, be considered as appertaining to the United States.<sup>36</sup>

The 1856 Guano Act and the subsequent occupation of many Pacific islands opened the door for the United States in the Pacific. Commonly referred to as the **Pacific Remote Island Marine National Momentum**<sup>37</sup> the monument accounts for approximately 495,189 square miles of open ocean, coral reef, and island inhabitants making the total area of the Monument nearly five times the size of all the U.S National Parks combined and nearly twice the size of the state of Texas.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Guano was used as an agricultural fertilizer as well as used as a by-product (saltpeter) for gun powder.

<sup>35</sup> Please refer to [1856 Guano Act](#) for further information.

<sup>36</sup> Please refer to <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title48/chapter8&edition=prelim> for further information.

<sup>37</sup> Please refer to <https://www.fws.gov/national-monument/pacific-remote-islands-marine> for further information.

<sup>38</sup> Please refer to <https://www.fws.gov/national-monument/pacific-remote-islands-marine> for further information.

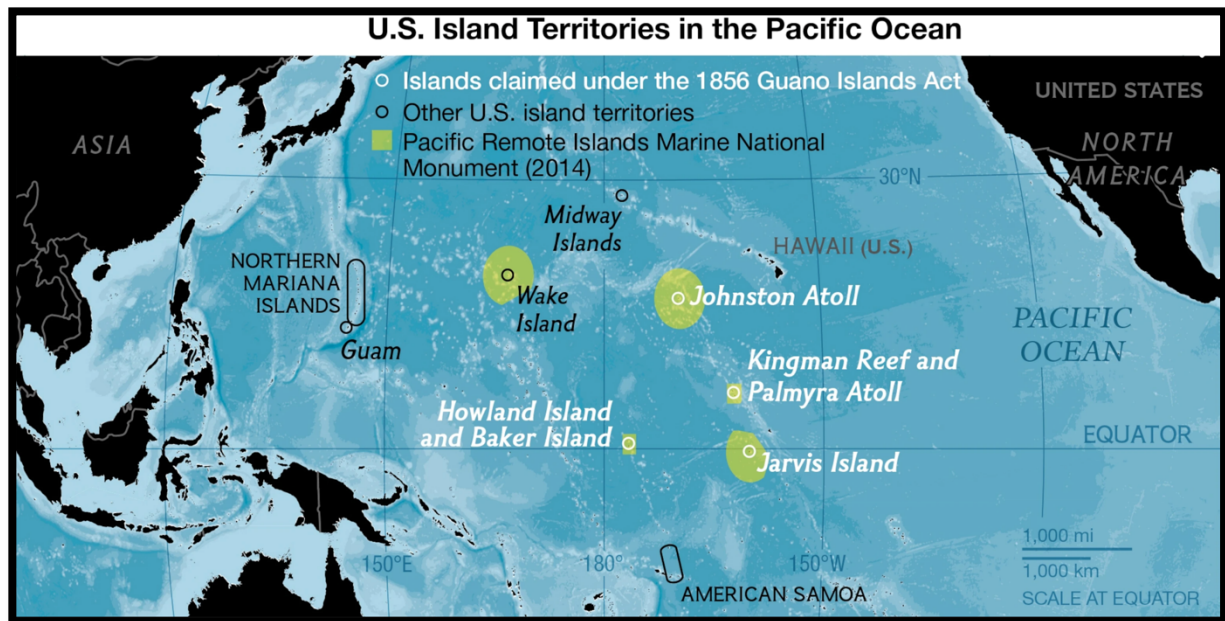


Figure 6 Source: nationalgeographic.com

#### Compact of Free Association (COFA)

The United States has a COFA with three Pacific Island nations – Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau. In addition to these Pacific Island nations, the Northern Mariana Islands or The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is an incorporated territory<sup>39</sup> and commonwealth of the United States.

The COFA initially acted as bilateral treaty relationship between the U.S and the Pacific Island Nations to compensate for the loss of life, health, land and resources due to the numerous nuclear weapons tests on the Marshall Islands and Bikini and Enewetak Atolls issues by the U.S from 1946 to 1956. The Compacts allow citizens of Micronesia to live and legally work in the U.S. without a visa, as well as have access to social and health services. In return, the U.S. has sole access and substantial amount of military and veto power over these islands that are considered of strategic value.<sup>40</sup> The COFA treaties are renewed every twenty-five years.

<sup>39</sup> An unincorporated territory of the United States is a self-governing country which is, however, dependent on the absolute power of the US Congress, as well as the US armed forces exercise extensive control over it. The citizens of an unincorporated territory are under the control of the Department of Interior and thus, they are not given the full rights of US citizenship.

<sup>40</sup> Please refer to <https://guides.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/c.php?g=105631&p=686651>



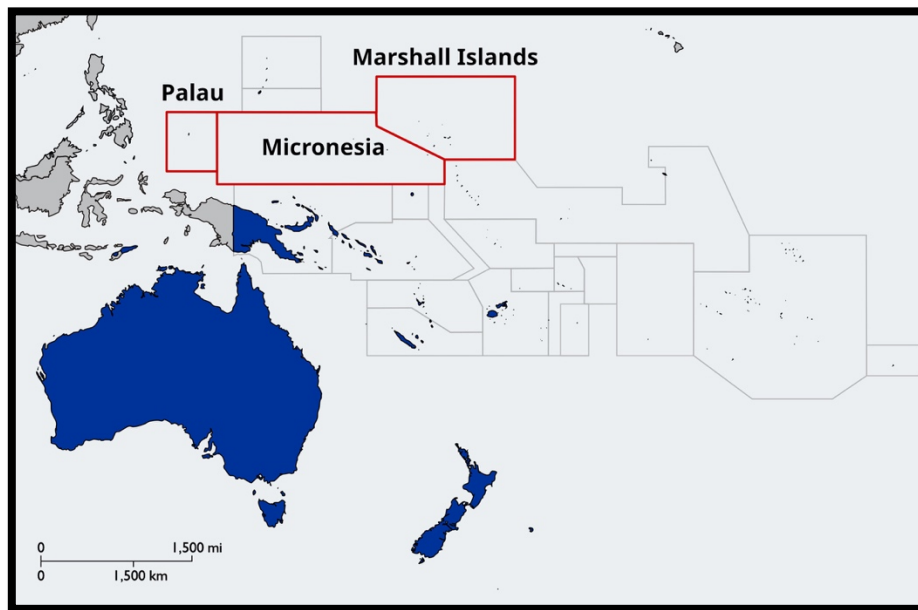




Figure 7 COFA in the Pacific (Source: [manage.thediplomat.com](http://manage.thediplomat.com))

#### Unincorporated Territories of the United States

The United States also has three Unincorporated Territories<sup>41</sup> in the Pacific – American Samoa, Guam, and The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). These do not include the U.S. occupation of many other uninhabited Pacific Island atolls etc. These Unincorporated territories are not sovereign entities. A sui generis characteristic of these U.S. unincorporated territories is that members of these territories cannot vote in the U.S. Presidential elections, and they also have a non-voting representation in the United States Congress.

American Samoa	Guam	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
		
76 sq. miles 55,191 pop. (2020) 1900 Unorganized Unincorporated Territory U.S. Nationals	210 sq. miles 168,775 pop. (2020) 1899 Organized Unincorporated Territory U.S. Citizens	184 sq. miles 57,559 pop. (2020) 1986 Organized Unincorporated Territory (Commonwealth) U.S. Citizens

<sup>41</sup> Please refer to footnote 18

## U.S Present day presence in the Pacific

The Pacific archipelago has become the most highly contested region in the world. The U.S has relied heavily on the region's metropolitan powers of New Zealand and Australia to be good stewards of the region. In doing so, the U.S has been, for the most past of thirty years been observing in the past. However, the U.S has been concerned with the increased influence of China in the Pacific region and their cheque-book diplomacy to sway Pacific island nations allegiance to them. Many Pacific Island countries, as a consequence to this, many Pacific Island nations have fallen into huge amount of debt. The region, as a consequence of these actions, now referred to an Ocean of debt owe China billions of dollars<sup>42</sup> despite Australia being the main foreign aid provider for the region.

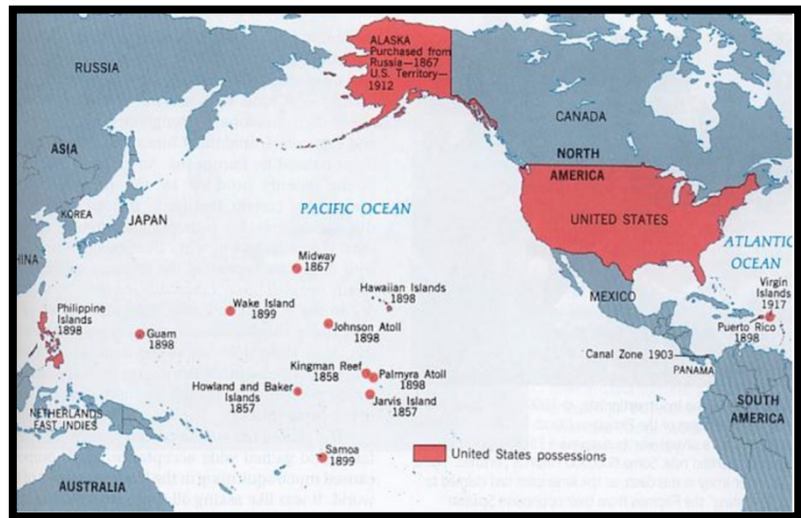


Figure 8 U.S presence in the Pacific (Source: gorhistory.com)

Despite this, many Pacific Island countries have switched allegiance to China and this has worried the U.S tremendously. In response to this, for the first time, U.S Vice President Kamala Harris attending the Pacific Island Forum virtually<sup>43</sup> to propose to the member countries the increased presence of the United States in the Pacific.

## Migration to the U.S

Frist wave: Kanaka Hawaii

On January 16, 1893 the United States troops arrived in Hawaii and illegal occupied and overthrew the Hawaiian Kingdom. This usurpation, was the forced induction of the *kānaka maoli* or Native Hawaiians to the U.S and in doing so been the catalyst of existing tension between *kānaka maoli* and the U.S.

