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**Sexual Assaults on Gay and Bisexual Men:  
Barriers to Reporting to the Police**

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
**Master of Science in Psychology**  
at  
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**PETER PATLAKAS**



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## **Abstract**

Sexual assault is a matter of public concern that affects many individuals globally, regardless of their gender and sexual orientation. With many survivors of sexual assaults choosing not to report their victimisation to police, it appears that prevalence rates based on reports made to the police represent only a fraction of the actual occurrence of assaults. This is especially the case where assaults on gay and bisexual men are concerned. This study examined the barriers gay and bisexual male survivors of sexual assaults face in reporting their victimisation to the police.

This study aimed to address a lack in New Zealand based research on the topic and develop an overall representation of the various barriers these survivors may encounter, as well as solutions for their reduction. This was achieved by conducting semi-structured interviews with six service providers functioning as key informants and four gay/bisexual male survivors of sexual assault. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. The qualitative software NVivo was used to allow for the development and organisation of themes and subthemes from the interview data collected. Four themes were identified pertaining to barriers: personal, social, institutional, and abuse-specific. Personal and social barriers were more readily recognised than those within the institutional and abuse-specific themes. A fifth theme, the reduction theme, emerged in relation to suggestions for decreasing barriers.

The following eight barrier areas were identified within the personal barrier theme: defence mechanisms, cognitive mindset, revisiting, knowledge, emotions, privacy/confidentiality, past experience, and mental health. The social theme consisted of nine barrier areas: family, queer community, support, culture and religion, homosexuality and gender, myths, judgement, homophobia and prejudice, and location and environment. Seven barrier areas were identified within the institutional theme: poor responses, services and counselling, cons to reporting, the law, court dynamics, limitations, and police. The abuse-specific barrier theme consisted of nine barrier areas: time, need for proof, victim-perpetrator relationship, age, drugs and alcohol, disclosure of details, consent issues, report scrutiny, and labelling and defining.

Finally, six areas were identified pertaining to the reduction of barriers:

services, youth, police, information, reporting process, and societal attitudes. Many of the suggestions for reduction methods, such as increasing police training and services offered within the queer community, were seen to be beneficial, yet they may still be subject to various difficulties in their implementation, such as funding concerns.

Queer-specific barrier aspects were deemed important to account for in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Various linkages between barriers also emerged, effectively making a decision to report to the police even harder for survivors. A case study based on one of the survivors interviewed helped to illustrate this complex weaving of barriers.

Further research is needed to examine these barriers on deeper levels, particularly in terms of addressing any differences between youth and adult survivors. The results of this study serve as the first step in developing the foundation to bring information on this topic to the forefront of New Zealand research in the area.



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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

The problematic nature of the ways in which sexual assault affects gay and bisexual male victims is an area that has received minimal attention within the literature on sexual violence. In particular, there has been a marginal focus on identifying the reasons that gay and bisexual men who have been sexually assaulted often choose not to make a formal report of their abuse to the police. This thesis seeks to develop understandings in this area by identifying the barriers in existence that prevent survivors from coming forward and making reports, as well as the possible ways that these barriers can be reduced.

The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader an orientation to the thesis topic. Discussion surrounding the background to the research is made, providing information about my interests and experiences with the topic. This section gives an overview of why I felt that research in this area was justified, as well as my initial plans on how I would approach the subject. The chapter concludes by providing definitions that aid in establishing a clear understanding of the various terminologies used within this thesis. In the next chapter, I will delve deeper into the research currently available in order to provide a foundation for how I plan to further expand on this knowledge and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

### **Background to Research**

I am a 29-year-old Canadian student studying psychology within the Master of Science programme at the University of Waikato and I identify as a gay man. Having moved to New Zealand for my graduate studies, I have been able to immerse myself within the culture of New Zealand's gay community. My prior research primarily focused on sexual assault offending behaviour, including narrowly examining risk factors present for male juvenile sexual offenders and the ways that various assessment tools can be utilised to address the level of risk posed for sexual reoffending in general.

I maintain personal connections with a few gay men who have disclosed to me that they had been sexually assaulted and had chosen not to report their victimisation to the police. In the case of one of these individuals, I witnessed first-hand the aftereffects of the assault. My attempts to try to assist him in

making a report to the police were met with a great deal of resistance. My personal discussions with sexual assault survivors on why they had never reported resulted in an impression that gay men may face unique difficulties in making the decision to report. After some further questioning on the matter, little information was divulged that could help to identify what these difficulties might be. In order to find some answers, I turned to literature in the area to see what information was available.

An initial review of the literature examining why gay and bisexual men do not usually report sexual assaults to the police and what barriers they may face yielded very little in terms of an answer. Most of the information that was available focused almost exclusively on barriers present for women. Articles addressing barriers for men often grouped all males into the broad category of *men* and failed to account for any differences that may be present based on the sexual orientation of the men. It can be said that the lack of information relating to men who lie outside of the heteronormative formulation poses a great concern. With this being the case, I felt that further exploration needed to be carried out in order to understand what stops male survivors of sexual assaults that do not identify as heterosexual from making reports to the police.

In order to accomplish this, I believed that speaking to survivors of sexual assaults as well as the service providers that offer support to them would yield the most valuable information on this topic. This approach would not only allow for information to be gathered based on the experiences of service providers and their clients but would additionally permit for survivors to bring forth their views based on their lived experiences of having been sexually assaulted. Conducting research in this area would allow for identification of existing barriers while also being beneficial to both survivors of sexual assaults as well as any agencies working alongside those survivors by way of being able to understand these barriers and implement strategies for their removal.

Within my academic career, I have received a large amount of training in forensic psychological issues, both through my Bachelor of Science in Psychology and my Graduate Certificate in Forensic Practice. I feel that there is a strong tie between the issues of criminal justice and those of society and culture. Speaking from a forensic and criminal justice perspective, in this research I sought to identify the specific barriers that contribute to decisions not to report

sexual assaults to the police. On a more social level, this research also aims to assist in understanding the effects that these barriers have on survivors themselves. Even though the scope of this research is to gain a full understanding of existing barriers and how they affect gay and bisexual men, I am hopeful that this information will be beneficial to future approaches focusing on ways to reduce these barriers.

Sexual assault is widely understood to occur within all areas of the globe, yet the focus of this study is within the context of the New Zealand/Aotearoa society. Many of the barriers identified within the project may be present universally, yet certain barriers could be unique to the New Zealand population.

### **Definitions**

When discussing issues surrounding unlawful sexual conduct, the terminology used frequently varies depending on the dialogue of the individual. The use of the word ‘rape’, for instance, may carry with it the connotation of penetration while the legal meaning may differ depending on the jurisdiction in which it is defined. For the purposes of this thesis, rather than the word ‘rape’, the words ‘sexual abuse’ or ‘sexual assault’ are often used instead. The use of this language gives greater allowance for discussions to include narratives surrounding non-consensual sexual acts in which penetration may not have occurred.

As men are the focus in this thesis, it is important to define what constitutes sexual abuse and sexual assault on men. Rick Goodwin (2004), co-founder and executive director of The Men’s Project, provides a very clear definition of the two as they pertain to male victims. Firstly, he defines male sexual abuse as “any non-consensual act of sexual coercion and/or domination which threatens the physical and/or psychological well being of a boy or male adolescent or adult” (Goodwin, 2004, Sexual Abuse section, para. 1). Examples of this include “unwanted sexual touching, unwanted sexual exposure, unwanted exposure to pornography, sexual harassment, incest, child prostitution, sexual assault and rape” (Goodwin, 2004, Sexual Abuse section, para. 3). Secondly, he defines male sexual assault as “any non-consensual act of sexual coercion and/or domination which threatens the physical and/or psychological well being of a man” (Goodwin, 2004, Sexual Assault section, para. 1). Examples of this include “sexual touching, and oral and anal rape” (Goodwin, 2004, Sexual Assault section,



para. 3). In either case, physical force may or may not have been used. Perhaps due to common misunderstandings about the distinction between these definitions, the term ‘sexual abuse’ and ‘sexual assault’ are often used interchangeably in interviews, though efforts will be made throughout this thesis to use the term ‘assault’.

The term ‘sexual violence’ is sometimes used within this thesis as a broader term, particular when making reference to sexually assaultive experiences occurring within same-sex partnerships. Sexual violence has been defined by the World Health Organization (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002) as:

“any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work” (p. 149).

As sexuality is a central aspect of this study, it is important to refer to the terms ‘gay’ and ‘bisexual’ as terms denoting an individual’s sexual orientation. It is integral to note that for some men, sexuality is not entirely defined by the types of sexual practices in which they engage (Duke & Davidson, 2009). Men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM) may engage in same-sex sexual practices without necessarily associating their sexual orientation with labels such as gay and bisexual. Rather, MSM often identify as heterosexual or straight men despite participating in sexual activities with members of the same sex (Boellstorff, 2011).

Due to the many complexities surrounding sexuality, the use of the words ‘gay’ and ‘bisexual’ for the purposes of this study refer to the category with which a man identifies himself. This includes the gender to which they find themselves attracted, both physically and emotionally, as well as the type of sexual activity in which they engage, where ‘gay’ refers to an attraction towards members of the same sex and ‘bisexual’ refers to an attraction to members of both sexes (American Psychological Association, 2012).

Additionally, the terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ will often be used interchangeably throughout the thesis to describe individuals who have been sexually assaulted or abused. Efforts are made to use the term ‘survivor’ wherever possible as it is inherently more positive, carrying with it a sense of having survived a sexual assault rather than having been victimised.

The acronym GLBT will also be used in reference to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community. When making reference to this community regarding gay and bisexual men, the terms ‘queer community’ or ‘gay community’ may be used rather than the acronym GLBT.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This chapter will review current research related to the reporting of sexual assaults for gay and bisexual men. To begin, a review is made on the problematic nature associated with sexual assault and its under-reporting. This section details how under-reporting may arise, as well as many of the difficulties that it can pose. Discussions then move to what we currently know about reporting sexual assaults to the police and the extent of the process. In this section, the focus is on the many challenges that are involved with the reporting process itself. The review finishes with a thorough examination of the difficulties that gay and bisexual men may face when deciding to report a sexual assault to the police. Discussions in this section are further expanded to focus specifically on the issues and barriers these men can face that are identified in the literature on the topic. The chapter concludes with a summary that highlights many of the key points raised.

### **The Problem of Sexual Assault Under-Reporting**

Sexual assault and abuse are by their very nature highly problematic behaviours that occur within all societies throughout the world. The feeling of being sexually victimised against one's will is an experience that no one should have to endure. However, despite efforts to address and protect individuals from becoming victims to such horrendous acts, they continue to occur, as is often seen through reports made to the general public by various media sources.

Quite often, the sexual assaults about which the media informs the public involve female victims, and this may lead individuals to the false assumption that this type of victimisation only happens to women, failing to recognise the fact that men are also victims of sexual assaults. Results of The New Zealand National Survey of Crime Victims 2001 (Morris, Reilly, Berry, & Ransom, 2003) indicate lifetime prevalence rates of sexual assault or interference of 4.9% for men and 19.3% for women, based on 5147 individuals surveyed. Despite these statistics showing that men are sexual abused, albeit at lower rates than women, it is important to remain aware of the fact that any gender is vulnerable to being sexually abused as well as being abusive (Welch & Mason, 2007) and not discount the abuse of men simply because of a lower incidence rate. It thus becomes imperative to find ways to dispel the incorrect commonly held myths

that state that men cannot be victims of sexual assaults.

As much of the prior research on the topic has been focused more intently on sexual assault within prison populations (Petrak, Skinner, & Claydon, 1995; Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006), some effort has been made in conducting research on sexual assault within gay communities. This being said, literature that focuses on the GLBT community remains quite limited, with the majority of the emphasis being placed on same-sex domestic violence rather than sexual violence on the broader spectrum (Leventhal & Lundy, 1999).

With this minimal amount of attention, it seems that there exists a lack of information available to educate people on male sexual assault and the types of sexual acts that are considered to be sexual assaults. This could thus contribute to an unwillingness to report what may have been a sexual assault to the police, as it may be unclear to the victim whether or not they were sexually assaulted. Fenaughty and colleagues (2006) bring forth the interesting notion that the lack of reporting could in turn affect the public's perception of the rate at which these crimes are occurring, contributing to unverified assumptions of rates being very low or nonexistent. This could further result in increased difficulties for victims being able to come forward with the disclosure of their assaults, as well as making it difficult to calculate the extent to which men are being sexually victimised (Milne, 2005).

Statistics related to the number of men reporting sexual assaults may be found in various police databases worldwide, yet most often it is rare to see these statistics broken down based on the victim's sexual orientation. In New Zealand, for example, few data collection methods, such as the national census, offer the ability for an individual to disclose his or her sexual orientation. It could be argued that asking about sexual preferences and identity is an invasion of privacy, but without these figures, it becomes difficult to make any sort of assessment in relation to sexual orientation. Despite the challenge of being able to accurately estimate the number of gay and bisexual men and the rate at which they are being victimised, we cannot let this lack of information lead to beliefs that these men are not experiencing abuse. Focus needs to be given to developing methods of increasing reporting while simultaneously raising awareness within communities and addressing the needs of victims. If this does not occur, survivors may end up experiencing both physical and emotional disturbances as well as sexual

dysfunctions (Tewksbury, 2007), while the perpetrators could further victimise others in the community.

It can be readily understood that the guilt, shame, and stigma experienced by a sexual assault victim along with the barriers faced in deciding to report may be key contributors to under-reporting (Gordon & Crehan, 1998). Sexual assault has also been shown to be associated with many mental health issues such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, drug/alcohol abuse and even suicide (Ryan & Rivers, 2003). Further studies have shown that in cases where sexual violence occurs within the context of an intimate partner relationship for a GLBT individual, the risk for the victim becoming infected with HIV increases (Heintz & Melendez, 2006; Stall et al., 2003). In light of the many negative impacts of sexual abuse, it is encouraging to see that reports also show that GLBT individuals are able to face their abuse and discrimination with a great deal of resilience (Scourfield, Roen, & McDermott, 2008).

A report by Daryl Sweet (2010) for the Men's Advisory Project in Ireland shows the impact mental disability can have on seeking help. Sweet found that for cases of domestic abuse, unwillingness to seek out help almost doubled for respondents who identified as having a mental or physical disability, with 22.6% indicating that they would not seek help versus a 13.6% response from those without any disability (Sweet, 2010). For those identifying as gay, bisexual, or lesbian, a slightly higher reporting rate was found, with 17.4% saying they would not seek help versus a response of 14.3% from heterosexual respondents (Sweet, 2010). With this decreased tendency in help-seeking, it seems only likely that GLBT individuals, including those with mental and physical disabilities, would also be less willing to go to the police when compared to their heterosexual counterparts.

Not only do we know that sexual violence affects GLBT individuals in domestic partnerships (Leventhal & Lundy, 1999), but it has also been shown that these prevalence rates may be higher within the queer community than for those who are in heterosexual relationships (Burke & Follingstad, 1999; McClennen, 2005; The Queer Community and Intimate Partner Violence, n.d.). If studies show that sexual abuse may be occurring at high levels within same-sex relationships, we should expect that the reporting of sexual assaults would happen on a much greater level than it presently does. Many of the difficulties in

reporting, which will be reviewed in-depth further in this thesis, can pose as barriers for both intimate partner violence and sexual violence inflicted by an unknown perpetrator. With this being said, it has been posited that individuals within same-sex intimate relations may under-report sexual assaults more frequently, as they may fear any repercussions that could result from reporting (Rothman, Exner, & Baughman, 2011). Additionally, they may be less able to identify their experiences as being of an assaultive nature or label them as rape than they would if their assailant was a stranger or member of their family (Rothman et al., 2011; Sweet, 2010). This raises questions about the adequacy of information currently available on what constitutes sexual assault and if this information is being effectively presented to individuals within the queer community. It also indicates that individuals who are accessing services to assist them with the aftereffects of their assault may not be entirely representative of the general GLBT population (The Queer Community and Intimate Partner Violence, n.d.).

Low levels of reporting sexual assaults could in some ways be impacted by the ages of victims. With many youth currently exploring sex and sexuality at earlier ages (Carmody, 2006), it becomes necessary to examine what effect this may have on reporting in cases where victimisation happens during youth. A study conducted by Freedner and colleagues (2002) with 521 adolescent youth attending a GLBT youth rally indicated that 45% of gay male youth and 57% of bisexual male youth had experienced sexual abuse within the context of dating. The rates found in this study are significantly higher in comparison to other studies that yielded rates of sexual victimisation between 4% and 12% for gay men (Christman, 2012; D'Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006; Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 1999). Naturally, there are many differences in the studies, including how their samples were selected and the age of participants. Despite these differences, Freedner and colleagues' (2002) study assists in highlighting the fact that sexual abuse occurs even within the context of intimate relations in youth, and that in the majority of cases, these assaults will go unreported. It could be argued that today's youth are becoming more aware of what constitutes sexual abuse and how to identify it. However, if this is true, it brings about concerns over why these youth are not reporting to the police.

In terms of sexual victimisation of gay and bisexual youth within a New

Zealand context, results from the Youth '07 project (Rossen, Lucassen, Denny, & Robinson, 2009) on same/both-sex attracted youth give further justification to the need to examine under-reporting of sexual assaults. Results from this report indicate that 3.9% of male students surveyed within New Zealand secondary schools identify as being same-sex or both-sex-attracted, with only 36.4% of these students having come out openly to others close to them about their sexuality. As the number of male students being same-sex or both-sex-attracted who have not come out about their sexuality constitutes the majority (63.6%), one may begin to imagine how difficult it may be for a gay or bisexual youth to report a sexual assault when he has not yet disclosed his own sexuality to those closest to him. Another cause for concern is that the rates of suicidal ideation and attempted suicide were 39% and 20% respectively for same/both-sex-attracted students versus much lower rates of 13% and 4% for those that were opposite-sex-attracted. The results do not give any indication as to why rates are higher for these youth, but it is worth considering whether or not any differences in ability to disclose a sexual assault may have had any effect. This may be further stressed when seeing indications that same/both-sex-attracted youth report having had sexual intercourse and being currently sexually active at rates of 59% and 45% respectively, almost double the rates of 36% and 25% reported by opposite-sex-attracted students.

Looking at statistics related to violence in the Youth '07 project (Clark, Robinson, Crengle, Grant, Galbreath, & Sykora, 2009), more information can be found in regards to unwanted sexual experiences. Despite results not being broken down by sexual orientation, 5.4% of male students surveyed provided indications that they had been touched in a sexual way or made to do sexual things that they did not want to do. It is important to note that even though the authors stated that the report was representative of secondary schools throughout New Zealand (Clark et al., 2009; Rossen et al., 2009), only 74% of students selected actually completed the survey. This leaves room for the possibility that the other 26% who chose not to complete the survey may have consisted of a much greater percentage of gay/bisexual youth who have been victims of sexual abuse. It may be the case that these youth could see a survey of this nature as a forced form of disclosure, thus feeling that they may not be able to go about completing it as they may consider the survey itself to be a method of reporting in

a sense. If this is the case, this would mean that sexual abuse is being further under-reported than we currently believe.

This is only a start to being able to fully understand why under-reporting of sexual assaults is all too common. Compared to their straight counterparts, gay and bisexual youth face many additional challenges that could ultimately lead to not wanting to report an assault, which will be discussed further in the thesis. With many organisations in New Zealand, such as OUTline and Lifeline, offering services tailored to address issues of sexual assault in GLBT individuals, one would think that this would have a positive effect on increasing reporting. The implementation of services for survivors is by no means a negative prospect, yet a report commissioned by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (Mossman, Jordan, MacGibbon, Kingi, & Moore, 2009) concludes that despite the presence of these services, there is little information available in the way of their evaluation relating to survivors themselves. It needs to be acknowledged that sexual assault is not the easiest of subjects to address. By recognising that under-reporting occurs and understanding the many factors that contribute to it, we may begin to develop ways of furthering methods to increase reporting of these crimes.

### **Reporting Sex Crimes to the Police**

As under-reporting of sexual assaults continues to occur within our society, we begin to recognise the many difficulties that present themselves to an individual deciding whether or not to report to the police. A key factor here is the many myths surrounding sexual assault that are entrenched within the social consciousness (Braun, Schmidt, Gavey, & Fenaughty, 2009). It can be said that these myths, along with the many other factors that hinder reporting, do nothing more than make the process of reporting more challenging for gay and bisexual men (Wakelin & Long, 2003). It becomes greatly important that we be able to identify exactly what types of challenges these men face in hopes of bettering our efforts towards increasing reporting rates.

It is important to bear in mind that regardless of any increase in reporting rates that may be found in the future, many victims may never choose to report. Not only does this indicate rates of sexual assault are likely much higher than what is officially documented in police statistics, but it can also strengthen many of the false social conceptions that sexual assault is not something that happens to



men (Davies, 2002). If this resulting misinformation is true, the effects would similarly penetrate into the queer community, leading to possible consequences such as diminished safety and precautionary measures in highly sexualised environments such as gay saunas and nightclubs.

It is reported by Hodge and Canter (1998) that gay and bisexual victims of sexual assaults will frequently choose not to report to the police, unless they feel some sort of assurance that their story will be believed, such as if they have sustained any type of physical injuries. Many of these victims are also less likely to report to the police if it entails revealing their sexual orientation, often due to fear of receiving any negative responses (Hodge & Canter, 1998).

The fear of homonegative attitudes exhibited by the police is something that would carry through to same-sex domestic violence issues as well. It is known that men in same-sex romantic relationships also report being victims of sexual assaults by their partners (Merrill & Wolfe, 2000). With many of the domestic violence models placing the male into the role of heterosexual abuser and a female partner into the role of the victim (Curran, 2010), it becomes important to further emphasise that sexual abuse can happen in same-sex domestic relations as well and that differences may be present due to the sexual orientation of the victim. This needs to be accounted for within the police and criminal justice sectors in order to ensure a well-rounded understanding of sexual abuse and its reporting from the queer community.

The age of the victim may also influence reporting. It has been shown that many youth choose never to report their victimisation experience of criminal events to the police (Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003). For many youth, their experiences of sexual abuse as children could lead to various psychological difficulties in adult life (King, Coxell, & Mezey, 2002). Even more troublesome is that gay and bisexual youth victims of sexual assaults have been shown to have a greater risk of being revictimised in their adulthood (Balsam, Lehavot, & Beadnell, 2011). Adding to this, further research indicates that disclosure of sexuality can contribute to an increased risk of being sexually assaulted by a member of one's own family (Garnets, Herek, & Levey, 1993). This adds to an already increased risk of being victimised based on sexual orientation when compared to heterosexual siblings (Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine, 2005).

With all the research indicating that sexual abuse is affecting gay and

bisexual men regardless of their age or relationship status, further focus needs to be made on identifying exactly what prevents this abuse from being reported. Many of these difficulties can be partially due to an unclear understanding of what types of acts constitute sexual abuse or assault. With perceptions of gay communities as spaces in which sex is freely promoted or even actively encouraged, one can easily see the difficulties that may arise for an individual who experiences a sexual act with which he felt uncomfortable. Non-consensual anal penetration is readily identifiable as sexual assault, but other behaviours such as unwanted touching or masturbation may not be as easily identified. Problems also exist in defining what types of sexual acts are criminal within the eyes of the law. Individuals may experience sexual acts that make them feel victimised yet choose not to report them if they would be deemed as non-criminal, and thus not illegal, within the justice system (Braun et al., 2009).

The process involved in reporting a sexual assault as well as the legal process that follows may be something that is unclear to victims. This may all boil down to a simple lack of education on the issue within the GLBT community. Within New Zealand, the police force has been active in appointing Diversity Liaison Officers, positions in which officers concentrate their efforts on building relations within the GLBT community and target their responses to acts of homophobia (Mossman, Mayhew, Rowe, & Jordan, 2008). The establishment of these positions is a great step towards addressing concerns of violence within New Zealand's GLBT community.

A search for literature on the effectiveness of these positions and the queer community's view of them yielded no results. It could be that despite police having a responsibility to investigate reports of non-consensual sex regardless of the role sexual orientation plays (Hunter, Bentley Cewe, & Mills, 2000), members of New Zealand's GLBT community are hesitant about believing this in light of all the barriers and challenges they face. They may still feel marginalised in comparison to other New Zealanders as a whole, and their experiences with homophobia in the community could make the challenge of reporting a sexual assault even more difficult. They may also have little education on the various specialised services offered by both the police and service providers working with sexual assault victims.

Victims of sexual assault all face difficulties in reporting, regardless of

gender or sexual orientation, yet there is a great need to carry out more research on the specific difficulties individuals within the queer community face that may be unique or different to those outside of this demographic group. Understanding these difficulties may assist the development of means of distinguishing the distinct needs that these individuals have, leading to methods that would increase reporting of sexual assaults to the police.

### **Difficulties in Reporting for Gay and Bisexual Men**

Even though any man can be a victim of sexual assault, men who identify as gay or bisexual and are consequently part of a marginalised community face a greater risk of becoming victims of sexual attacks stemming from homophobia (CCASA, n.d.). Along with this, male perpetrators seeking to sexually assault other men may choose to victimise gay and bisexual men who tend to frequent areas such as local 'cruising' spots or toilets in search of sex (Davies, 2002). This contributes to the increased occurrence of physical and sexual abuse faced by those who identify as gay or bisexual and thus outside of the heteronormative social views of sexuality (Fileborn, 2012).

A study conducted by Doll and colleagues (Doll et al., 1992) helps to highlight the level to which sexual abuse impacts gay men. Their study consisted of 1001 interviews conducted with 864 gay men, 116 bisexual men, and 21 heterosexual men in the United States who had attended sexually transmitted disease clinics. The researchers observed that 37% of the participants reported having had unwanted sexual contact before the age of 17 with an older or more powerful partner. From these reports, 51% involved the use of force and 33% involved anal penetration. Based on a developmental criterion created by the researchers, it was found that in 93% of the participant cases, the sexual contact disclosed would be classified as sexual abuse in terms of the researchers' definition. The high rates of victimisation during adolescence found within this study may be related in part to culturally-linked issues of sexuality such as a gay youth's longing to be included in a collective gay community, hence the initial contact with an older man. An inability to identify a sexual encounter as being of an assaultive nature due to sexual inexperience or a lack of sexual education could also play a role here. These speculations are ones that would deserve further examination in order to understand what role they might play in the reporting of a

sexual assault.