<sup>42</sup> Please refer to <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/ocean-debt-belt-and-road-and-debt-diplomacy-pacific> for further information

<sup>43</sup> Please refer to <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-12/us-kamala-harris-to-appear-at-pacific-islands-forum-fiji/101229858>



*Figure 9 Illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom (Source: nea.org)*

Prior to this, British fur merchants and explorers in the early to mid-1800's would employ native Hawaiians. These expeditions would take them to the north-western United States. As a consequence of this, many would eventually settle in the Astoria Colony or what is commonly known today as Oregon.<sup>44</sup> The fur industry would see native Hawaiians also settled other predominant fur companies in Hudson Bay. Fishing expeditions, forestry work as well as the 1847 San Francisco gold rush would also influence the migration of native Hawaiians.

By 1830, the spread of religion started to find its way to the Pacific. The impact of Christianity on the native Hawaiians was profound and like many Pacific islanders influenced them to migrate to the hub of the different religious institutions. The religion road would exert influence on many Pacific islander to migrate to the United States. An example of this was the *Iosepa colony* in Utah was settled in 1850. This colony was home to Hawaiian, Samoan and Māori migrants who travelled to Utah to join the Mormon faith.<sup>45</sup>

#### Second wave:

The migration of Pacific islanders to the U.S increased dramatically during the late to mid-forties. As previously explained, as the U.S began to take influence of the Pacific through their bilateral COFA and territories, many Pacific islanders left their home islands for the U.S. Guam gained full citizenship in 1950 and American Samoa was granted U.S National status enabled free migration to the U.S without visas.

The religious road also continued to play an important role for many Pacific islanders with many Samoans, Tongans and Fijians migrating to Utah to gain educations through Mormon

<sup>44</sup> Please refer to <https://hanahou.com/19.2/kanaka-in-the-land-of-timber-and-mist> for further information.

<sup>45</sup> Please refer to <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/4489/> for further information.



universities. The creation and establishment of a university specific for Pacific islanders in Laie, Hawaii<sup>46</sup> and in Salt Lake City Utah became popular locales for Pacific islanders.

Another important migration vehicle for Pacific islanders in the territories was the U.S military. Many U.S territories as well as COFA have U.S military bases.<sup>47</sup> In doing so, the military has been a unique source of employment opportunity for the islanders to earn more income, gain and education, travel and provide for their family. American Samoa, in particular, has the highest proportional military enlistment rate of any state or territory in the U.S.<sup>48</sup>

Sports has also been another reason for migration. Many Pacific Island families have moved to the U.S to pursue sporting opportunities in basketball, baseball, athletics, rugby and football. According to Bleacher report, Pacific islanders have the highest representation per capita in the National Football League (NFL).<sup>49</sup> CBS 60 Minutes reported that there are over 50 Polynesian players in the NFL and more than 200 players of Samoan or Polynesian descent in major college football. In fact, American Samoa has produced more NFL players than any state in America.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Initially called Church College of Hawaii, now called Brigham Young University Hawaii

<sup>47</sup> The U.S has bases in Guam, Hawaii, FSM and American Samoa.

<sup>48</sup> Please refer to <https://thedi diplomat.com/2021/06/american-pacific-islanders-deserve-protection-in-the-pacific/> for further information.

<sup>49</sup> Please refer to <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/373141-island-ball-pacific-islands-a-hotbed-for-nfl-fact-or-fiction> for further information.

<sup>50</sup> Please refer to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A69Z8fCpuAI> for further information.

## The Current Pacific Diaspora in the United States

The U.S Census Bureau groups Pacific Islanders with Native Hawaiians as ‘Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander’ (NHOPI). In the U.S, NHOPI ethnicities include Carolinian, Chamorro, Chuukese, Fijian, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Kosraean, Marshallese, Native Hawaiian, Niuean, Palauan, Papua New Guinean, Pohnpeian, Samoan, Tongan, and Yapese.<sup>51</sup> The Polynesian group is the largest of the three group and include Hawaiians, Samoans, Tongan’s a group, is primarily Guamanian (or Chamorros), but also includes other Mariana Islands, Marshall Islands, Palauans and several other groups. The Fijian population is the largest Melanesian group in the USA.

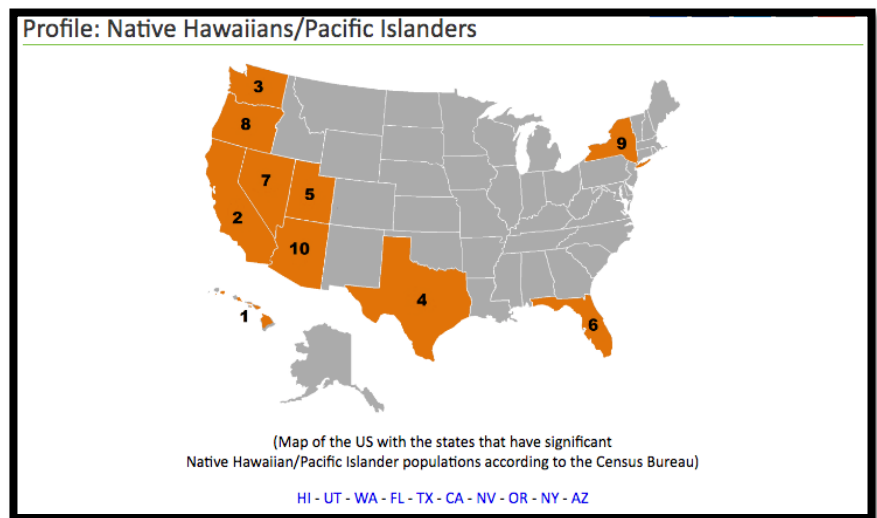


Figure 10 Geographic location of Pacific Island populations in the USA

In 2015, the U.S Census Bureau published the American Community Survey<sup>52</sup> which concluded that:

- 783,326 Polynesians include 70% (549,858) Native Hawaiians, 23% (182,968) Samoans, and 8% (62,458) Tongans.
- 207,128 Micronesians include 63% (130,476) Guamanians or Chamorros, 13% (26,856) Marshallese, and 4% (8,957) Palauans.
- 43,211 Melanesians include 97% (42,110) Fijians.

Immigration was a major factor in the growth of Pacific Islander population for a while, with large numbers coming to the United States from the Pacific Islands following the adoption of the Immigration Act of 1965.<sup>53</sup>

Immigration played a much more varied role, however, in the growth of our Pacific Island population. Only 13 percent of Pacific Islanders in the USA are foreign born. Hawaiians are of course, citizens. Persons born in American Samoa are United States Nations with the right

<sup>51</sup> Please refer to <https://s3.amazonaws.com/gbv-wp-uploads/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/12205452/DVFactSheet-Pacific-Islander-Apr-2018-formatted-2019.pdf> for further information.

<sup>52</sup> Please refer to <https://api-gbv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/DVFactSheet-Pacific-Islander-Apr-2018-formatted-2019.pdf> for further information.

<sup>53</sup> Please refer to <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/fifty-years-1965-immigration-and-nationality-act-continues-reshape-united-states> for further information on the Immigration Act 1965.

to free entry in the United States, and since 1950 inhabitants from Guam are United States citizens.<sup>54</sup>

In terms of demographics, according to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health explained that the ten states with the largest Pacific Island populations were is also important to note that 30% of this group is under the age of 18, as compared to 19% of the non-Hispanic white population.<sup>55</sup>

The Pacific Island population in the United States are generally made up of US born rather than foreign born. As previously mentioned, Pacific Island populations in the United States are relatively young and have, on average, larger families compared to the general United States population. Education and higher learn was another reason for Pacific Islanders to settle in the United States. In comparison to the national income average, Pacific Islanders per capita were below national average. An explanation for this partly reflects that large average size of Pacific families compared to all families nationally. The income average for Pacific Islanders also informed the higher poverty rates within Pacific Island diaspora compared nationally.

## REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To preface this section, it is important to emphasize the lack of past and existing research on understanding (1) the prevalence of the domestic violence problem in the Pacific diaspora in the United States, (2) the cultural and societal ideologies that justify and normalize acts of violence towards victims of DV, (3) understanding and unpacking the narratives, reasoning, and justifications of violence within the specific Pacific island cultures that call the United States home.

Compounding this is that fact that because the U.S classifies and group Pacific Islanders under the category of ‘Asian and Pacific Islander’ to include all people of Asian, Asian-American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific ancestry who trace their origins to countries, states, jurisdictions, and the diasporic communities of these geographic regions.<sup>56</sup>

In doing so, to create ‘individuality’ and ‘specificity’ this report will focus on the Pacific Island diaspora from geographical location previously stated.<sup>57</sup> The Asia Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence (API-GBV), has done some tremendous work. This report, builds on similar reports that have been published under API-GBV.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Please refer to <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/wepeople/we-4.pdf> for further information.

<sup>55</sup> Please refer to <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=65> for further information.

<sup>56</sup> Please refer to <https://infoguides.rit.edu/c.php?g=957189&p=6978185> for further information.

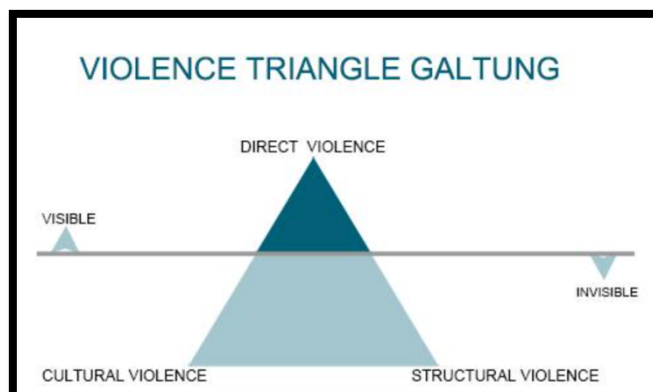
<sup>57</sup> Please refer to the section entitled “Understanding Oceania”

<sup>58</sup> For example [Facts & Stats Report: Domestic violence in Asian & Pacific Islander Homes \(update 2015\)](#) and [Fact sheet: Pacific Islanders and Domestic & Sexual violence \(2018\)](#).