It is important to have strong definitions of what constitutes sexual assault and sexual abuse as problems can arise, especially for victims, when the types of sexual acts that can be classified under these terms are unclear. It cannot be expected that a sexual abuse victim would even be able to consider reporting a coercive sexual encounter if he is unable to recognise that it fits the definition of a form of abuse (Fenaughty et al., 2006). This inability to clearly recognise sexual assault does not affect only youth, as many older gay and bisexual men may also experience a lack of clarity as to what exactly constitutes sexual abuse and assault. It could very well be that the education received by gay and bisexual men on these issues is sparse or unclear.

Another issue which then arises is the concept of victimhood. Employing the word 'victim' may seem appropriate when referring to discussions surrounding an individual's victimisation. Despite the ease of using this word as an outsider, it is imperative to understand the effects that its use has on the individual being labelled. The experience of being labelled is one that many find displeasing, as oftentimes labels carry with them many negative connotations.

For many men, being referred to as a victim may engender feelings of being weak and powerless. Dunn's (2012) study helps to show the impact of victim labelling on gay men in relation to masculinity and their gay identities. In this study consisting of interviews with 25 gay men from London, it is highlighted that the victim label is one that has the ability to awaken feelings of failure in upholding masculine norms within the individual. Most of the men within the study did not want to take on the identity of a victim, reserving it only for more severe cases of abuse such as rape. An important point made by Dunn (2012) is that despite the negative associations with the label of 'victim', there is an increased chance that identifying with the victim label would allow these individuals to make use of the services available to them, particularly any services having the word 'victim' in their names. It was found that the concept of victimhood was not compatible with a strong masculine gay identity associated with having adequately dealt with many negative life experiences such as homophobia and feelings of shame. A similar outcome is found here in New Zealand, where gay men have been shown to be reluctant to admit that they had been sexually coerced out of fear that heterosexism within society will place them

into a position seen as being less masculine (Fenaughty et al., 2006). This was further seen to be the case for youth who had yet to establish a fully grounded sense of their sexual identity. Thus, it can be argued that the selection of more appropriate language, such as using the word 'survivor' rather than 'victim', may allow for less negativity to be felt in discussions with those having experienced sexual abuse, ultimately allowing them to open up further about their experiences and decreasing the silence on the topic.

Despite many improvements being made within the police force, such as the introduction of Diversity Liaison Officers, the effects of historically poor police responses to members of the queer community are difficult, if not impossible, to erase. Events such as the raiding of gay venues and violence towards protesters help to illustrate some of the ways in which historically poor police involvement can lead to an increased fear of police for members of the GLBT community (Leonard, Mitchell, Pitts, Patel, & Fox, 2008). These events may be ones that would be less commonly seen in today's society, but the impact they have had on making homophobia visible may continue to affect GLBT individuals, perpetuating the worry that their claims of assault would be met with homophobic responses if they were to make a report to the police. The tendency to remain silent, contributing to decreased rates of reporting, allows for misperceptions to continue within society that sexual assault is an issue that has no impact on gay and bisexual men (Fenaughty et al., 2006).

Silence is also present in regards to the very minimal amount of data available on the topic. Researchers may be starting to expand their investigation in the area of sexual abuse and gender, yet they will most likely encounter various obstacles. One such obstacle is the identification of sexual orientation. With many individuals choosing to remain silent about their sexual orientation, it could be the case that some survivors may identify as being heterosexual when, in fact, they are not. Such a problem is seen in research of prison populations, in which inmates may be reluctant to identify as anything other than heterosexual to researchers, and researchers may also fail to take into account situational factors affecting the individual's sexual behaviour (Miller, 2010).

In reference to the problems of data collection, further difficulties present themselves in the avoidance of asking questions relating to an individual's sexual orientation. Of course, one could assume that to ask questions regarding sexual

orientation can constitute a personal invasion on an individual's sex life, yet this would seem quite innocuous when one considers the many benefits that can result from the including of such questions. The inclusion of questions relating to sexual orientation can lead to a greater understanding of the ways in which the GLBT community can be affected, including their individual needs and whether or not these needs are being adequately met.

To be able to examine issues related to under-reporting of sexual assaults within the queer community, it becomes pertinent to have a full understanding of the various barriers that can affect a reporting decision. Issues such as guilt, fear of homophobic reactions, lack of resources, and unwanted disclosure are ones that may stand out as the most obvious barriers to reporting an assault (Sable et al., 2006), yet alongside these concerns are other more intimate issues needing to be examined. Discussions in this area are complex as many of the issues are so deeply set and hidden that it becomes very difficult to have these areas commonly discussed by victims. In hopes of trying to clarify some of the ways in which a reporting decision may be hindered, the following subsection will seek to explain some of the key factors that can impact survivors based on the literature reviewed. These are not areas that all gay or bisexual survivors will experience, yet they help to provide a well-rounded coverage of the possible factors found within the literature.

**Issues affecting reporting decisions.** The impact of homophobia can be seen as one of the leading factors affecting an individual's decision to report to the police. The institutional homophobia that can be present within the various organisations a survivor of assault may encounter can lead to reluctance to disclose all but the most extreme cases of assault (Davies, 2002). Often, gay and bisexual men may fear that their reporting of a sexual assault to the police could result in an insensitive or homophobic response from police officers or other service providers with whom they meet (CCASA, n.d.; Leonard et al., 2008). These assumptions can lead to a belief that they would end up receiving unfair treatment from those within the criminal justice sector (Hunter et al., 2000). Combining this with the ways in which society's heteronormative views act to ostracise gay and bisexual men (Braun et al., 2009), one can see the major impact homophobia can pose when a survivor is deciding whether or not to report to the

police.

Some survivors can also experience a sense of internalised homophobia, such as the feeling that they are deviant and thus deserving of being victimised as a punishment for their actions, which could contribute to increased levels of under-reporting (Gold, Dickstein, Marx, & Lexington, 2009). This internalised form of homophobia may be in part due to the many myths present within society. The homophobia within society itself can lead to a decreased awareness of violence. This can ultimately result in those who have not disclosed their sexual orientation, particularly youth, to remain in violent relationships out of fear of having to effectively disclose their orientation should they choose to report to the police (Gillum & DiFulvio, 2012). For adult men in same-sex relationships, the decision to report abuse can often result in emotionally reliving the homophobic experiences they may have had from family members, which could further lead to self-blame based on their individual lifestyle choices (Tilbrook, Allan, & Dear, 2010).

Despite research showing that levels of homophobia towards members of GLBT communities have decreased within policing compared to the past (Wotherspoon, 1991), a tendency for gay and bisexual men to believe that police exhibit similar or higher rates of homophobia than the general society is often stated as a main reason for being reluctant to report to the police (Berman & Robinson, 2010; Elliott, 1998; Leventhal & Lundy, 1999).

There is also a tendency for experiences of forced or coerced sex to be minimised and seen as less serious, often in accompaniment with victim blaming. One way that this may occur is within the victim himself. It may be difficult for a victim of a sexual assault to recognise and label his experience as one that was violent and assaultive (Fileborn, 2012), placing him in a position that would in turn result in him minimising the seriousness of the offence. It can also be the case that this minimisation can carry through to perpetrators as well (Fenaughty et al., 2006). The occurrence of this could allow for a victim of sexual assault to decide to remain silent rather than report to the police, as he may feel his incident was not severe enough to justify reporting.

Further problems in this area centre on ways in which gay male sexuality is assumed to be at the root of an individual gay man's identity, carrying with it a sense of endless sexual potentials and desires (Fenaughty et al., 2006). This

model of a gay male sexual identity may lead to a societal perception that sex is something that would never be seen as unwanted by gay men, thus making them seem impervious to becoming victims of sexual assaults.

The tendency to view the sexual assault of a gay man as less serious is often seen in the negative reactions expressed towards victims (Rumney, 2008; Rumney, 2009). These negative reactions may play out as assumptions by others that the victim may have actually desired what occurred to him based on his sexual orientation (Rumney, 2008). It has also been stated that claims of rape by gay men may not be treated in the serious manner they deserve, stemming from beliefs that the trauma experienced by gay victims carries with it significantly less gravity (Lees, 1997). This tendency has been further supported by Doherty and Anderson's study (2004) which shows that rape claims are seen as less severe if the individual in question has experienced consensual physical acts in the past. In comparison to heterosexual men, as well as the severity of the crime seeming to decrease when the victim is a gay man, there is also an increased level of blame on the victim (Davies, 2002; Doherty & Anderson, 2004).

This tendency to minimise and blame a gay or bisexual victim of a sexual assault could very well be a product of the societal myth that sexual violence is something that is nonexistent within the context of a same-sex relationship. This shares many similarities with society's beliefs of women being incapable of violence, thus attributing a violent nature to those within a dominant male gender role. As many may tend to view gay men as residing outside of the discourses of heterosexual masculine roles, they may hold a view that renders sexual violence as something unable to happen within a same-sex relation.

Not only does research tell us sexual assault can indeed occur within a same-sex relationship, a comparative study conducted by Tjaden and colleagues (1999) has shown that the likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence is significantly greater for those having lived in a same-sex relationship when compared to those that have not. The researchers found that the prevalence of intimate partner violence is greater for gay men than it is for heterosexual couples. Of course, this study is not without its limitations, yet it helps to highlight that sexual abuse does occur within same-sex relations despite the societal misconceptions that it does not.

These myths can be quite harmful to men within same-sex relationships,



often leading them to remain silent about their abuse. They may fear that their claims would not be taken seriously if they choose to turn to any services. Additionally, there is the possibility that these men have not disclosed their sexuality to their family or employers, giving the perpetrator of violence the ability to threaten unwanted disclosure of his partner's sexual preference should he decide to report the abuse (Tilbrook et al., 2010). This only contributes to increased fear surrounding the idea of reporting sexual assault and leads to further secrecy of its occurrence, allowing for the myth that sexual assault does not happen in same-sex relationships to proliferate.

In a society that is saturated with many incorrect beliefs and assumptions surrounding gay men and sexual assault, one can only think that credibility issues will often arise for gay and bisexual victims of sexual assault. Despite being able to accurately describe an experience in ways that would fit a definition of sexual assault, complications can occur for victims in the way of convincing others that their experience was truly non-consensual rather than one in which they received some form of enjoyment (Braun et al, 2009; Fileborn, 2012). The difficulty surrounding credibility becomes even more problematic when these societal misconceptions are shared with those in the police force, leading to an increased ability for reports made to be placed under speculation rather than given the level of seriousness they deserve.

Societal myths that place homosexual men in the position of always being open to engaging in sex do little more than further strengthen the notions that gay men cannot be victims of sexual assault. The negative effects of this have been shown in cases where the reporting of sexual assault has led to an increased likelihood for reports made by victims to be seen by the police as less reliable (Rumney, 2008). This tendency to take accounts of gay male sexual assault victims as unreliable goes together with incorrectly held assumptions that victims enjoyed their experiences or consented to them rather than to see the assault for that which it really is. When associated with credibility issues, this lack of sensitivity to the nature of a report would do little more than result in an increased level of trauma for the individual. This can lead many victims to remain silent rather than disclose their assault given the possibility that it will not be taken seriously and their accounts of the event would not be believed.

Another factor to bear in mind is that gay and bisexual men are often part

of a collective GLBT community, and it is within this community that a vast proportion of their social networks may be based. Many individuals within the GLBT community may benefit from this inclusive support network, but it is important to consider that there may be many subcultural factors within the community that can influence sexual assault victims to not report to the police. An example of such an influence is that when sexual assault occurs in the context of a same-sex relationship, the abusive partner may also be a member of the same community.

Intimate partner violence is an area that may not be fully understood by the members of the queer community and any decision to make a report of assault against a partner may thus result in the victim becoming socially alienated (Duke & Davidson, 2009). As most GLBT communities are small and tightly-knit, many men may fear not only being excluded and thereby isolated from the community, but also the negative ramifications they may face within the gay community as well (Tilbrook et al., 2010).

The GLBT community generally embraces an individual's disclosure of sexual orientation, and members of the community share a privileged position of being informed about one's sexual orientation. It is important to note that despite a choice to disclose sexual orientation within the GLBT community, an individual may still not be open about to everyone in his life. An intimate partner, more likely than not, is informed about this choice to be discreet, and this may give way to a possibility that a decision to report may result in the violent partner threatening to disclose the victim's orientation (Mulroney & Chan, 2005). The abuser could even go as far as making statements about this to the victim, further adding to the trauma and emotional harm they are already experiencing while also instilling fear. Despite how apparent it is that this can happen within the GLBT community, research focusing on sexual violence within the community has yet to fully flourish (Fileborn, 2012).

The fear of unwanted disclosure of one's sexual orientation can impact a reporting decision simply on its own. Some gay and bisexual victims may fear what the results would be if they disclose their sexual orientation or are 'outed' to family and friends (Leonard et al., 2008). This fear can be so intense that it may prevent them from being able to even disclose their victimisation to these individuals as well, as a disclosure of this sort would inherently be accompanied

with an ‘outing’ of sexual orientation (Fenaughty et al., 2006).