## What are the forms of violence that victims of DV & GBV in the Pacific diaspora experience?

As previously mentioned, the term violence is a loaded term. However, in the context of this report, violence is understood and explained through three specific lenses – direct violence, cultural violence and structural violence. One of the unique characteristics that differentiates direct violence from cultural and structural violence is that the effects and impacts of direct violence is always visible to the eye. For example you can see the outcome when women are sexual and physically abused.

However, cultural and structural violence are invisible to the eye because the justifications of violent acts are embedded and hidden in the cultural norms and ideologies as well as the institutions (both western and indigenous).



With this in mind, the follow section will look at the various forms of direct violence impacting the Pacific Island diaspora in the U.S. This will be followed by looking at both the cultural and institutional (both western and indigenous) forms of violence that justify and normalize acts of violence towards victims of DV.

### Direct violence (visible)

The Pacific diaspora in the U.S, like many other communities around the world, is not immune to the problem of DV & GBV. At the time of compiling this report, there is a dearth of studies, reports, statistics on DV & GBV in the U.S Pacific diaspora. This alone is quite concerning. As previously mentioned, the biggest challenges are that the U.S government as well as existing studies, reports and statistics on DV & GBV is homogenized and exists under the consolidated umbrella of 'Asian and Pacific Island.' To better understand the severity, contributing cultural and institutional issues, it is paramount that the information of DV & GBV are specific to the Pacific ethnicity and not generalized under one ethnic category.

The following information is based on U.S Pacific diaspora DV & GBV reports and studies compiled during the time of this report.

### 1) The National Intimate Partner Sexual Violence Survey 2010-2012 Report<sup>59</sup>

- a) Violence experienced by Race/Ethnicity
  - i) 22.9% of Asian/Pacific Islander women experienced some form of sexual violence during their lifetime.
  - ii) 7.6% of Asian/Pacific Islander women experienced stalking at some point in their lives.
  - iii) 18.3% of Asian/Pacific Islander women experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

<sup>59</sup> Please refer to [The National Intimate Partner Sexual Violence Survey 2010-2012 Report](#) for further information.

- b) Contact sexual violence<sup>60</sup>
    - i) 22.9% of Asian/Pacific Islander women experienced some kind form of contact sexual violence during their lifetime.
  - c) Rape (Completed or attempted)
    - i) 9.5% of Asian/Pacific Islander women experienced rape at some point during their lifetime.
  - d) Non-contact Unwanted Sexual experiences
    - i) 21.4% of Asian/Pacific Islander women had non-contact unwanted sexual experiences during their lifetime.
- 2) **Fact sheet: Pacific Islanders and Domestic & Sexual Violence – Asia Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence.**<sup>61</sup>
- a) 2016 community needs assessment of Pacific Islanders in Utah
    - i) 87% of respondents believed that violence is an issue in the community.
    - ii) 81% of respondents knew at least one person in their community that needs help with an issue related to violence. Most respondents knew of 3-5 people.
    - iii) When ranking issues that needed the most attention, respondents ranked domestic violence second (60%) after substance abuse (74%).
    - iv) Participants felt that the most needed services to prevent violence were support groups for victims, abuser, family and friends (67%); and outreach workers who help clients find services (18%).
  - b) According to a report on Pacific Islanders published by the Utah Department of Health, Office of Health Disparities, which conducted telephone interviews of 605 Pacific Islander adults living in Utah:
    - i) 41% (34% of females and 48% of males) reported having experienced verbal abuse as children.
    - ii) 37% (30% of females and 43% of males) reported having experienced physical abuse as children.
    - iii) 31% (26% of females and 37% of males) reported having witnessed domestic violence as children.
    - iv) 9% (10% of females and 8% of males) reported having experienced sexual abuse as children.
- 3) **Facts & Stats Report, Updated & Expanded 2020 Domestic Violence in Asian and Pacific Islanders Homes.**<sup>62</sup>
- a) 2013 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) in the state of Hawai'i:
    - i) 14.1% of Pacific Islander respondents (female and male) reported having ever been hit, slapped, pushed, kicked, or hurt in any way by a current or former intimate partner. [Note: Gender breakdown was not provided.]
    - ii) 4.1% of Pacific Islander respondents (female and male) reported having ever experienced unwanted sex by a current or former intimate partner. [Note: Gender breakdown was not provided.]

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<sup>60</sup> Contact sexual violence includes rape, being made to penetrate someone else, sexual coercion, and/or unwanted sexual contact.

<sup>61</sup> Please refer to [Fact sheet: Pacific Islanders and Domestic & Sexual Violence – Asia Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence](#) for further information.

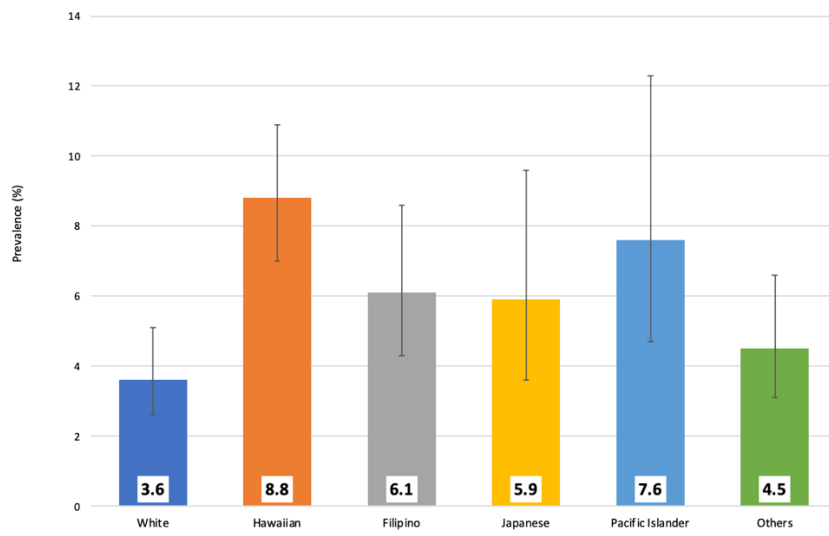
<sup>62</sup> Please refer to [Facts & Stats Report, Updated & Expanded 2020 Domestic Violence in Asian and Pacific Islanders Homes](#) for further information.

- iii) In a study conducted at an O’ahu community clinic, focus groups were conducted with 7 Chuukese women (aged 28-58) who had recently migrated to Hawai’i from Chuuk, one of the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia:
      - (1) Participants were aware that intimate partner violence happened in their cultural group.
      - (2) Participants spoke of a cultural norm that placed responsibility of maintaining family peace on women; they stated that women are expected to tolerate the abuse in silence.
- 4) **Violence Between Intimate Partners in Hawaii Across the Life Span.**<sup>63</sup>
  - 3. Estimated of Intimate Partner Violence by Demographic Characteristics
    - (1) Sex:
      - (a) Male: 10.2%
      - (b) Female: 15.8%
    - (2) Age:
      - (a) 18-34: 16.4%
      - (b) 35-49: 15.2%
      - (c) 50-64: 12.5%
      - (d) 65+: 5.9
    - (3) County:
      - (a) Hawaii: 14.9%
      - (b) Honolulu: 11.9%
      - (c) Kauai: 13.8%
      - (d) Maui: 17.8%
    - (4) Race/Ethnicity:
      - (a) White: 17.5%
      - (b) Native Hawaiian: 17.5%
      - (c) Chinese: 5.2%
      - (d) Filipino: 6.3%
      - (e) Japanese: 8.6%
      - (f) Other Pacific Islander: 16.8%
    - (5) Education:
      - (a) No HS Diploma or GED: 15.8%
      - (b) HS Diploma or GED: 13.0%
      - (c) Some College: 14.5%
      - (d) College Graduate: 10.7%
    - (6) Home Status:
      - (a) Own: 10.2%
      - (b) Rent or other arrangements: 18.2%
    - (7) Insurance:
      - (a) Insured: 12.6%
      - (b) Uninsured: 18.5%

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<sup>63</sup> Please refer to [Violence Between Intimate Partners in Hawaii Across the Life Span](#) for further information.

**Figure 2. Intimate Partner Violence Before and During Most Recent Pregnancy by Race, Hawaii PRAMS, 2012-2015**



*Figure 11 Source: [health.hawaii.gov](http://health.hawaii.gov)*

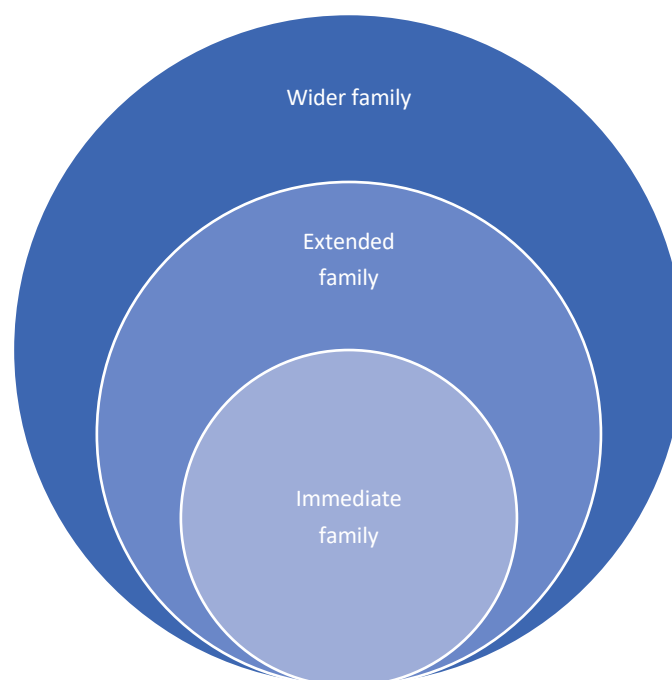
## What are the institutions/structures (indigenous and adopted) & cultural ideologies that justifies and normalizes DV & GBV in the USA?