One must imagine that this fear would pose even greater difficulties when the abuse victim is a youth. Within the context of a relationship, disclosure of sexual activity with an underage youth could result in statutory rape prosecutions, thus unwillingly placing the teen’s sexual orientation in the spotlight. With youth, as well as adult survivors of sexual assaults, fears surrounding having sexual orientation revealed without consent could decrease the willingness to turn to family, police, or service providers for support. This would further contribute to the under-reporting of sexual assaults among this group.

Discussing fear a bit further, there may also be a possibility for sexual assault victims to become fearful of receiving some sort of retaliation or retribution for making the decision to report to the police. This fear may be seen particularly in cases where the assault was inflicted by heterosexist violence or by an intimate partner (Fileborn, 2012). With worries about whether or not revenge or future abuse will be sought out by the perpetrator (Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003), a victim may make the choice to avoid reporting to the police.

This fear of retaliation and retribution could very well be similar to what a heterosexual male or female victim may also experience. Despite not showing any uniqueness to the GLBT community, it is still important to take this into account as it poses a barrier in the decision to make a report. This could be especially true in cases where the assault may have been quite violent in nature. As a relation to fears surrounding ‘outing’ may also exist, it is likely that fears of retaliation and retribution would also occur if a reporting decision disclosed the sexual orientation of the perpetrator, thus making the victim fearful of the perpetrator’s reaction to having his own sexuality revealed.

The GLBT community can be seen as an individual group with its own distinct needs. This being said, there often exists a lack in services that are sensitive, appropriate, and supportive for this group (Leonard et al., 2008). This lack of a sufficient support network is seen globally in regards to services offering support for gay male victims, with the majority of programmes available tending to focus more on the perpetrator and being able to get him to change his violent behaviour rather than on the needs of survivors (Cheung, Leung, & Tsui, 2009). This small proportion of services has even been seen within prison populations, where gay inmates’ requests for protection from abuse have been ignored or

denied by prison staff, often only taken seriously in situations in which they suffered some sort of physical injury or harm (Mariner, 2001).

Tilbrook and colleagues (2010) offer a good discussion of the lack of appropriate services within the context of male same-sex relationships. They indicate that being able to find and access services can be problematic, giving the example of there being no shelters available for men in same-sex relationships fleeing from abusive partners in the same way that there are for women. The authors also note that any services that are present will most likely operate from a heterosexist viewpoint, which will ultimately lead to humiliation or discrimination. Comments are made indicating that prior discrimination from service providers could result in an increased feeling of distrust experienced by those trying to access services. Aspects such as an unwillingness to disclose orientation and the generally small size of the community to which they belong can also pose as unique barriers for men in same-sex relationships. This helps to highlight the increased need to develop and put in place services that would be appropriate for members of the GLBT community. Additionally, the marketing of such programmes would need to be done in ways that make them visible to members of the community, allowing for them to be informed of their availability. While this is ideal, being able to follow through with steps to more appropriate services may result in many barriers of its own, such as the inability to secure adequate funding.

The importance of receiving support from family and friends is also discussed within the literature. Tilbrook and colleagues (2010) detail the difficulties gay and bisexual men may have in this area, talking largely about abuse within same-sex relationships. They discuss that for many GLBT individuals, a lack of support or acceptance of their same-sex relationship may be present prior to any abuse having occurred, making the process of disclosing abuse and talking about it much more difficult. An example of how this may occur is found within Fenaughty and colleagues' (2006) interviews with gay male sexual abuse survivors. In one case, a participant discussed an inability to seek support from his family members for his abuse due to the negative experiences he had when he disclosed his sexual orientation to them. As individuals may want to talk to family and friend before seeking out and accessing support services, the issues surrounding inadequacies with this form of support may be distinct from those of service providers.

Another factor that can play a role in reporting is that of culture and religion. An individual's cultural or religious affiliation could impact the way in which he goes about handling his assault or the services he chooses to make use of. This can tie into discussions of the types of support available, highlighting the importance of having services that are culturally sensitive. It becomes significant here to recognise that sexual assault also affects those within New Zealand's Māori community. Māori men who have experienced sexual assaults often seek support within their own cultural networks (Fenaughty et al., 2006), so it is important to address any differences in the way these individuals are impacted and ensure that services aimed towards them are cognisant of these differences in terms of the support they provide. The same can be said of individuals whose religious affiliations play a strong role in how they deal with issues in their lives. Religious teachings focusing on forgiveness rather than punishment could skew a survivor's perception of the possible benefits of reporting to the police.

With discussions made previously about the fears of being isolated from the GLBT community, it is essential to recognise that many gay and bisexual men can also face experiences of isolation due to their geographic location. Most queer communities are found within larger cities. To be a gay or bisexual man and live in a remote or rural area, and thus geographically far away from any queer communities, would lead to increased feelings of isolation. This spatial isolation means not only that these individuals have more limited access to GLBT-specific services, but also that they may be further inclined to remain silent about their abuse, especially if the community in which they live is intolerant of sexual diversity (Leonard et al., 2008).

Finally, issues surrounding an individual's right to privacy and confidentiality are integral to mention. Many gay and bisexual victims fear that making a report of sexual assault could lead to having their experiences sensationalised (CCASA, n.d). If their sexual orientation is something they have chosen to keep private, they could feel that such sensationalising could result in having their sexual orientation unwillingly disclosed (Hunter et al., 2000). This fear of having their privacy infringed upon may also occur in cases where the assault has happened within the context of a relationship, leading to confidentiality concerns that those within their community would become informed about the assault (Tilbrook et al., 2010). This can occur by way of

police questioning or informing members of a victim's family, as well as friends and employers, and the information discussed will invariably include details about the abuse as well as their sexual orientation (Elliot, 1998). It could be the case that sexual assault victims may be aware of this possibility, thus leading them to become more wary of making reports to the police.

### **Chapter Summary**

With the impact of sexual assault garnering an increased amount of awareness and attention within research, it is essential to give a focus to issues that affect those residing outside of a society's heteronormative lens. The current status of under-reporting is an area that needs to be addressed in order to increase the action being taken against these crimes by the criminal justice system. To further address issues faced by gay and bisexual sexual assault victims, in this thesis I seek to examine the barriers preventing them from making reports to the police, and derive possible methods for their reduction.

Reviewing the literature, it can be seen that factors such as homophobia, societal myths, and inadequate services are only a few of the factors identified that can contribute to a tendency not to report a sexual assault to the police. By conducting interviews with gay and bisexual male survivors and the service providers who work with them, this thesis will expand further upon the barriers discussed in the literature. The aim is to understand what contributes to under-reporting, and how these factors can be decreased, through the development of a comprehensive overview of the various barriers faced by gay and bisexual male survivors of sexual assaults.

To increase future reporting rates, it is important for research to take into account the uniqueness of gay and bisexual sexual assault victims' experiences and develop an increased understanding of the many barriers these men face. By ensuring that methods for reduction are included within the scope of this thesis, the hope is that a foundation will develop for prospective efforts to begin implementing methods in the reduction of the various barriers identified.

Chapter Three will provide further details on the aims of this research, as well as an overview of the methods used in the study and how the findings were interpreted.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

The primary focus of this chapter is to provide details on the methodology and design of the present study. The chapter begins by describing the aim of this research and its importance, along with the scope of the research questions being asked and ethical considerations. Information regarding participants and their recruitment is then provided. The distinction between being positioned in the study as either a key informant or survivor is also discussed. After this, information is given regarding the selection of the research method used within this study. Following this, the chapter concludes with an outline of the research procedure, including descriptions of how the data was collected, transcribed, analysed, and disseminated.

#### **Research Aim**

The aim of this research is to establish and understand contributing factors to under-reporting of sexual assaults to the police in cases where the victim is a gay or bisexual man. In this thesis, I aim to expand out further from the broadly categorised reasons found within published literature, seeking to examine the themes surrounding these barriers at a deeper level. Findings from this research may generalise to a global context, though efforts will be made to take into account the unique cultural aspects of the New Zealand/Aotearoa society. The review of the literature shows that studies on this topic are sparse, and this will likely be the first study of its kind to examine these issues within New Zealand. This study makes use of expert knowledge from interviews with key informants while also allowing for the inclusion of gay and bisexual sexual assault survivors. By aiming to incorporate the voices of men who have experienced sexual assaults in their lives within this research, a more complete insight into the various barriers identified can be achieved. As the research focuses on a population of gay and bisexual men, clarification will be provided further in this chapter for reasons of excluding participants who identify outside of these sexual orientations, such as those who identify as transgender.

### **Research Plan**

The use of key informants is one that holds a great deal of benefits in this study. One such benefit is that individuals who function in the position of a key informant can provide more pertinent information on the topic than members of the general public. There are many other benefits of the use of key informants beyond the ability to increase the validity and richness of data. By using key informants it allows for increased ease around establishing rapport and continued contact, while also functioning as a method of raising further awareness and interest in this topic with key stakeholders (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, n.d.).

To qualify as a key informant an individual must hold a position in society related to the topic, such as rape crisis counsellors, and thus be able to provide specialised and valuable information based on the knowledge acquired in their role (Payne & Payne, 2004). I aimed to make the key informant group as diverse as possible in order to minimise any biased or one-sided results that may have occurred had the key informants all shared a more similar background, and to maximise the areas of discussion being brought forth in interviews. This research was structured to allow for both the expert insights of key informants and those of survivors with first-hand experience.

As key informants and survivors form two distinct participant groups with the aim of answering the same research questions, there were minor differences in the questions asked within the interview guides. To aid in explaining the approach taken to the research, Table 1 illustrates some of the differences between the nature of the questions asked for key informants and those of survivors, while relating to a shared outcome. Within the table, the central column highlights the type of information that was hoped to transpire based on the nature of the questions asked. These research outcomes included barriers that have been specifically experienced, barriers that were not actually experienced but may still exist, and suggestions for improvements which could be made to assist in barrier reduction. Topic areas of focus pertaining to key informants are provided in the left column and those for survivors in the right column.



Table 1

*Research Plan Depicting Topics and Outcomes Pertaining to Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assaults to the Police for Gay and Bisexual Male Survivors*

Topics (KI)	Research outcome	Topics (S)
Experiences clients have described or that key informants have had to deal with that illustrate barriers.	<b>Identifying specific barriers that have been personally experienced by victims.</b>	Discussions as to why survivors had not reported to the police, as well as barriers they faced in any attempts they may have made.
Personal perceptions of other barriers that could be present outside of those explicitly detailed to them by survivors.	<b>Identifying additional barriers that victims may experience.</b>	Beliefs as to additional barriers that may exist for other gay and bisexual male sexual assault survivors.
Suggestions as to ways barriers may be reduced in order to allow for increased reporting.	<b>Improvements that can be made to help reduce barriers.</b>	Suggestions on how others can best go about reporting and minimise any potential barriers.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethics approval was granted by the University of Waikato's Psychology Research and Ethics Committee. Documents contained within the application included a research proposal, ethics review for human research questionnaire, research project consent form, interview guides, as well as all information sheets and recruitment materials pertaining to the study.

Specific areas of importance to this study within the ethics process pertained to issues of culture, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. This study does not focus specifically on issues pertaining to culture, including Māori, yet has allowed for issues relating to Māori to be discussed by participants within interviews. This has no direct impact upon Māori in general. Issues of culture and ethnicity may arise in discussions, but they are not a direct focus of the study.

As the study focuses exclusively on gay and bisexual men, it inherently excludes the participation of those identifying with other sexual orientations, both

within the survivor group and within the focus of discussions. Individuals who identify as transgender were excluded from the study despite the fact that many transgender individuals may still identify with a gay or bisexual sexual orientation. This study also does not include individuals who identify as intersex for their biological sex.

Despite the fact that violence, including sexual assault, shares similarities with the hate-crime violence experienced by female and transgender victims (Witten & Eyler, 1999), there are still some differences that would make the analysis of barrier themes much different if transgender individuals had been included. One of these differences that can be seen is that medical professionals and police may often be unable to handle or understand the needs of transgendered individuals (Valles, 2010). The most distinct difference for both transgender and intersex individuals from the population of interest in this study is that individuals within these groups may still maintain female reproductive organs, and can therefore face additional barriers such as pregnancy risks as they can be sexually assaulted both vaginally and anally. I felt that differences such as these would place transgender and intersex individuals outside of the focus of this study.

With this being said, issues pertaining to transgender gender identities as well as intersex biological identities are nonetheless important to research, and future studies should endeavour to fill in the gaps in the literature on these groups. The focus in this study is more around masculinity constructed around sex rather than that of gender. It focuses exclusively on issues revolving around masculine gender identities and the victimisation of individuals who identify with a male biological sex, thus the inclusion of individuals identifying as transgender or intersex would bring about too many additional factors that do not fall in line with those seeking to be examined.

Lastly, due to the sensitive nature of the topic, there was a potential risk for participants to experience some discomfort within interviews. To address this, I ensured that participants' comfort was of utmost importance. Efforts were made to avoid steering conversations in ways that would place too much emphasis on survivors' experiences of the assault itself rather than those of barriers. I also took notice of participants' behaviours during interviews, and redirected my questions if I felt discomfort was arising at any time. All survivors were informed of their ability to withdraw and refuse to answer questions. They were also told

that they could bring a support person with them to the interview if they wished to do so, in attempts to further minimise discomfort prior to interviewing.

### **Recruitment**

Prior to the outset of this research, plans had initially focused around recruiting key informants who have worked with gay and bisexual male survivors of sexual assault to serve as the participants. I began making use of my network of contacts, as well as local directories and web resources, to create a list of possible key informants to contact regarding the study. I hoped that once hearing about my study, interested key informants would disperse relevant information to others in their own network, resulting in a snowballing effect.

At the outset, ideas surrounding the probability of recruiting survivors to the study seemed somewhat unlikely. Much of my initial hesitation around this was in the difficulty of finding a recruitment method to adequately recruit survivors. There were also potential ethical and safety issues in being able to assess whether or not survivors had properly dealt with their abuse in a way that would allow them to feel comfortable being interviewed on the topic.

As the planning of the study progressed, I elected to find a recruitment method that would offer the possibility of having survivors included within the study in a way that would be ethical and cause minimal distress to them. I felt that in order to obtain a fully comprehensive understanding of the areas addressed in this research, recruitment methods needed to focus on allowing participation of both key informants and survivors. To accomplish this, I decided to personally contact prospective key informants, and provide those who were interested with recruitment material for both themselves and any prospective survivors they may know, rather than making any direct contact with survivors myself.

The preferred method selected for providing these introductory materials to key informants was through the use of email, as it is a quick and direct way for individuals to read and access information. The use of email also allowed for key informants to easily print of additional resources for survivors and forward the attached files on to other participants of interest. In cases where email addresses were not available for prospective key informants, all of the recruitment materials were sent via post, and provisions were made to provide additional copies if requested.

The initial package sent to key informants included both an introductory participant letter (Appendix A) and a participant information sheet (Appendix C) pertaining to them, as well as an introductory participant letter and participant information sheet that they could pass on to survivors (Appendix B and Appendix D). It is also important to mention here that in the participant letter for survivors (Appendix B), a space was provided at the bottom for both me and the referring service provider to include our signatures. It was felt that the inclusion of this would allow for decreased levels of stress and anxiety for survivors, as they would feel comfortable knowing that the information was coming from a reliable source. Further to this, it was also stated within the participant letter for key informants (Appendix A), that they should refrain from giving recruitment material to those survivors whom they felt could have been negatively affected by participating in the study. These measures were put in place to further minimise any risks or discomforts.

Utmost care was taken to ensure all participants were aware of the levels of confidentiality involved in the study prior to consenting. This was done by informing participants that all identifying information, such as names and locations of incidents, would be removed from the transcripts. Participants were further reassured that all audio recordings and transcription files were kept on a password-protected flash drive, accessible only by me. They were also informed of how they could access the completed results of the study.

Participants were invited to contact me by phone or email to schedule an interview or ask further questions. Often times, additional correspondence needed to be made, such as follow-up calls regarding interview scheduling. In the case of interested survivors, meetings were set up at the workplaces of referring key informants to personally discuss the recruitment material and answer and questions they may have had. I felt that these initial meetings served as a personal introduction, allowing possible discomforts in survivors to ease and rapport to be developed prior to the interviews. To further increase survivor comfort levels, time was set aside in the first meetings to provide them with a bit of my personal background on the topic. This included informing them of my sexual orientation as well as my own personal experiences with sexual assault survivors.

Before finalising a date for an interview, I ensured that all participants had been screened for inclusion based on predetermined screening criteria.

Screening criteria for key informants included:

- Need to have worked with or have expert knowledge on issues pertaining to gay and bisexual male survivors of sexual assaults.
- Able to partake in a recorded interview either in person, on the telephone, or through Skype in the English language.
- Be over the age of 18 and living within New Zealand.

Screening criteria for survivors included:

- Need to have been a victim of sexual abuse/sexual assault.
- Need to identify as a gay or bisexual man in terms of their sexual orientation.
- Need to identify as having a male gender identity.
- Comfortable in discussing issues surrounding barriers to reporting sexual assaults.
- Able to partake in a recorded interview either in person, on the telephone, or through Skype in the English language.
- Be over the age of 18 and living within New Zealand.

Provisions were also made if any over-recruitment occurred. If this was the case, an opportunity would have been given for participants to have discussions with me via telephone or email, allowing for their voices to still be heard despite being excluded from being directly interviewed for the study.

### **Research Participants**

In Table 2, participant information is provided for all key informants and survivors recruited for the study. Pseudonyms are provided to ensure the confidentiality of each of the participants. In summary, there were six key informants and four survivors interviewed. Additional details about the position of being either a key informant or survivor follows this table.

Table 2

*Participant Information*

Name	Position in the study	Experience with the topic	Sexual orientation
Rita	Key informant	Relationship and sexual abuse counsellor who has worked with gay and bisexual men.	
Helen	Key informant	Works in responding to and preventing sexual violence, with specialised knowledge of queer-specific issues.	
Diane	Key informant	Correctional psychologist having worked with gay and bisexual men.	
Gary	Key informant	Manages peer-run youth service that gay and bisexual youth make use of.	
Andy	Key informant	Former police officer that investigated crimes against gay men, currently serving as an external consultant for New Zealand Police.	
Geoff	Key informant	Former police officer that is now a service provider for male survivors of sexual abuse.	
Dean	Survivor	Sexually abused twice during childhood by both male and female perpetrators and in adulthood by a male friend and male stranger.	Bisexual
Max	Survivor	Sexually assaulted by a male stranger after having reached the age of consent.	Gay
Rangi	Survivor	Sexually abused in childhood by men within his family as well as by a male priest in a position of power/trust.	Gay
Hemi	Survivor	Sexually abused in childhood by a male cousin as well as by a male friend after having reached the age of consent.	Gay

**Key informant group.** Participants within this group consisted of individuals who had a key role in the community relating to this topic, specialised knowledge in the area, and could share this with me in a way that communicated their ability to fit into this role within the study (Marshall, 1996). Their employment position or background needed to entail having worked with gay and bisexual male victims of sexual assault in a professional setting, ideally having provided some sort of services to these individuals such as counselling. Participants in this group did not need to identify as being gay or bisexual themselves, yet it was hoped that any self-disclosure of this could lead into directing interview questions in a way that would allow for their own experiences as a victim to be brought forth.

**Survivor group.** Participants in this group needed to be sexual assault survivors who identified as gay or bisexual men over the age of 18. All interested participants were assured that their involvement as a survivor would be focused on discussing barriers rather than the details of their victimisation. As survivors may choose to bring up some of the background of their assault during interviewing, provisions were made to allow for this without prying into too much depth about the specifics of the assault itself. By permitting participants of this group to discuss a bit of their circumstances, it would allow the analysis to better investigate any barriers stated in context with their individual backgrounds.

### **Research Method and Procedure**

A qualitative research approach was taken in order to gather the information for this topic. Qualitative methods allow for the ability to purposefully select a small sample of participants who can share their rich individual experiences with the topic area in a way that would result in detailed in-depth data that can be used in analysis (Patton, 2002; Yardley & Marks, 2004). As the project focuses on placing participants in the position of being the experts on the topic, I felt that using a qualitative approach would allow for reflections to be made based on the scope of the participants' experiences rather than through any preconceived notions that might have been based on my own personal experiences.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach. I developed

a set of focus questions to be used in interviews while still permitting discussions to diverge from these areas of questioning. This allowed for the ability to subsequently question and discuss any new areas brought forth within interviews that may have not been part of the original scope of questioning, making way for much fuller and detailed narratives of participants' accounts (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The questions included in the interview guide for key informants (Appendix G) were mainly focused on their experiences with clients who had been sexually abused, while those in the interview guide for survivors (Appendix H) focused more on their individual experiences relating to sexual assault.

Due to the sensitivity of the information being discussed, the conducting of interviews was to be done one-on-one between the participants and myself. Interviewing one-on-one was felt to be the most appropriate way to establish a trusting relationship between the researcher and participant, allowing for an increased ability in having them open up on the topic. It also allows for a more personalised experience in which they are put at the centre of attention, letting their narratives be the focus rather than a complex mixing of narratives that may have resulted had interviews been conducted in a group setting. Despite having been informed of their ability to bring a support person with them to the interview, none of the participants in the study chose to do so.

When scheduling for interviews, all participants were given the option of being interviewed either at the university campus, their place of work (or referring service provider's place of work in the case of survivors), through the telephone, or via Skype videoconferencing. I felt that giving participants a range of options would be the best way of recruiting in a manner that would make them feel comfortable with participating while fitting into their own time schedules. For the key informants of this study, two were interviewed at their place of employment, three over the telephone and one over Skype. Two of the survivors in the study chose to be interviewed at the university campus, while the other two preferred to be interviewed at the location of the referring service provider.

In all interviews that were conducted in person, participants were provided with a consent form to sign (Appendix E). As the use of telephone and Skype for interviewing resulted in a physical distance between me and the participants, anyone who elected to make use of these methods for interviewing gave verbal consent prior to beginning the interview. In addition, all information regarding



participants' rights and ethical considerations was restated to them prior to the commencement of the interview.

Participants were informed that the interview would last for approximately one hour and that all interviews were to be recorded on an electronic voice recorder for later transcription. They were also informed that the recorder could be paused or shut off at any point if they felt uncomfortable or wanted to say something without it being included in the interview recording.

All interviews began with a general introduction and questions of a demographic nature in order to assist in easing the participant into the research and establishing rapport. As the interviews progressed, questions focused on the three research areas of inquiry. The structure of asking questions relating to these areas did not follow any rigid format. In general, it began with questions surrounding having actually experienced barriers and moved on to any possible yet non-experienced barriers, concluding with questioning on the reduction of barriers. Table 3 provides examples of how each area being explored was addressed within interview questions while also showing how questions were posed differently depending on the participant's position in the study.

Table 3

*Examples of Questions to Address each Research Area*

Key informant questions	Research area	Survivor questions
What are some of the reasons people had told you for why they have not reported?	<b>Experienced barriers.</b>	What barriers did you face yourself that might have made you decide not to report to the police?
In what other ways do you think gay or bisexual men may face a challenge when it comes to reporting?	<b>Perceived barriers.</b>	Are there any other barriers that you feel gay or bisexual men might encounter?
How can we challenge these barriers?	<b>Reduction of barriers.</b>	Is there anything we can do to make it easier for survivors to go to the police?

At the end of each interview, participants were thanked for their input and were informed on how their responses would be beneficial to the study. Participants were provided with a support contact handout (Appendix F) in the case that they experienced any distress after leaving the interview. All participants were informed that they would hear back from me again once I had completed the transcription. They were also told that they could contact me through my mobile phone or email if they had any further questions after leaving the interview, or upon receiving the copy of their transcript.

Once transcription was completed, all the participants were emailed a copy of their transcript to review and edit, except in the case of one survivor who was provided with a printout due to not having an email address. It was felt that providing an opportunity for the review of transcripts would not only benefit the preciseness of the information used in the analysis, but it would also make participants feel further comforted in that they could have a say as to what would be used and how exactly it would be worded. Post-interview thank-you letters for key informants (Appendix I) and for survivors (Appendix J) were sent along with each interview transcript. The information included in the support service information sheets was also included on the back of all participants' letters in the case that they had happened to have lost it.

When receiving their thank-you letter and transcript for editing, survivors were told that they would be provided with a ten-dollar-coffee voucher. These vouchers were left in sealed envelopes with referring service provider for pickup, and survivors were informed of this via email. It was decided that survivors would not be informed that they would be receiving the voucher until after completion of the interview. This decision allowed for the coffee voucher to serve as a token of appreciation for sharing their personal stories with me rather than an incentive or bribe for their participation. Vouchers were not provided to any of the key informants who participated.

### **Transcription**

Efforts were made to ensure that each transcription was a complete and detailed version of what was said within the interview; including false starts, laughs, and any other verbal utterances made. This helped to ensure that the complexities of what was said during interviews could be understood and

repeatedly communicated within the results of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

All participants were told they had two weeks to review their transcript and make any necessary changes. It was during this two-week time frame that participants also could drop out of the study, thus excluding their transcript from the analysis. Once the two-week time frame had passed, if any participants had not responded, the assumption was made that the transcript was acceptable. In total, two participants returned transcripts with edits included. The remaining eight chose to include their transcripts without any additional edits.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to analyse the transcripts, thematic analysis was selected as the qualitative method of choice. In their article on the use of thematic analysis in psychology, Braun and Clarke (2006) state that “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (p. 79). The authors also describe many of the decisions that need to be made when doing this type of analysis.

Firstly, a decision needs to be made on what counts as a theme. The central research areas for these analyses were experienced barriers, perceived barriers, and reduction of barriers. Experience and perceived barriers both pertained to barriers that could be faced, and were thus analysed together. Five themes were then generated during analysis based on how well they could capture aspects of their associated research area. Four of these themes related to barriers to reporting and were defined as the personal, social, institutional, and abuse-specific themes. The additional fifth theme pertained to suggested solutions for barriers and was thus labelled as the reduction theme.