Cultural and Structural violence (invisible)

### The family

The Pacific family is a complex social system. A unique characteristic of the Pacific family is that it is usually organized and structured gerontocratically. Embedded in a gerontocracy society is the 'entitlement to respect is relatively easy to establish; virtually everyone who is older is entitled to respect, deference, and obedience.'<sup>64</sup> Children in Pacific societies are raised to respect their elders. The transitional process from child to manhood or womanhood is important in many Pacific cultures because it is expected that during this process a child reared by their parents, extended families and extended communities, would have learnt the values and obedience. When this cycle is complete, it is their (adults) responsibility to ensure that those values are preserved.

It is also important to highlight that the social organization of the family extends far beyond the scope of how a family is defined from a western lens. In the Pacific, the family usually consists of three main circles, the immediate family (parents and children), the extended family (uncles & aunties etc), and finally the extended family that comprise of family ties to various villages that they have geneological ties, religious ties, land ties etc.



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<sup>64</sup> Macpherson, C. & Macpherson, L. M. (2006). The Nature and Limits of Traditional Dispute Resolution Processes in Contemporary Samoa. *Pacific Studies*, 29(1), 128–158.



However, the family landscape as well as the traditional cultural ideologies that exist within it has change tremendously in recent years. Urbanization, gentrification, inter-generational and inter-cultural marriages have had a profound influence on what the U.S Pacific family looks like in 2022.<sup>65</sup> The social, political, and environmental shifts has change the structure and function of the family as many Pacific islander have had to adapt and adopt lifestyles, behaviors and attitudes in their new location of residents. Changes are one of the most important constants in life. However, many U.S Pacific islanders have struggled to adapt to their new surrounds and social environments. These challenges have, in many ways, contributed towards the DV problem in the U.S There is limited research available to examine the impact of migration, acculturation, urbanization and gentrification on Pacific island families in the U.S and its impact of DV. This is an area of research that needs to be addressed.

#### *Urbanised Pacific: Acculturation*

The impact of acculturation and the rapidly changing social landscape is extremely problematic for Pacific island families in the U.S. According to David T. Mayeda;

For Native Hawaiians, acculturation has been examined as a possible factor increasing stress and related health problems. While some research has not found significant correlations between acculturation and psychosocial adaptation for Hawaiians ... Adolescents who identified more with Hawaiian cultural values were at greater risk to attempt suicide. They state, "Perhaps it is those adolescents who strongly identify with Hawaiian culture, but cannot or choose not to integrate into Western culture, who are socially disadvantaged to a greater extent and at greater risk for attempted suicide.

American Samoa has urbanized and as Samoans have migrated to Hawai'i, Samoans have been contained in a capitalist economy and its attendant occupational anxieties. In turn, occupational stress has increased problems, such as depression, nervousness, feelings of guilt, and anger. Samoan, Filipino, and Korean immigrants to Hawai'i, Samoans reported the highest incidences of detrimental change in the health and behavior of a family member, in financial status, and in work relationships compared to the other groups.<sup>66</sup>

Pacific families in the U.S are also inter-generational. It is common to have grandparents living with their children, grand-children and great grand children. When there is an amalgamation of inter-generational cultural practices situated in one location, it is often challenging to preserve, apply and intergrate traditional cultural practices (from grandparents) vs reappropriated and redesigned cultural practices (parents, children and grand-children). U.S born and raised Pacific islanders in relation to their island born grand-parents and parents

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<sup>65</sup> Time the report was written.

<sup>66</sup> Mayeda, David T., Scott K. Okamoto, and Gregory Y. Mark. "Adapting culture in a colonial and capitalized world: Role strain and acculturation in Hawaiian and Samoan families." *Journal of Poverty* 9.1 (2005): 105-120.

may have conflicting ideals regarding the role, function and purpose of their family. The incommensurability of accepted cultural norms such as communal or plurisitic living can inform certain attitudes and behavior to things such as family obligations, the role of women in the family, the importance of religion and spirituality.

The inter-generational dynamic that exists in many Pacific families can pose numerous challenges that are unique to them. Conversely, non-Pacific families would never consider integration with Pacific culture as a priority because their social surroundings have not needed to change and 'fit in.' The lack of cultural integration from non-Pacific people can also be problematic when trying to understand the role and function of the family from a Pacific worldview. Not being able to negotiate these shifts experienced by Pacific families can widen the gap towards providing specific services for families, victims and survivors of DV & GBV.

More specifically, the younger generation, irrelevant if they are multi or mono-ethnic, are much more urbanized, technologically literate and are probably more likely to understand and participate in social justice. This is an important when deconstructing and understanding the family dynamic(s) in the U.S Pacific diaspora and how they navigate the social and cultural shifts within an inter-generational familial structure. It informs how DV and GBV is understood and justified in the family from one generation to another.

While many Pacific families do their best to hold on to their traditions and customs, it usually comes at the expense of their new and sometimes foreign adopted U.S culture. The clash of tradition and western ideologies have impacted the Pacific families in the U.S.

Many Pacific families in the U.S work low income employment. Often times, they work more than one job to ensure that 'family' (both in the U.S and the islands) are taken care of. If both parents are working, the parent-child relationship is also strained. Not only does financial constraints and pressure impact the children, but it also impacts the relationship between husband and wife. According to the National Network to End Domestic violence (NNEDV)<sup>67</sup> domestic violence is actually three times more likely to occur when a couple is experiencing high financial stresses versus low financial stresses. Furthermore, women whose male partners experience two or more periods of unemployment in a five-year span are almost three times as likely to be victims of DV as opposed to women whose partners in stable jobs.<sup>68</sup>

The interface between intersectionality and DV is not a common relationship. However, this relational space is important to consider when thinking about Pacific diaspora in the U.S. One of the greatest concern, as previously mentioned, is the existing homogeneity of Pacific diaspora in the United States. This clashes with the accepted and well published Pacific narratives that reinforce the Pacific peoples heterogeneity, complex cultures, inter and intra-personal uniqueness embedded in Pacific cultures. By grouping Pacific diaspora under API neglects the vastness of 'Pacific-ness' that exists in the Hawaiian, Tonga, Samoan, Fijian,

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<sup>67</sup> Please refer to <https://nnedv.org/> for further information.

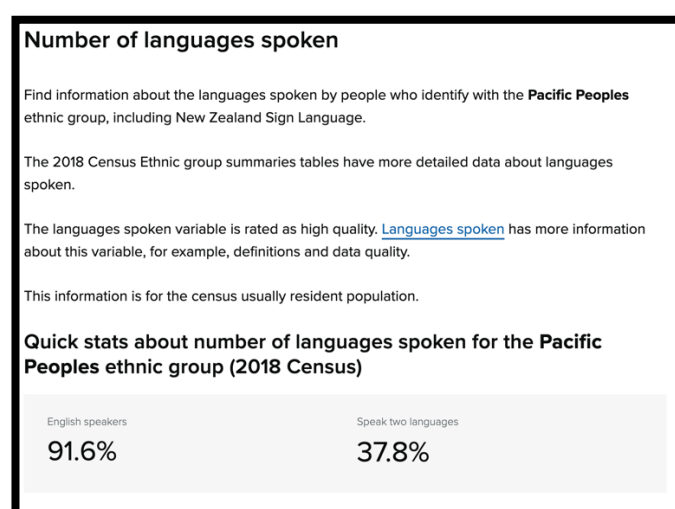
<sup>68</sup> Please refer to <https://timothydimoff.com/2020/09/16/link-domestic-violence-financial-stress/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20National%20Network,stresses%20versus%20low%20financial%20stresses> for further information.

Chuukese, Guamanian as well as other Pacific heritages that call U.S home. This needs to change.

### *Language & Customs*

In 2021, API-GBV published a report entitled *Pasifika Power and Control Wheel Translation Project Report 2021*.<sup>69</sup> The aim of the report was to ‘empower individuals, families, community-based and system responders, allied professionals, and the community-at-large with **cultural responsive resources** to address and prevent gender-based violence in Pasifika communities in the United States and affiliated territories.’<sup>70</sup>

An important component of the culturally responsive resource is language access. This can be problematic when there is limited data to understanding the language landscape in the U.S Pacific diaspora. The U.S census groups all Pacific languages under API category to included Ilocano, Samoan, Hawaiian, or other Austronesian languages.<sup>71</sup> This is important to understand when examining the impact of language on DV. In New Zealand, they have a clearer lanaguage data from their census research. The table below shows that in New Zealand alone, 91.6 per cent of Pacific islanders has English as their first language in comparison to less that 40 per cent that speak two or more languages.<sup>72</sup>



The New Zealand census also includes and tracks the number of languages the New Zealand Pacific diaspora will speak over time (usually between each five year census report). In the

<sup>69</sup> Please refer to <https://www.api-gbv.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Report-Pasifika-Power-Control-Wheel-Translation-Project-2021-Final-1.pdf> for further information.

<sup>70</sup> Please refer to <https://www.api-gbv.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Report-Pasifika-Power-Control-Wheel-Translation-Project-2021-Final-1.pdf> for further information.

<sup>71</sup> Please refer to <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/language-use/about.html> for further information.

<sup>72</sup> Please refer to <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-ethnic-group-summaries/pacific-peoples> for further information.

table below, we see that over the five year increments, Pacific Islanders in New Zealand will speak at least two languages – English and their specific Pacific language.

**Number of languages spoken, over time**

GRAPH TABLE METADATA

**Number of languages spoken by the Pacific Peoples ethnic group, 2006–18 Censuses**

Number of languages	2006 (%)	2013 (%)	2018 (%)
None	3.6	2.9	3.7
One language	49.6	52.3	55.6
Two languages	42.9	41.3	37.8
Three languages	3.3	2.9	2.5
Four languages	0.5	0.4	0.3
Five languages	0.1	0.1	0.1
Six languages	0.1	0	0

In addition to the previous tables, the New Zealand census includes the number of language spoken by age.

**Number of languages spoken, by age**

Number of languages spoken, by age group, for the **Pacific Peoples** ethnic group, 2018 Census

TABLE METADATA

	Under 15 years (%)	15–29 years (%)	30–64 years (%)	65 years and over (%)
None	10.7	0.1	0.1	0.1
One language	63.0	58.9	47.9	40.8
Two languages	24.4	38.5	47.9	54.5
Three languages	1.6	2.2	3.4	3.8
Four languages	0.1	0.3	0.6	0.7
Five languages	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Six languages	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

See metadata tab for information about variables and data quality.

Stats NZ

Having access to this information can strongly influence the way language resources, research and projects similar to the API-GBV report are created, designed, implemented and actioned.

While there is no information on the U.S census similar to the provided tables from the U.S census, I am quite confident to assume that the first and second generation U.S Pacific islanders do not speak their Pacific language fluently. Many of them vicariously live their culture and language through their grand-parents and parents. In doing so, addressing DV in the Pacific diaspora must reflect the existing lived experiences amongst Pacific families and communities. Furthermore, although it is important to preserve and reinforce the use of Pacific

languages in DV & GBV research and community driven projects, it would be remiss to not consider the needs of first and second generation Pacific islanders who do not speak a Pacific language.

Pacific families in the U.S is also, as previously mentioned, becoming inter-cultural. Inter-marriages between many Pacific cultures have also contributed the complexity of what a Pacific family now looks like. As a consequence, you have families that have cultural threads from Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Chuukese, Hawaiian forming a new Pacific identity. The integration of different Pacific cultures compounded with the struggles of co-existing in a western environment like the U.S can also be challenging for these types of families.

### The Church

The Church is not just a religious institution, it also represents a default village and immediate, extended and wider family for Pacific people. In doing so, it is extremely difficult to separate the two. The Church, as an organization and its specific hierarchy, is often dominated by men. Many Church ministers are men (there are also women who are Church ministers too) and the asymmetric in power and authority within the Church can be problematic for victims of DV & GBV.

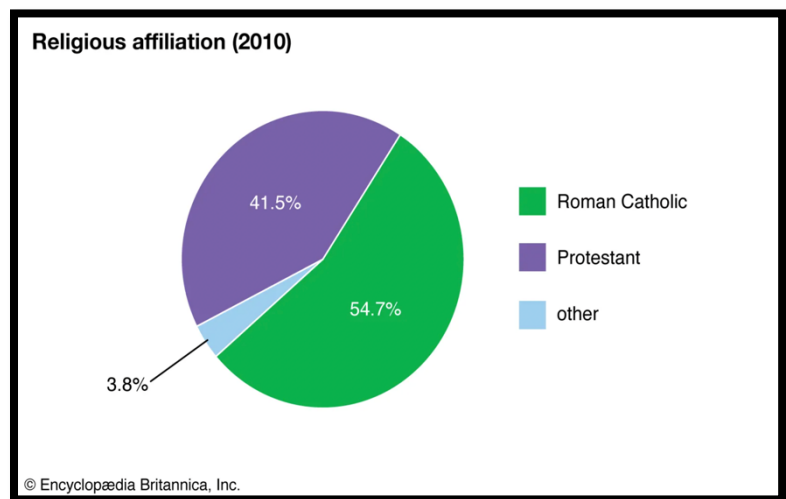


Figure 12 Religion in Micronesia

There has not been any substantial research to understand and gather statistics on religious participation and affiliation for Pacific islanders in the United States. However, generally speaking, if we assume that Pacific islanders in the United States continue to affiliate themselves with their (or the church their parents or grand-parents were members of) families church in the islands, the following tables give an indication on the religious affiliations. These tables highlight the different religious affiliations in some of the Pacific islands.

**Table 1: Religions of selected Pacific Island Countries**

	Hindu	Islam	Christianity	Indigenous	Other
Vanuatu		>10%	90%	5.6%	Bahá'í >10%
Papua New Guinea			96%		
Fiji	30%	7%	52%		
Solomon Islands		>5%	92%	5%	Bahá'í >5%
Tonga			96%		Baha'i Faith, Jehovah's Witnesses, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism <4%

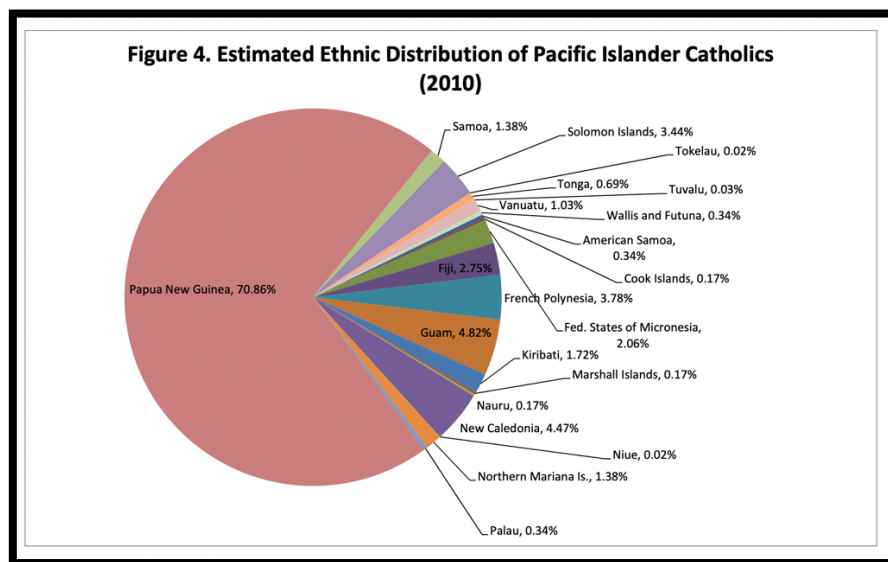


Figure 13 Source: usccb.org

As previously mentioned in this report, Christianity has had a profound impact on the Pacific region. This is highlighted in the tables provided where many Pacific islander are practicing the Judeo-Christian traditions. Understanding the religious affiliations of Pacific islanders in the United States is crucial towards provided bespoke programs and initiatives to address DV & GBV. Furthermore, these religious institutions should not be homogenized under one umbrella because while all Judeo-Christian traditions believe in the same God, each religious institution has its own unique culture and ideologies.

While the Church can play a vital role in change attitudes, narratives, culture and behaviors that exist in DV & GBV, there are aspects within this particular institution that can, directly or indirectly, contribute to the DV & GBV problem.

Despite recent research on the roles and impact of religious institutions on DV and GBV<sup>73</sup>, there is still a significant gap focused on the interface between religion and the complexities that exists with DV & GBV. This section examines some of these contributors.

#### *Respect & loyalty*

Church ministers are highly respected in Pacific culture. They are considered to have a covenantal relationship with God. This dominant ideology can be challenging when addressing DV & GBV. In doing so, it is also imperative to explore the social status and the respect that is usually given to many religious leaders who, many times, expect an attitude of respect and loyalty that is not only embedded in its religious beliefs but also an expectation in many Pacific cultures.

Respect and loyalty is a crucial aspect in the Pacific island culture. However, because religion, including its leaders, are tightly interwoven in Pacific culture, this cultural ideology can be problematic for victims and survivors of DV & GBV.

Respect and loyalty can inform and reinforce a culture of silence. Usually when someone in authority, like a Church minister, speaks there is, out of respect of the Church minister silence. This is because in many Pacific cultures, silence is considered an act of respect and humility. Additionally, this behaviour is also practiced when parents speak to their children. They are taught not to speak or question what their parents say. This is the same between Church ministers and their congregations. As a consequence, these ideologies (silence, respect and loyalty) that are embedded in a structure (in this case the church) can, directly or indirectly, be problematic for victims and survivors of DV & GBV. It is common for Pacific islanders not to talk and express their feelings because their mind and psyche is designed and programmed to exist in an asymmetrical power imbalance in their homes, Churches and villages. In doing so, when victims of DV & GBV need to voice their concerns or tell someone about an abuser, they often do not speak because they prioritize the relational space between them and the Church minister.

#### *Power of the pulpit*

The relationship between Church ministers and their congregations is widely considered a sacred space. Ministers are treated highly within the church and the 'village' (urban villages are comprised of families that make up members of the church) because they are seen to have a special relationship with God. In doing so, Religious ministers have a strong influence on how the role(s) of women are framed within the Church and within the family. Dr Ah-Siu Maliko, who is a Church minister herself articulated this problem from a Samoan perspective. She stated:

The Bible has often been misused to justify Samoan men's presumed superiority over women. Samoan family relationships are strongly

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<sup>73</sup> Nason-Clark, Nancy. "When terror strikes at home: The interface between religion and domestic violence." *Family rights and religion*. Routledge, 2020. 245-252 and Fortune, Marie M., Salma Elkadi Abugideiri, and Mark Dratch. "A commentary on religion and domestic violence." *Domestic violence: Intersectionality and culturally competent practice* 318 (2010).



influenced by the patriarchal system which dominates the Old Testament. This is a result of missionary teachings, whereby the English missionaries in the nineteenth century placed strong emphasis on the Old Testament. The New Testament was read but was hardly used in preaching. The missionaries described God as a patriarch and espoused the subordination of women what was typical of the Victorian England from which they hailed.<sup>74</sup>

When Church ministers preach that the husband is the head of the home, it reinforces the narrative of masculinity and the impunitive nature that men have in a relationship. This also causes a problematic space when victims seek Church ministers for counsel and help towards their relationship with their husband/partner. In a recent qualitative study that examined attitudes and beliefs about family and domestic violence in faith-based communities, researchers observed:

“At the institutional level, several factors have been identified which may enable the perpetuation of family and domestic violence (FDV) including the denial of FDV, or minimization of its severity, within the faith; silencing of women who disclose experiences of violence; an inappropriate responses to disclosure of abuse such as proving marriage counseling. For examples, women who disclose abusive relationships can be counselled by religious leaders to prioritize a “faith first” approach, such as prayer and church attendance, over their own safety.”<sup>75</sup>

#### *Religious trauma*

There is an emerging cohort of literature that examines the interface between Religious trauma (RT) and domestic violence. RT is defined as:

“Pervasive psychological damage resulting from religious messages, beliefs, and experiences.”<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, religiously traumatic experiences can also include the following characteristics;<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Siu-Maliko, Mercy Ah. "A public theology response to domestic violence in Samoa." *International journal of public theology* 10.1 (2016): 54-67.