This identification of the various themes was done using an inductive approach, allowing for themes to emerge from the interview texts. Themes were identified on a latent level, allowing for the analysis to go deeper than the pure semantic meanings of each theme. As for the epistemology of the analysis, the study lends itself more to a constructionist approach. By using this approach, participants’ accounts can be discussed in a way that reflects the sociocultural context more than a realist approach would. Having made all of these decisions on how the theoretical position of the thematic analysis would be approached

ahead of time, it is hoped that the final analysis of this research will be complete and thorough in the way that the results come across to the reader.

In conducting the thematic analysis, I chose to adhere to Braun and Clarke (2006) description of the six phases a researcher must go through when doing a thematic analysis: familiarising yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. To familiarise myself with the data, I transcribed all the interviews on my own, making sure to reread each transcript in conjunction with the interview recordings. Additionally, all transcripts were reread again prior to coding. In generating the codes and themes, I chose to import and analyse each transcript using the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo.

The use of NVivo as a tool in the analysis process allowed for increased rigour, as features of the software permitted the searching of data throughout all transcripts. This ensured that all key pieces of data were coded for, and did so in a much more efficient manner than manually scanning for key words through all the interview transcripts would have. When searching for themes, NVivo allowed for greater ease in placing codes into potential thematic groups than a traditional paper-based cut-and-paste method. Once potential groups were made, data extracts could be viewed within the software to double-check that all initial codes fit in well to the higher-level coded categories. If any of the codes appeared misaligned, revisions were made until all the themes fit with their associated codes.

In addition to these features, the model explorer tool included within NVivo was used to help map out how each of the themes related to one another (Welsh, 2002). Thematic models were then subsequently reviewed and refined. Clearly defined names were subsequently created for each of the themes and subthemes associated with the research areas. Model diagrams for each theme are provided at the start of corresponding sections within the results chapter of this thesis, along with selected extracts that illustrate the story that each of the themes and subthemes identified tells.

### **Dissemination of Findings**

During the process of writing this thesis, I was approached by a key informant regarding an opportunity to have some of my preliminary findings

included in a presentation being given to key stakeholders within the New Zealand Police at the police headquarters in Wellington. A request was made for me to provide a short PowerPoint presentation that gave a brief overview of some of my findings, specifically those pertaining to barriers the police may have an interest in becoming involved in reducing. This particular key informant had a good background in working with gay and bisexual male survivors and would briefly speak about my findings as part of the presentation he was giving, ensuring that I would be fully credited and that stakeholders would be provided with my contact information for any additional interests they may have. I was told that many of these stakeholders were aware of my research and the opportunity to provide some of these early findings could lead to a further interest in this study and the research area. The slides that I prepared for this presentation are presented in Appendix K. I also made sure that a link was provided for the University of Waikato library website, allowing for any interested individuals to access this thesis after its submission.

## Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter details the themes that emerged from interviews conducted with key informants and survivors. The four emerging themes surrounding barriers to reporting sexual assaults to the police were: personal, social, institutional, and abuse-specific. A fifth theme, reduction, also arose in relation to the ways that barriers can be decreased. Each of the identified themes will be expanded on and discussed within this chapter, concluding with an overall summary for each. Quotes from participants are included to illustrate many of the points raised. The abbreviations ‘*KI*’ or ‘*S*’ will be used next to participants’ names in quotes for ease in identifying their position as either a key informant (*KI*) or survivor (*S*).

The diagram shown below (Figure 1) provides a visual representation of the emerging themes discussed within this chapter in relation to the central research topic of barriers to reporting sexual assaults to the police for gay and bisexual male victims. The themes of personal, social, institutional, and abuse-specific barriers are all reasons why individuals may not report to the police. The theme of reduction of barriers has been placed off to the opposite side of the other themes on the diagram as the nature of its content differs despite relating to the central theme of barriers. The following sections will further expand on the details for each of the five themes identified within the research as well as any evident relationships.

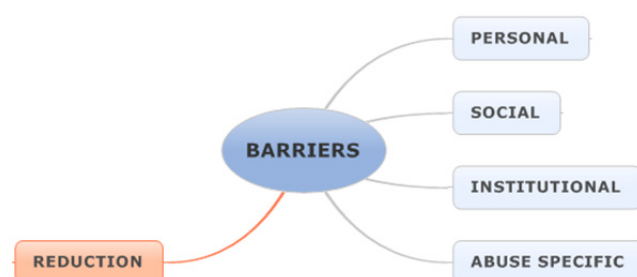


Figure 1. Overview of research themes.

### Personal Barriers

The diagram below (Figure 2) illustrates the eight key areas associated with the personal theme: defence mechanisms, cognitive mindset, revisiting, knowledge, emotions, privacy and confidentiality, past experience, and mental health. This theme relates to the private and internal aspects of one's own individual self. Many of the key areas are broken down into relevant subcategories, as has been depicted within the diagram. The following discussions provide further details of each area and their relationship to a personal sense of self. Information regarding relationships and trends is also highlighted.

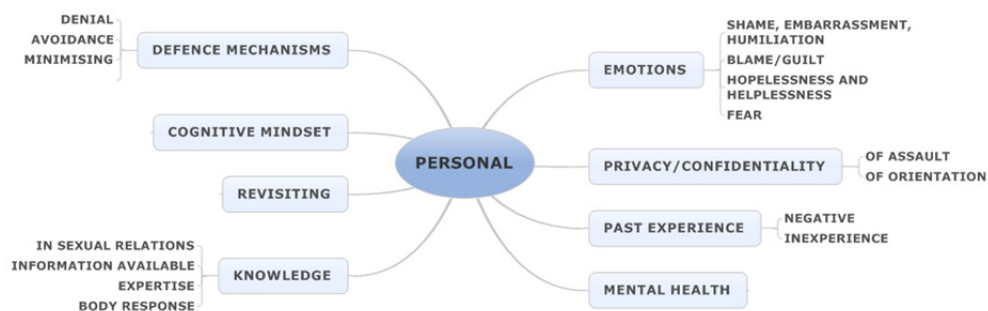


Figure 2. Overview of barrier areas within the personal theme.

**Defence mechanisms.** There was a large amount of discussion surrounding defence mechanisms within all of the participant interviews. The term *defence mechanisms* can be defined as “regulatory processes that allow individuals to reduce cognitive dissonance and to minimise sudden changes in internal and external environments by altering how these events are perceived” (Vaillant, 1993, p. 44). Comments in this area related to earlier denials of the assault having occurred, avoidance of thinking about the assault, or minimisation of sexual assault experiences. One of the survivors, Max, tended to focus greatly on these areas in his interview. As Max’s assault occurred quite recently in comparison to the other survivors interviewed, his substantial commentary in this area likely stems from being in a state in which he is currently experiencing these defence mechanisms.

Within these three subareas, a large amount of attention was given to the area of avoidance. The methods of avoidance often involved placing oneself in a frame of mind where the assault would begin to be forgotten about. This seems to offer survivors a form of escape from any negative effects that could arise from focusing too greatly on their assault. Rita, a key informant, offers a reasonable explanation for survivors may use avoidance tactics.

***Rita (KI):** for quite a few people, they don't actually want to go through all that stuff cause they don't want to kind of re-engage with it in a way that it becomes part of their day-to-day life again.*

Along with the tendency to avoid, participants similarly discussed the ability to deny that the assault even happened. Max alludes to how this happened for him while also showing a connection to the feeling of being hopeless and helpless, which will be discussed further in this chapter. Despite knowing that he had been assaulted while under the influence of alcohol, Max originally attempted to deny this to himself upon waking up in a sober state by attempting to block out thoughts of the assault and continue on as though it had never happened.

***Max (S):** I went to sleep after it happened and woke up when people found me. I knew exactly what had happened, but yeah, I don't know if that's a barrier really. But my mind sort of... didn't really happen in my head. So there was nothing I could do.*

From discussions with participants, there is an awareness that minimisation can often affect survivors' thoughts surrounding reporting. This can occur by an individual downplaying the seriousness of their assault, both to those that question them about it and themselves. In saying this, it was common to hear survivors make comments during interviews indicating that they may still be experiencing denial mechanisms. Survivors often made comparisons, suggesting that their assault was minimal when compared to situations where greater force may have been used. Many of these forms of defence mechanisms may be in part influenced by the other barrier areas present within the individual's life. In the case of denial, many of the participants' comments were often coded in relation to their cognitive mindset.



**Cognitive mindset.** To explain a cognitive mindset, it seems best to refer to ErEl and Meiran's (2011) definition of mindset itself as "a configuration of processing resources that are made available for the task at hand as well as their suitable tuning for carrying it out" (p. 150). This definition can be applied here to refer to the area of an individual's own cognitions or thoughts that they may be having in regards to their assault and what they should do about it. This was an area that a substantial amount of comments were coded under. Interestingly, participants showed that both negative and positive thoughts can contribute to decisions not to report.

A build-up of negative thoughts, such as whether their actions at the time may have instigated the assault or predictions that reporting will only result in a negative outcome, appears to result in an increased tendency to decide not to report to the police. On the other hand, participants also explained how the occurrence of positive thoughts, such as those relating to coping abilities, can lead to a strengthened sense of being able to deal with the assault on their own. This can also result in a decision to not follow through with a report to the police.

The idea of positive and negative thoughts is not as clear-cut as it seems. Participants often referred to the fact that abuse can leave a victim confused as they try to piece together both negative and positive thoughts in their head. Diane, a key informant, explains how this confusion often occurs in relation to questions a survivor may be thinking about.

***Diane (KI):** "Am I being punished?". Just like abuse victims often think they are to blame, "Well. I'm to blame for being gay, so one way of being punished is to be abused".*

This tendency for questions to arise, such as why the assault occurred, what it means, and whether they influenced it in any way, seems to have an impact on many of the other key areas preventing reporting. The relationship that cognitive mindset has on these other areas will be discussed in associated subsequent sections, yet from an overarching viewpoint it is a major area that shares relationships with all four of the barrier themes: personal, social, institutional, and abuse-specific. To add to this, it is interesting to note that survivors often commented in this area more readily than key informants. As key informants may not be survivors of abuse themselves, they could possess less

experience with the thoughts that play out within one's mind after being sexually abused.

**Revisiting.** As discussed within the section on defence mechanisms, it can be seen that survivors often try to avoid having to go back and revisit their assault in any way. Revisiting shares a relationship with the individual's cognitive mindset, as much of this area involves having the thoughts and images of abuse play back in one's mind. This is something that can commonly occur when having to disclose abuse. The idea of having to go to the police station and make a report inherently involves having to think back to the time of the assault and revisit those events. Dean, a survivor, gives an example of how he experienced an episode of revisiting his abuse during a counselling session.

***Dean (S):** They gave us about an hour-long lecture, and passed around a series of photographs... and it was a photograph of a convicted paedophile. It was the look in the eyes of that person that just triggered something off.*

Participants made further comments in this area explaining that even without a report being made, revisiting can often occur through questions asked about the assault during a counselling session. They often stated that going back and thinking about the assault may be necessary in certain counselling paradigms, but this constant revisiting can also lead to an increased risk of being re-traumatised. Discussions showed that survivors may be aware of this and thus refuse to make a report in order to avoid the awakening of thoughts they may have hidden away in their memory about the assault. Dean makes further mention of the way in which revisiting can happen in reference to having been put back into another abusive situation. His comment highlights the detrimental effect for survivors despite any beliefs they may have of being able to handle situations such as this. For Dean, a recent assault he experienced made him revisit the abuse he went through as a child.

***Dean (S):** and thought in my head that "if this [sexual assault] ever happened again, I'd do the normal macho thing and beat the shit out of somebody"... but when it did happen, it took me back to being nine-years-old, and I just froze.*

**Knowledge.** Another commonly discussed area was that of a lack of knowledge. This area pertained to knowledge of sexual relations, lack of information available on sexual assault and what to do if you have been assaulted, a lack of understanding the expertise of support workers, as well as a lack in understanding of the body's involuntary physical responses to unwanted sexual touch.

Many comments were made regarding inexperience about sexual relations. The comments reflected the belief that within the queer community, there is little emphasis placed on trying to communicate relationship skills among its members. Rather, there seemed to be a consensus that being queer often associates a great deal with sexuality and being sexual, and that sex-related discussions are not often being made outside of aspects of the physical act of sex itself. This non-understanding of the workings of good and healthy sexual relationships can lead those that are being abused to misunderstand what exactly is going on, leading them to think abusive sex acts are something that is normal for queer-identified men. They may see these sexually abusive acts as simply 'rough sex' and could thus feel that they do not need to be reported. This also gives way to the possibility that abusers may be aware of this and could therefore target inexperienced individuals in hopes that they may not see the truly abusive nature of the activities they are being coerced into engaging in.

A lack of information regarding sexual assault and what to do if you are a victim of assault was brought up in the dialogues of all participants. Gary, a key informant, helps to show that not only is information regarding sexual assault on gay or bisexual men seemingly not present within brochures or publications, it is also lacking on the internet.