<sup>75</sup> Truong, M., Sharif, M., Olsen, A., Pasalich, D., Calabria, B., & Priest, N. (2022). Attitudes and beliefs about family and domestic violence in faith-based communities: An exploratory qualitative study. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 00, 1– 18. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.210>

<sup>76</sup> Alyson M. Stone. “Thou Shalt Not: Treating Religious Trauma and Spiritual Harm With Combined Therapy.” *Group*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2013, pp. 323–37. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.13186/group.37.4.0323>. Accessed 21 Jul. 2022.

<sup>77</sup> Punchuk, Michelle. “The shattered spiritual self: A philosophical exploration of religious trauma.” *Res Philosophica* 95.3 (2018): 505-530.



1. Trauma is caused by something that the individual closely associates with the religions – when harm is inflicted by someone whom the subject perceives as representative of the divine (clergy, religious parents, guru, spiritual mentor), justified on religious grounds (citing religious texts, traditions, or doctrines), inflicted for religious reasons, or arises from a negatively valenced (punitive) experience of the divine being itself or other spiritual reality.
2. The survivor usually perceives the religion to have played a positive or negative causal role in the experience's coming about, either by motivating the perpetrator, justifying the behavior, or by failing to forbid or protect against it.
3. Some of the post-traumatic effects (the epistemic or the not-merely-cognitive) have a religious trigger or object. The survivor may come to believe that God is untrustworthy or that religious communities are unsafe. They might experience intrusive memories triggered by religious practices, feel extreme fear, distrust, or revulsion toward the divine being, or internalize a deep sense of self-hatred as the result of religious doctrines. Thus, we can roughly characterize religious trauma as a traumatic experience perceived by the subject to be caused by the divine being, religious community, religious teaching, religious symbols, or religious practices that transforms the individual, either epistemically or not-merely-cognitively, in such a way that their capacity to participate in religious life is significantly diminished.

In the Pacific space, researchers have been proactive in understanding how religious practice and teachings contribute and reinforce traumatic experiences for victims of DV & GBV. The Church, for many faith-based Pacific islanders is generally the first point of call for when they need financial and emotional help and security. As previously explained, it is also the location where victims of DV & GBV seek refuge and safety.

However, when you have Pacific culture embedded in religious culture, it is difficult for women access help when both they have no rights and voice in both worlds (Pacific culture and religion). In both worlds, there is patriarchy, women have lower status than men, women generally have no rights, and there are also expectations of women's dependency on men. So how can women succeed in places that are traditionally viewed as places of sacredness and safety when both environments can be toxic and unsafe for them? That is the dilemma many Pacific victims, who are usually women, face.



Figure 14 Source: vawnet.org

## Chieftanship

### *Patriarchy & Power*

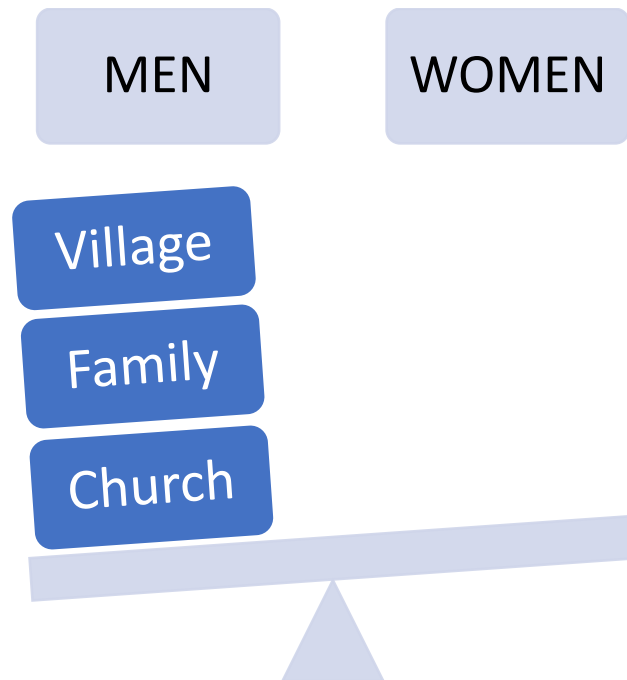
Patriarchy refers to the set of ideas and beliefs that justify male control over women.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, it is a system for maintaining class, gender, racial, and heterosexual privilege and the status quo of power – relying on both crude forms of oppression, like violence; and subtle ones, like laws; to perpetuate inequality.<sup>79</sup> Patriarchal beliefs operate by affording men the right to exercise power within their family through enforcing and reinforcing the inequality of power between males and females, along with social arrangements that give males extra privilege.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Tonsing, Jenny C., and Karen N. Tonsing. "Understanding the role of patriarchal ideology in intimate partner violence among South Asian women in Hong Kong." *International Social Work* 62.1 (2019): 161-171.

<sup>79</sup> Please refer to <https://www.api-gbv.org/about-gbv/our-analysis/patriarchy-power/> for further information.

<sup>80</sup> Alvarez, A. and R. Bachman (2008) *Violence: The Enduring Problem*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

In the three main social circles that make up Pacific society/environment, men dominate and women, often, have limited to no access.



There is a dearth of research on the number of transnational chiefs currently living in the United States. It is important to consider the impact, role and function of the traditional and customary chief system in the U.S. Why? Because the chief system “evolved out of the fusion of the family and hierarchical system...and is characterized by institutions in which the relationship and interactions of kin and groups are influenced by reference not only to kinship factors but particularly by such considerations as titles, hierarchy of titles, genealogies and honorifics.”<sup>81</sup> In doing so, understanding the function, organization and purpose of the Pacific family in the United States is premised on understanding how the traditional chief system has been utilized outside of the Pacific. The chief system and families go hand in hand. It is challenging to separate the two. So when we are discussing and unpacking patriarchy and its influence on families and women, it is imperative to consider the role of the chief systems too.

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<sup>81</sup> Vaai, S. (1999). *Samoa Faamatai and the rule of law*. Apia. Samoa: National University of Samoa.

The following is an example of a study that was done to trace the multiple perceptions and experiences of

intergenerational global Samoan matai, or titled family heads, and faamatai, the Samoan chiefly system - to find out how transnationality – the condition of cultural connectedness and mobility across space, is used to refer to the cultural specificities of global processes. How do

transnational matai - those born and raised in western metropolises, as well as Samoan-born matai now domiciled in the western metropolises - maintain meaningful and sustainable ties to families and villages in Samoa? How are global cultural forces impacting on faamatai, faasamoa and identities?<sup>82</sup> The research found that:



**“In 2016, the Samoan Lands and Titles Court stated that of the registered matai born outside of Samoa, 83.5% were born in New Zealand, 6.6% born in Australia, 6.3% born in the United States, and 3.6% born elsewhere in the world.** These results suggest that Samoans in New Zealand are the powerhouse of transnational fa’amatai. Of the 420,000 Samoans who live outside of Samoa, over a quarter of them live in New Zealand. In fact, population projections reveal that the Samoan population in New Zealand will outstrip Samoa’s entire population of 200,000 by 2025.”<sup>83</sup>

This research has informed and shaped the way that the New Zealand Government has developed health, education, social, economic and political reforms, programs and initiatives for the Samoan diaspora that call New Zealand home. New Zealand have a better understanding of the role and function of the *matai* or chiefs in New Zealand. With this understanding, they are able to work better with the Samoan communities, Churches, Early education institutions, health and wellbeing service providers and DV & GBV service providers.<sup>84</sup> This shift in mindset and approach from a structural level (New Zealand government) needs to be employed by the U.S government in order to create transformational change within the Pacific diaspora.

<sup>82</sup> Anae, Melani & Peterson, Ingrid. (2020). A Handbook for Transnational Matai (Chiefs): Tusi faitau o matai fafo o Samoa.

<sup>83</sup> Anae, Melani & Peterson, Ingrid. (2020). A Handbook for Transnational Matai (Chiefs): Tusi faitau o matai fafo o Samoa.

<sup>84</sup> For example, <https://www.pasefikaproud.co.nz/> and <https://www.mapumaia.nz/>

### *Impunity of men in Pacific culture*

Domestic violence in the Pacific cannot be discussed without the issue of male impunity. The Concise Oxford English dictionary defines impunity as “exemption from punishment or freedom from the injurious consequence on action.”<sup>85</sup>

Pacific culture is a patriarchal society, and attitudes and behaviors towards women are molded by this characteristic. It is not so much that there are cultural factors that directly influence the culture of violence, but it is the degree of impunity that is granted to men within the family, village, and the churches.

Therefore, the level of impunity granted to Pacific men is reflected, reinforced and justified by Pacific culture. From the grassroots level of the family to the churches and even the government, there are cultural attitudes that empower men.

Pacific women who are victims of domestic violence can also contribute to the problem of impunity. It is not the culture that teaches Pacific men to beat up their wives, so much as that women will protect their men and give them impunity because they accept that men are the authority and the head of the home. Pacific women, because of their immediate exposure to its patriarchal society, are brought up with a subordinate mentality towards men. This attitude of subordination by Pacific women begins in the home. Because there are no traditional practices that protect and empower women in the homes, the likelihood of abuse towards young girls and women is high. Furthermore, when young men are raised to see their fathers, uncles and grand-father disempower their wives, sisters, nieces, grand-daughters it will also reinforce in the young men minds that they have the right to do the same, thus reinforcing and feeding the cycle of masculinity and patriarchy.

How does the attitude of impunity contribute to domestic violence? As Galtung explained, the damaging influence of cultural violence is that it makes the wrong look right, it justifies and empowers the negative as being a positive, it frames exploitation as utilitarian and ultimately makes domestic violence look justified.

Cultures of violence and masculinity in the Pacific context can only be read in the context of Pacific societal drivers. Many of these drivers exist in the Pacific and migrate with Pacific immigrants to the United States and persist to shape their and their children's attitudes and behavior towards violence.”<sup>86</sup> Gender relationships in the Pacific countries are “characterized by inequalities of power, opportunity and access to researches, (and) these relations are closely linked to cycles of victimization of women and girls.”<sup>87</sup>

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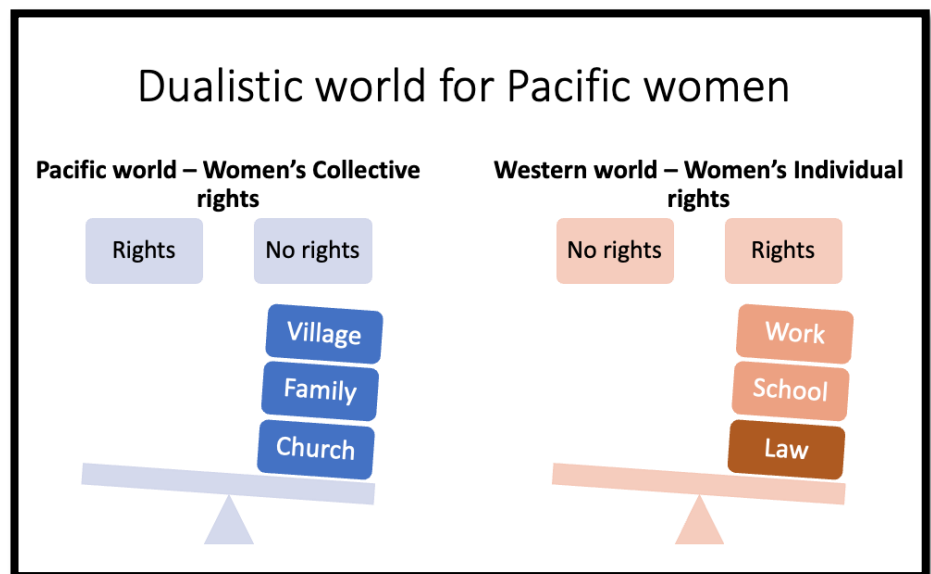
<sup>85</sup> Soanes, C., & Stevenson, A. (2006). *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>86</sup> Ministry for Women. (2015). A malu i “aiga, e malu fo’i i fafo: Protection for the family, protection for all, (December), 32. Retrieved from [http://women.govt.nz/sites/public\\_files/Pacific Report web.pdf](http://women.govt.nz/sites/public_files/Pacific%20Report%20web.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> Siu-Maliko, M. A. (2016). *A Public Theology Response to Domestic Violence in Samoa*. *International Journal of Public Theology* (Vol. 10). Dunedin. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1163/15697320-12341428>

### *Women's rights*

In all of the aspects of the Pacific societal structures, the rights of women are minimal. Women are often discriminated in the family, in the village councils, employment and in the churches. Irrelevant of location, the rights of Pacific women and the disparity that exists between Pacific women and men is continuing to grow.



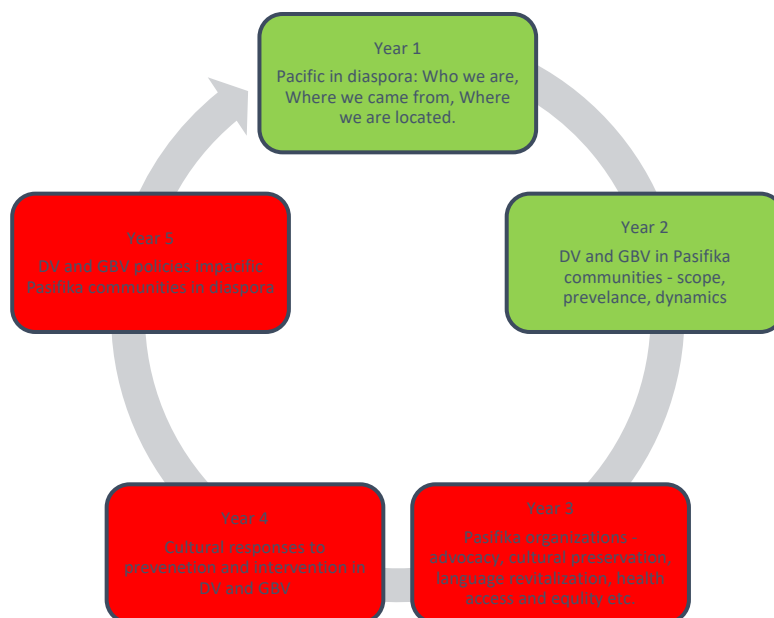
One of the main challenges is that for Pacific women is that they exist in a dualistic world – Pacific and western worlds. In the Pacific world, women's rights, roles and responsibilities revolve around domestic duties, looking after the children etc. Many women do not participate in important council meetings, participate in decision making processes. However, in the western world, many Pacific women excel in their education and employment aspirations. In the western world, they are able to make important decisions, empower others, they are in high managements roles. The paradox of a Pacific women is that when they leave the comforts of the western world, they will always return back to the Pacific world where they resume a completely different role. The to and fro that women experience on a daily basis will eventually take a toll on women. This can also contribute to high stress, emotional and psychological stress for women.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

This report acknowledges the large amount of work (past and present) that has been done to address the purpose and focus of this report. In doing so, this report seeks to add on to those efforts to build on potential ways to help the Pacific diaspora that call the U.S home, address the issues associated with DV & GBV in their homes, communities and as a country.

In terms of framing our understanding of violence, this report employs a working definition from applying Johan Galtung's typology of violence – direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. As previously mentioned, one of the unique characteristics that differentiates direct violence from cultural and structural violence is that the effects and impacts of direct violence is always visible to the eye. For example you can see the outcome when women are sexual and physically abused. However, cultural and structural violence are invisible to the eye because the justifications of violent acts are embedded and hidden in the cultural norms and ideologies as well as the institutions (both western and indigenous).



When thinking about recommendations, and taking into consideration the scope and position of the five-year diaspora research plan, year 4-5 have been allocated to rethink ways and processes to address the purpose and intent of the report. However, recommendations can still be provided in the year one and two phase of the five-year plan. The following section will provide recommendations addressing some of the issues and gaps identified in this report.



Galtung violence triangle: We need to think upside down

Western culture has frequently identified itself as the ethnocentric centre of legitimate culture.<sup>88</sup> This dominant belief infers a dichotomous relationship between the “interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interest and ways of resisting of the Other – indigenous people.”<sup>89</sup> The importance of decolonizing western frameworks and methodologies “allows indigenous peoples, in particular, to re-establish their own engagement with scholarly authority over their own knowledge systems, experiences, representations, imaginations and identities.”<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, there is a need for more indigenous researchers to employ methods, frameworks and theory embedded and grounded in cultural ideologies, belief systems and epistemologies. By doing so, it “grounds the research and provides it with methodological and theoretical integrity.”<sup>91</sup>

Galtung’s violence triangle provides an important theoretical framework to expand our understanding of violence to consider both cultural and structural contributions to violence. However, when thinking about the Pacific diaspora and the application of this theory, there are some important considerations that need to be employed.

One way to rethink Galtung’s triangle and its application to the Pacific worldview is to literally turn it upside down. Galtung’s inverted violence triangle (GIVT) has one main difference from Galtung’s violence triangle (GVT) – the relationship between the seen and unseen.

Below, we see that GVT suggests that direct violence (DV) is visible and structural violence (SV) and cultural violence (CV) is invisible. However, when applying GVT to a Pacific lens, GIVT suggests that DV is actually invisible and that SV and CV is visible.

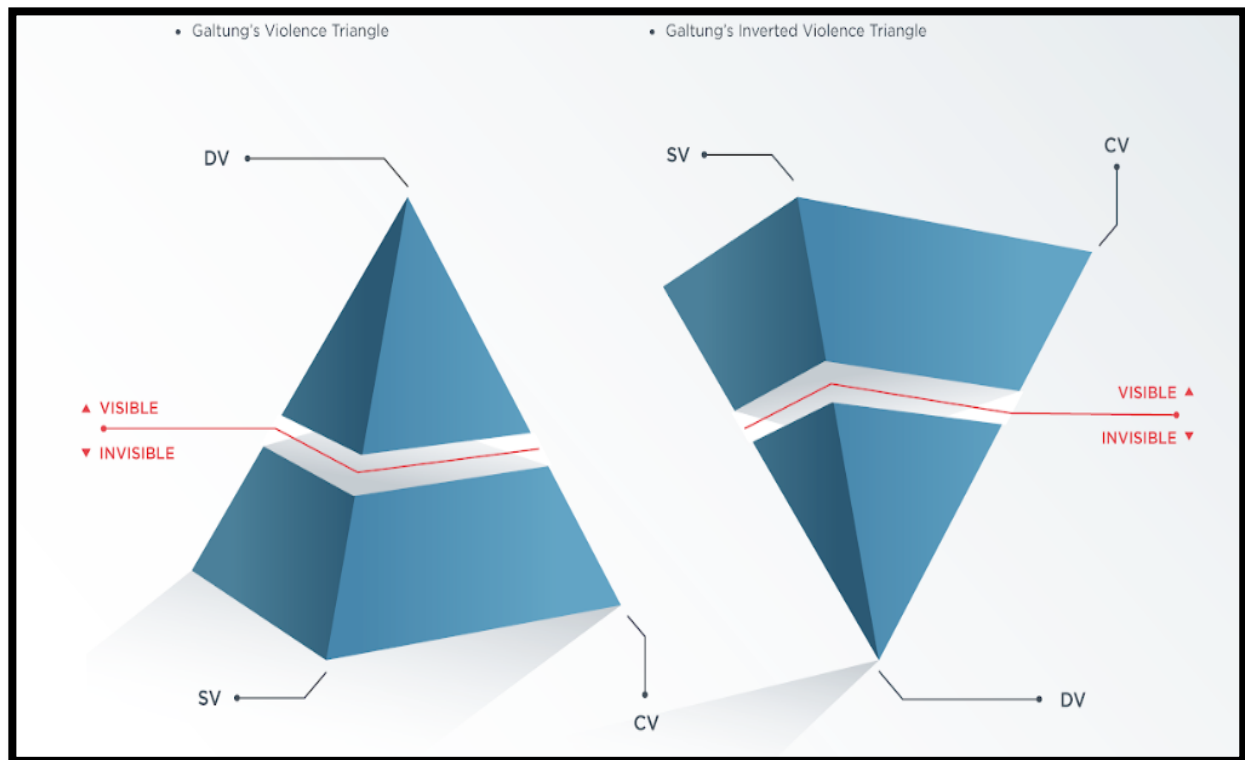
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<sup>88</sup> Wilson, C. (2001). Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People by Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 214. Retrieved from <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA81762115&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=fulltext&issn=11724382&p=AONE&sw=w&authCount=1&u=otago&selfRedirect=true>

<sup>89</sup> Smith, L. T. (2004). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*. London: Zed Books.