***Gary (KI):** I mean even if you go to a website, you know... sexual assault, same-sex assault; it's not easy to find when you're looking for a website.*

Information also appears to be deficient regarding the level of expertise individuals who may be able to offer support to this group have pertaining to their own unique needs. This was shown within discussions to often lead survivors to believe that nobody is really there to help them.

**Rita (KI):** *You know, if you've had no previous dealings with the police... then I don't think that people [survivors] actually really know... you know, what training the police have had, whether they've got, uh... that there's this liaison person I think apparently at the moment.*

Finally, both a key informant and a survivor discussed the difficulty in understanding how the body may respond by way of an erection in response to the stimulus of sexual touch, despite this touch being unwanted. This is important to make note of as it shows a relation to aspects of fear, guilt, myths, confusion about sexuality, and many others that could lead to a report being avoided. It can also have increased function as a barrier for youth as many of the areas it ties into function more strongly in younger survivors.

**Emotions.** The influence of emotions was another highly discussed area in regards to barriers. This barrier area relates to the many emotions survivors may experience, both during and after an assault. Many of the negative emotions experienced by sexual assault survivors could lead to reluctance to report. These emotions fall into four main subcategories: shame/embarrassment/humiliation, blame/guilt, hopelessness/helplessness, and fear.

The subcategory of shame/embarrassment/humiliation is one that shares a relationship with the area of cognitive mindset. It seems as though the negative emotions within this category can easily relate to the detrimental thoughts a survivor may be having. Diane gives an explanation of the nature of this subcategory.

**Diane (KI):** *They're already probably feeling stigmatised and a higher level of shame, arguably, than some other sexual abuse victims. And so, it's an internal barrier that they would have to surmount perhaps, more than a societal barrier.*

Blame/Guilt was also seen to share a relationship with cognitive mindset, and this was discussed in one of the comments made by Geoff, a key informant.

**Geoff (KI):** *They're not sure. They know it's not right, but then they think that they're just as guilty because they let it happen.*

In addition, Geoff's comment highlights the fact that the guilt many survivors may feel from letting the assault happen can be related to a lack of knowledge about how to properly say no to sexual activities they may feel uncomfortable with.

The subcategory of hopelessness and helplessness was often discussed by participants. Statements in this subcategory referred to general overall feelings that help is unavailable, both from the police and service providers, leading survivors to feel that there is no point in making a report. The realisation of this may be an important area to examine in regards to methods of reducing present barriers.

The fourth subcategory, fear, was discussed by all of the participants regarding an internalised feeling of fright pertaining to many different areas.

***Diane (KI):** Sexual abuse victims, I mean any victim, a victim of violence or whatever... they're traumatised, they're frightened, they're afraid they're going to be further victimised; so what do you do?*

**Privacy/Confidentiality.** Issues surrounding privacy and confidentiality garnered a fair amount of discussion within interviews. Statements in this area fell into two categories: those in relation to the assault itself, and those focused more on the sexual orientation of the survivor.

Max gives an account of how a survivor may choose to keep details of his victimisation private from others.

***Max (S):** Like they [the police] interviewed me the day before I got my job. So that was quite lucky, because I wouldn't exactly feel comfortable about telling my boss about how I needed to go down to the police station. I mean, I would now, but at that time...*

From Max's statement, it can be seen that aspects of privacy and confidentiality can be related to the negative experiences of shame and guilt. This was something that was not evident in all the participants' accounts, but such relationships are clearly seen within the statement made by Max.

A similar need for privacy was found in regards to sexual orientation. Discussions showed that many survivors choosing to report may not reveal their

orientation despite any standardised procedure for obtaining this information by the police. Coupled with a lack of information in areas such as police processes, it can be seen that survivors may choose not to report for fear of having their sexual orientation made public. Helen, a key informant, highlights this unwillingness to disclose in one of her statements. Such a lack of disclosure would lead police to under-represent the proportion of sexual crimes being committed against gay and bisexual men.

***Helen (KI):** that actually, you're going to be outing yourself if you start talking about this; and that may be something you're not prepared to do for a whole range of reasons. Or you may be out in some parts of your life, but you don't necessarily want to be out everywhere.*

Reasons for not wanting to disclose orientation may also cross over into social aspects, such as a fear of homophobic reactions or inadequate responses due to a poor level of understanding of sexuality issues. In addition, victims may still be 'in the closet' about their sexual identity, so reporting may very well be detrimental to them, particularly if they are in a heterosexual relationship in which their wife/partner may be unaware of sexual activities they are engaging in with men.

**Past experience.** The impact of past experiences on reporting decisions was discussed by all but one of the participants. In general, comments were either based on negative experiences survivors may have gone through in the past, such as poor responses when previously reporting abuse or disclosing their sexual orientation, or a complete lack of experience.

Helen mentions the common occurrence of past negative experiences arising within New Zealand culture.

***Helen (KI):** It's pretty much universally coming up actually. And I think that, um... some of the research that's been done in New Zealand as well has suggested that early sexual experiences for queer men are often far from ideal.*

Adding to this, it is interesting to note that discussions in this area tended to come more from key informants than survivors. Taking Helen's remark on the topic into account, it could be the case that survivors may not fully understand the impact a past negative experience could have on their decision not to report. Interview comments highlight that some of these negative experiences may be related to prior dealing with the police, thus further contributing as a barrier to wanting to go to the police to report a sexual assault.

Looking at the impact of a lack of past experiences, the majority of comments made within this subsection shared relationships with both cognitive mindset and youth. Hemi, a survivor, highlights the way in which his lack of experience in his youth led to naivety, affecting the way in which he viewed his abuse.

***Hemi (S):** I didn't really think it was wrong to, you know, be playing with other guys. You know? I just thought it was a natural thing for society.*

In Hemi's case, his inexperience and innocence during childhood, most likely during the formative stages of his sexual identity, led him to start thinking of the sexual activity he was partaking in as one that may be normal for those that identify as gay. His lack of experience, both in sexual practice as well as in knowledge of sexuality, would have contributed to his inability to identify what was happening to him as abusive. Discussions here highlight the ability for inexperience to contribute to a decreased likelihood of reporting to the police.

**Mental health.** Aspects of mental health were discussed by all but two of the key informants. Discussions within this area slightly touched on survivors' mental health at the time of the assault, yet the majority of the discussion tended to focus on mental health after the impact of the sexual assault. Again, a large proportion of the statements here were also related to the cognitive mindset.

It was common within the interviews to hear about the likelihood of mental health getting progressively worse for survivors after the occurrence of sexual assault. Many of the statements made highlighted the fact that poor mental health, by way of depression and post-traumatic stress, for example, contributes to decreased desire within survivors to turn to the police. A statement made by

Hemi helps to further highlight the gravity of mental illness as a barrier to reporting. His statement shows how his mental health deteriorated over time after having decided not to go to the police or seek out counselling services.

***Hemi (S):*** *So I was keeping a victim all shut-up in me. So from then, I think everything just started to build up, build up, before it really exploded in (date omitted). In (date omitted) I tried killing myself... attempted suicide many, many times.*

Hemi further disclosed that he had been diagnosed with depression and been given medication to help alleviate the symptoms he was experiencing. In his case, the onset of depression after his assault had likely contributed to the suicide attempts. From statements like Hemi's, it can be seen that once mental health takes a turn for the worst, the thought of making a report to the police may cause increased stress, resulting in an even more diminished level of mental health. On the other hand, a decision to report may be empowering to some survivors, allowing for them to confront their issues and thus possibly alleviate some of the symptoms they are experiencing.

With this being said, Rita provides a statement from her view as a counsellor.

***Rita (KI):*** *Sometimes people might come for counselling where sexual abuse has been part of their life but not the issue that they have come with, and all of that.*

This statement shows that issues may often be given different rankings of importance by a survivor. When experiencing mental health concerns the focus could very well be shifted to trying to alleviate any problems such as depression through counselling and medication, leaving reporting to police lower on the scale of importance until the survivor's mental health has gotten better.

**Summary.** The aspect of barriers of a personal nature was a commonly discussed theme. Within this theme, eight subareas resulted. The first subarea, defence mechanisms, included comments pertaining to the ways that survivors may avoid thinking about their assault. This can be seen to be related to the second subarea, cognitive mindset, in which the negative thoughts being



experienced by a survivor can play a role in reporting. Interviews showed the effect that revisiting the assault in a survivor's mind can have in causing them to experience trauma, and feel less comfortable in making a report to police. The lack of knowledge available to survivors was also often brought up in this theme of barriers. Experiencing detrimental internal emotions were mentioned throughout all interviews and seem to share a strong relationship with the area of cognitive mindset. Many participants disclosed the ways in which the maintenance of privacy and confidentiality was an important factor, leading to the possibility of reports being avoided if perceptions are that this not being maintained. The negative past experiences of survivors, as well as the influence of having had no experience, was also seen to pose as a barrier to reporting. Finally, discussions brought forth the influence of mental health on tendencies to report, with many respondents indicating that the tendency for mental health to decline after the assault may lead to decreased frequencies in reporting. Overall, this theme was very often discussed in all aspects by all participants, making it the second most talked about area in regards to the barriers in reporting.

### **Social Barriers**

Illustrated below (Figure 3) are the key social barriers along with their associated subareas. This theme pertains to those areas associated with societal aspects and influences, and includes the barrier areas of family, queer community, support, culture and religion, homosexuality and gender, myths, judgement, homophobia and prejudice, and location and environment. The social theme was found to be the most talked about theme, as it had substantially more comments made by participants than any of the others. A crossover between influences of barrier areas in this theme and those within the other themes was also found, showing that the social context may have certain impacts over many of these other areas. Explanations for each key area and relationships are discussed below.

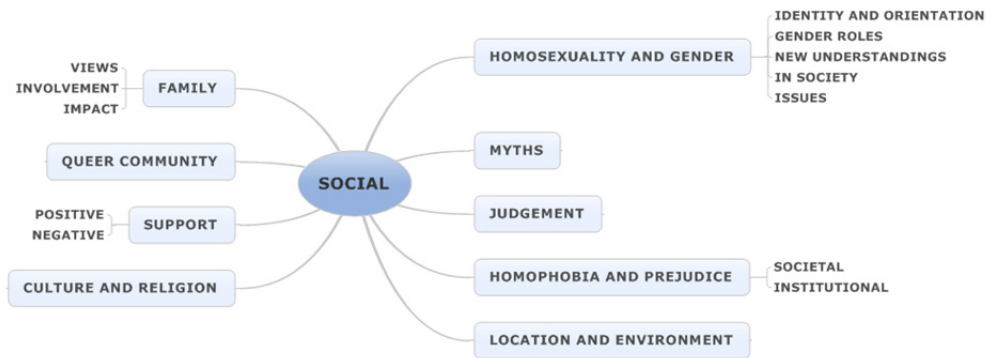


Figure 3. Overview of barrier areas within the social theme.

**Family.** Regarding aspects of family, comments generally fell into the subcategories of the family’s views, their involvement with the abuse, and the impact the abuse has or could have on the family.

The views held by family members related to various areas such as those based on the survivors’ sexual orientation, their views of the nature of the assault, as well as their own personal perceptions of the police. Rangi, a survivor, provides a comment relating to the views held by his family.

**Rangi (S):** *So I grew up in a generation where you never talked about sex in the house.*

Beyond this comment, Rangi explained how his mother had begun to question him more and become increasingly involved in trying to understand aspects of his sexuality in recent times. Comparing his comment about how things used to be for him to the way things are now, it shows how a cultural shift may be present in the way that families within society today view and discuss sex and sexuality. Rangi makes light of this by detailing the fact that during the time of his abuse, the lack of familial discussions about sex would have blocked him from bringing up his abuse with members of the family. Max provides additional commentary regarding the views of the family.

**Max (S):** *But definitely if a child has grown up in a family that has a history with violence or something, where the cops have been advocated by their parents as a negative thing, they would definitely have some pauses when going to the cops.*

Max suggests that the family's negative views towards police can carry down to children, thus giving them reservations in making a report, as well as the possibility that their parents could further discourage such a notion.

This discouragement ties in nicely with discussion of the family's involvement. In general, there were many more comments made in this area by survivors than those of key informants, possibly due to their own experiences with their families. Hemi makes mention of the difficulties present when involving family.

**Hemi (S):** *Even though her [his mother] and I are closer than my father, um... I just felt that I couldn't really communicate with my mother that well.*

Survivors may often be aware of the negative consequences of involving the family, such as receiving poor support and decreased communication from them due to their judgements. Because of this, they may be hesitant to disclose the abuse due to any negative impacts that could arise. Rangi comments on this, emphasising his worry over such negative impacts while also giving an indication as to the way in which they can continue to affect a survivor in later stages of life. His commentary helps to highlight the way that abusers can often use the family to manipulate victims into being fearful of making a report to police.

**Rangi (S):** *Because he always told me as a kid, if anybody found out... that I would lose mum. And even at this age... I still think that's going to happen. It's weird. I don't know. It's a bit whacked-out eh?*

**Queer community.** Another area often discussed within interviews was that of the queer community. This was a particularly interesting area as there were many comments made pertaining to a lack of activism in reporting assaults within the queer community.