<sup>90</sup> Nabobo-Baba, U. (2008). Decolonising Framings in Pacific Research: Indigenous Fijian Vanua Research Framework As an Organic Response. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 4(2), 140–154. Retrieved from <http://www.openpolytechnic.ac.nz/library/login?redirect=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=44066229&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

<sup>91</sup> Farrelly, T., & Nabobo-Baba, U. (2014). Talanoa as empathic apprenticeship. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 55(3), 319–330. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12060>



#### GIVT vs GVT

One of the biggest challenges towards understanding DV & GBV amongst Pacific victims, irrelevant if it is in the Pacific or in the United States is that DV & GBV cases are not reported or cases are under-reported. In addition to this, because of the strong family and communal structure, DV & GBV issues are usually considered a private matter and should be interfered with. The issues are usually dealt internally within the family. Issues are usually resolved through family elders, or even through the church which is usually made up of groups of families.

Reinforcing this approach is the ideologies and beliefs associated with shame. Pacific society is a collectivist society. In doing, the individuals who are members of the collective feel challenged to do anything to threaten the collective. This kind of “take one for the team” attitude can be detrimental towards victims of DV & GBV.

Shame as well as the accepted norms and cultural beliefs associated with collectivism suppress the visibility of DV & GBV. Not only are the behaviors associated with DV & GBV invisible, at times victims will do things to reinforce the invisibility of the act by self-blaming and protecting the abuser.

When it comes to Pacific cultural ideologies and structural institutions, they are very visible. Pacific islanders are a proud people and have no reservations showing their cultural and customary institutions such as the chief systems, Church institutions, women’s organizations and youth organizations. This is different to GVT that suggests that cultural ideologies and structural institutions are invisible.

Therefore, when trying to understand the reasons for the invisibility that exists in the Pacific problem of DV & GBV, we need to change our mindset and focus on the cultural ideologies and indigenous/customary institutions that suppresses DV. This takes time because cultural

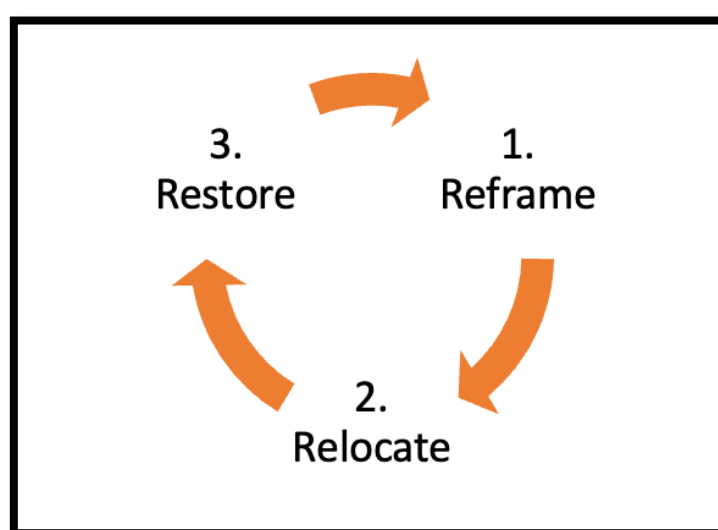
ideologies and institutional do not change over-night. Transformational change takes time. However, this can be difficult and challenging when funders, service providers financial and output turn overs are transactionally driven vs transformational driven. Its process driven vs people driven. This mindset needs to change when dealing with Pacific victims, families and communities.

Galtung's violence triangle (GVT)		Galtung's inverted violence triangle (GIVT)
DV	Violence is visible	Violence is invisible
CV	Cultural ideology is invisible	Cultural ideology is visible
SV	Structural institution is invisible	Structural institution is visible

3R approach: Reframe, Relocate, Restore

#### Reframe

Reframing involves the process of reconceptualizing a problem and seeing it from a different perspective.<sup>92</sup> With this in mind, it is important that any discussion of DV & GBV from a Pacific lens requires a shift in mindset from an individualistic to communal. This narrative is not new, however, there still small movements regarding the way families, service providers, churches view and understanding DV & GBV.



The reframing process invites families, communities, churches, villages, service provider and funders to be courageous to move past and existing narratives on the causes of DV and GBV. This includes:

- Reframing the attitudes, understanding and narratives that exist in Pacific families towards DV and GBV
- Reframing the role and function of Pacific communities and their role in protecting, safeguarding, and empowering the role of women.
- Reframing the role of the Church how they can, directly or indirectly contribute towards attitudes and justifications of DV and GBV.
- Reframing the role that villages/chief system in the U.S diaspora and how they can contribute towards help influence their community towards positive change on issues associated with DV and GBV.
- Reframing the way, the service provider perceive are the main contributors and causes of DV and GBV for Pacific victims.
- Reframing the way funders view and perceive DV and GBV in Pacific communities.

<sup>92</sup> Please refer to <https://dictionary.apa.org/reframing> for further information.

### Relocate

Relocating the problem of DV & GBV aligns with the violence theory employed in this report – direct, structural and cultural violence. In doing so, relocating emphasizes the importance of shifting the discussion of DV & GBV in the Pacific diaspora in the U.S from primarily being behavioral focused towards including discussions on how Pacific culture and Pacific societal structures or institutions contribute to DV & GBV.

In addition to this, the relocation process invites participating parties (families, communities, Churches, villages, service providers, funders) to focus on what is invisible (CV and SV) versus what is visible (DV).

It is also important that in addition to reframing process, relocation aligns with the reframing process in that it also prioritizes the developing of culturally specific frameworks, methodologies, approaches to understand and address DV & GBV in the Pacific diaspora in the U.S. Imperative to this is the understanding that the DV & GBV problem in Samoan/Tongan/Hawaiian/Chuukese communities in Utah will be different to how the DV & GBV problem in Samoan/Tongan/Hawaiian/Chuukese communities in Long Beach California are understood and addressed. These two communities, while they are both Pacific communities, have quite a different cultural and societal makeup.

### Restore

The restoration process prioritizes the importance of restoring things that were taken away as a consequence of DV & GBV. This applies to the victims, survivors, their families, communities, Churches etc.

For the victim it may be restoring their voice, rights, roles and dignity. For communities it may be restoring trust within families, Churches and other organizations. For service providers, it could be building cultural courtesy/capacity/competency by engaging culturally specific programs.

An important part of the restoration process is the development of culturally specific frameworks that build and align with the two previous steps – reframe and relocate. In doing so, the restorations of cultural practices and ideologies that safeguard and protect Pacific women needs to be restored. Supporting this is the importance of language, cultural and customary vitalizations within the Pacific Islander diaspora in the U.S to educated the new generations of U.S born Pacific Islanders on the values and belief systems to empower and protect women.

Finally, all these processes and program need to be done **BY PACIFIC, FOR PACIFIC and WITH PACIFIC**. This means aligns with a Samoan proverbial expression *E fofo le alamea le alamea* which implies that the solutions for our issues lie within our own communities.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report was (1) understand who is the Pacific diaspora in the United States, where they came from and where they are located; (2) examine the prevalence and scope of DV & GBV in Pasifika communities and (3) provide a discussion on the different forms of direct violence (DV), structural violence (SV) and cultural violence (CV) that normalize and justifies DV & GBV amongst the Pacific diaspora in the United States. These areas of focus align with the first two years of the proposed five-year diaspora project.

The report has also highlighted some limitations in terms of the past and existing qualitative and quantitative data. While they provide an important overview to the DV & GBV problem, they lack in ethnic and cultural specificity.

The problem exists in all aspects of Pacific milieu. It is complex and multi-layered to include social issues such as unemployment, education, poverty, housing and health and the ability of the U.S based Pacific diaspora to access these services. Furthermore, compounding this problem is the continuous clash between customary/cultural/traditional/communal worldviews and their newly adopted, foreign, individualistic social environments. The constant pull of modernity and tradition can be problematic to the Pacific diaspora.

It is of paramount importance that further comprehensive qualitative and quantitative community-based research is actioned. Moreover, the research needs to be done by Pacific, for Pacific and with Pacific.

The violence theories employed in this report illustrates that when understanding DV & GBV within Pacific diaspora in the United States, the issues contributing to the problem exist beyond the visible layers of hitting and physical abuse. The application of Galtung's theory of violence raises important institutional and cultural problems that can influence and justify acts of DV & GBV in the Pacific diaspora that call the U.S home. Some of these contributors are subtle and at times visible, while others are masked and hide behind entrenched Pacific values and belief systems. Whether violence is perceived as unseen (structural and cultural violence) or visible (direct violence), this needs to be addressed.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ligaliga, Michael, and Heather Devere. "Decolonising Peace and Conflict Studies through Indigenous Research."