**Gary (KI):** *Same-sex sexual assault is seemingly more dangerous, and within our community... so that's outside our community, within the community it's not mentioned because if we mention it, it will give us a bad name.*

Comments like Gary's highlight the fact that members of the queer community are aware of society's prejudices and judgments and may be wary of making mention of abuse in fear that it would further exacerbate the negativity already experienced by some. This shift in focusing involvements away from the addressing of assault within the queer community was also highlighted by Max. His comment should not be taken as one that denigrates the queer community, but rather as one that shows a current problem being raised by participants.

**Max (S):** *the gay community is pretty lazy when it comes to activism... a lot of it is just fucking around in the gay community, literally.*

There was also a great deal of discussion that focused on the relatively small size of the queer community within New Zealand. When comparing the size of our queer community here to those of larger cities, such as San Francisco, Toronto, and Berlin, we can begin to get a sense of how a disclosure of assault within New Zealand may have a higher likelihood of being spread among those within the community. This general worry of having others learn about the assault within the queer community was further discussed as one of the ways that the queer community can function as a barrier in reporting assaults to the police.

**Helen (KI):** *And most often with things like this, people take sides, so you may be risking the ability to be connected into other queer people... or you'd most certainly be worried that you're risking that whether or not you are.*

Helen's comment is particularly relevant to young survivors just beginning to form connections within the queer community. Additionally, if such a disclosure could lead to a risk of being alienated from the queer community, this could result in a fear of disruption of sexual identity in youth who are only in the beginning stages of its formation.

**Support.** Support was another interesting area brought up by all the participants interviewed. A support system containing negative traits, such as a tendency to criticise or exhibit hostility when offering support, can lead to a decreased likelihood of reporting, yet comments within the area of support also showed that a tendency not to report may exist for some survivors who receive a great deal of positive support from their support systems.

Beginning with the more obvious of the two, there were many comments made that showed how negative, and thus unhelpful, support can lead to non-reporting. A relationship between negative support and cognitive mindset was found, indicating that the receiving of negative support could very well contribute to the negative thoughts survivors are having. This can push them even further away from deciding to report to the police. Geoff explains how this may result in the case where a survivor may pose a ‘what if’ question to a friend, seeking to keep their own identity as the abuse victim concealed.

***Geoff (KI):** depending on the response of the friend... if it's the wrong response, they'll clam up. They won't go down that thing [referring to reporting], and usually nothing will be said.*

Contrasting this, participants also touched on the idea that receiving positive support can lead survivors not to go to the police as well. Much of this has to do with the increased strength they may feel within themselves by the support received from those close to them. Comments indicated that some survivors may simply want to talk about the assault with a friend for a sense of comfort and to get it ‘off their chest’. Participants explained that by doing this, they may experience relief from the negativity they could be internally feeling, in turn leading them to believe that they would be better off just to move on rather than report the assault to the police. For some survivors, the receiving of support from close friends or counsellors may be all that they are looking for. In addition, the individuals providing this support to survivors may hold their own biases, such as believing the police will not be able to do anything, and these may come through within the comments they pass down when offering their support to survivors.

**Culture and religion.** Comments from interviews reflected the nature of culture and religion being positioned as a barrier to reporting. As individuals interviewed for this study were all from New Zealand, many of the comments reflected aspects of culture and religion with specific reference to those that affect Māori. All of the participants interviewed included some sort of commentary on how the cultural and religious identifications of a survivor can play a key role in their decision not to report.

***Dean (S):** This bullshit... you know. Rugby, racing, and fricken beer. You know? Be a man and harden up. It may have served well in the sixties, but come on!*

Dean's commentary refers to aspects of the 'Kiwi Bloke'. This refers to the stereotypical portrayals of New Zealand men as the strong but silent type, asserting their masculinity through activities such as drinking beer, watching rugby, and partaking in do-it-yourself projects (Law, Campbell, & Schick, 1999; Phillips, 1996; Worth, Paris, & Allen, 2002). The presence of this 'Kiwi Bloke' culture within New Zealand can lead survivors into thinking that they need to toughen up and deal with their abuse on their own, rather than report it to the police. It shares some similarities with the area of gender roles, as choosing to report to the police may go against society's norms of what it means to be a man.

The impact of being Māori was also discussed in interviews. Two of the survivors identified as Māori and provided information regarding the difficulties of disclosing assault within their cultural community and being respected and welcomed on to the marae, the enclosed space of land positioned in front of Māori meeting houses (Durie, 1999). Their comments showed that the negativity experienced from their whānau, the larger Māori family collectives (Cram & Kennedy, 2010), could pose as a barrier to going to the police. Having worked with many Māori male survivors, Geoff provides his experience of this impact.

***Geoff (KI):** There's still the warrior with the Māori. There are a lot of gay Māori men, and they are being accepted, but I know ones that I've worked with... who their family still can't accept it. They're slowly going to, but it's a long way down the track. Um, and because of that, because they were gay... the sexual abuse that happened to them was written-off.*

The role of religion was also brought up by some of the participants interviewed. Religion was seen to act as a barrier for male survivors who would identify as being religious. As a religious male survivor, Hemi gives his view on the impact of religion, and the fears that may be present surrounding the idea of disclosing and reporting abuse to the police.

**Hemi (S):** *For people that are really religious, who I know, especially being Mormon... who I know have been sexually abused, will not say anything because they're afraid of being excommunicated from the church and being kicked out.*

**Homosexuality and gender.** Overall, there was a large amount of comments made by all participants in the area of homosexuality and gender. These comments fell into the categories of identity and orientation, gender roles, new understandings, in society, and issues. The subcategory of identity and orientation yielded the largest amount of commentary.

All participants made reference within interview discussions of the ways in which identity and orientation can be a factor contributing to resistance in reporting to the police. Many of the comments in this area were in reference to difficulties that can be present for individuals who have yet to establish grounded sexual identities and orientations, particularly for young survivors. This can also be related to fears they may have about being judged along with the confusion they may be experiencing with the abuse itself. Helen comments on this, relating to the way survivors may be thinking.

**Helen (KI):** *"If I go and talk to the police about this everyone's going to know that I'm gay, and actually, I'm only fifteen, and I'm not sure yet if I'm gay or not and maybe all sex with men is like that".*

The impact of gender roles and the expectations associated with them was seen within comments made by Andy, a key informant. His comments help to show the thoughts that some survivors may be experiencing when society's opinions towards gender come into play.

**Andy (KI):** *Two men... I mean like, you know, "I'm a man so therefore I should be able to take care of myself. How could I be assaulted by someone else sexually, whether it be female or male assaulting me?"*

It was interesting to see that all except for one key informant commented on the ways in which societal understandings of identity and orientation are a relatively recent development in regards to homosexuality. Their comments highlighted a societal shift, such as with the advent of mobile phone apps such as Grindr (Nearby Buddy Finder LLC, 2013), allowing men to easily connect and explore sex and sexuality with other men in a different way than past generations. Participants commented that these apps tend to result in less attention being given to words of warning from others within their community in regards to individuals to be wary about. Society's increased focus on same-sex issues was discussed as something that may still have its own complications due to its relative recent unfolding in society.

Comments extend from the recent developments of identity and orientation through to the ways in which society perceives this. Participants described ways in which the knowledge that members of society may have about gay and bisexual men may be more in the ways of their sexual behaviours. The ways that society may perceive these men could potentially lead to dismissal of their issues, ranking them lower on a scale of importance due to preconceived judgements.

Within this category of issues, participants discussed the ways in which homophobic attacks, along with the physical and verbal abuse of gay men, can tend to be under-reported. Much of their speculations inferred that this could be caused by survivors' unwillingness to disclose their orientation to police if they end up attempting to make a report. Diane's comment highlights one of the issues survivors can experience in this area.

**Diane (KI):** *They may carry their homosexuality with them as kind of a scarlet letter and assume that their sexual identity will be noted and challenged and make everything even worse.*



**Myths.** The many myths held by society surrounding the sexual abuse of gay and bisexual men were often a focus of interview discussion. Some of the myths described involved a fear of survivors becoming abusers in the future, a worry that they may have done something to cause the abuse, beliefs that men cannot be sexually assaulted, beliefs that gay men would never say no to sexual activity, and the belief that they may have been abused because they were gay or that the abuse itself may have made them become gay. The following statements from participants help to highlight many of the general myths entrenched within society.

Helen's comment reflects the myth that gay and bisexual men are always seeking sex, and that these men would never say no to any sexual encounters.

***Helen (KI):** I think there's an awful lot of queer-identified men who don't know how to say no to being sexual, who think that... who think that it's part of being a queer man to want to have sex all the time.*

Within Diane's comment relating to the thoughts survivors may experience after abuse, the myth of sexual orientation being the causal factor for the abuse is seen.

***Diane (KI):** Or even sort of on an unconscious level, "was I molested because I'm gay?"*

Dean's comment helps to show the guilt survivors may experience by way of societal myths that men frequenting certain locations known for homosexual activities, such as gay clubs and cruising locations, are deserving of the abuse they received. Such a myth in society would lead to decreased sympathy for gay and bisexual survivors and expresses a relation to homophobia and prejudice.

***Dean (S):** But again, nothing ever gets reported because of that perception that you're in the wrong place at the wrong time and deserved what you got.*

Gary's comment shows that societal myths surrounding homosexuality and homosexual behaviour can be present. These myths may allow police and service providers to minimise the seriousness of reports from gay and bisexual men.

**Gary (KI):** *So turning it into a norm that, you know, gay people are kinkier, for instance, is quite a common thing.*

Finally, Geoff highlights the myth that victims of sexual abuse may become perpetrators themselves, while offering his view of how the improper use of statistical information, such as when placed in improper contexts, can contribute to the perpetuation of this myth.

**Geoff (KI):** *And when we get some of our major top people in the police and that actually putting stats out, which are offender based stats, saying “there’s a very high...”, something like “forty-percent of our group turn into offenders”, who wants to say that they’ve been sexually abused? And our kids are picking this up too, because “everyone’s going to think that I’m going to become an abuser”.*

With these myths being ever-present in all aspects of society, awareness is raised that survivors would be conscious of this and could feel that a reporting decision might be subjected to the varying effects of these myths. Overall, there was a general perception that survivors may fear that police themselves would exhibit all of these myths towards them if they were to make a report.

**Judgement.** Participants, particularly survivors, discussed the way that fear of being subjected to judgements of society can function as a barrier. One comment from a survivor, pertaining to how he experienced a feeling of judgement, was made in regards to his experience of disclosing his assault to a sexual health clinic worker.

**Max (S):** *And it felt like they [sexual health workers] were suggesting I was quite sexually active, which I found quite offensive.*

A strong relationship was found between the area of judgements and that of identity and orientation, as the majority of comments related to worries about being judged based on their sexual orientation. There was also mention made of the fact that many youth may be inexperienced in dealing with individual judgements, thus being more reluctant in making a report for fear of being judged.

**Hemi (S):** *Being judged for who they are. I mean no one's perfect [pause]. No one's perfect. And yeah, we all make mistakes, but that's part of life.*

Hemi's comment not only shows that survivors can fear being judged for their identity and sexual activity choices, but it also alludes to the fact that judgements can be made in regards to other issues such as having been drunk at the time of the assault or being in a sexualised environment. These issues will be discussed within further sections of this chapter.

**Homophobia and prejudice.** Issues surrounding the effects of homophobia and prejudice were one of the more prominently discussed areas within all interviews. The majority of comments in this area did not go into great depth other than to say that homophobia and prejudice is one of the most common factors affecting reporting decisions. Discussions broke down into two subcategories: those relating to societal homophobia and prejudices, and those within institutions such as the police force.

Dean provides a good account on perceptions of society's homophobia and the effects it can have on survivors.

**Dean (S):** *We are predominantly a white upper to middle class Christian society, which homosexuality or same-sex relationships is frowned upon. I grew up in the era of "look at the dirty faggot!", and without even knowing the person, there was an instant dislike for them. Yet I grew up in the paradox of accusing other people, and yet trying to hide my own past, so...*

Despite society's current shift towards acceptance and understanding of homosexuality, Diane gives an account of contradictions that are still present.

**Diane (KI):** *There's a huge ambivalence. You know, on the one hand, there's this rather wonderful acceptance on some levels, and on the other hand, there's all this gay bashing and ambivalence, and kind of the whole religious thing. And the homophobia for certain is especially prevalent, probably more so in the lower classes.*

The discussions surrounding institutional homophobia were most often made by key informants rather than survivors. The reasoning for this could be

that survivors may have little experience with institutions such as the police force, and thus be less aware of the internal homophobias and prejudices within these organisations.

**Geoff (KI):** *And so if a gay guy's been sexually abused... who's, you know... the public aren't going to be too worried because they'd probably think he's asked for it, and the police are more likely to take the side of the public.*

This comment by Geoff shows the way in which members of institutions may be influenced by society's homophobia and prejudices, leading them to exhibit these traits within themselves when dealing with gay or bisexual male survivors. It is important to remember that with all the responsibilities the police may have, there is still the presence of homophobic police officers, as was confirmed by those key informants within the study having a background in policing. This may be something that is on the decrease, yet survivors can be fearful of encountering a homophobic officer and the response they would receive from them if they choose to go to the police station and make a report.

**Location and environment.** The location and environment of the society a survivor is immersed in was another area that was a focus of participant discussions. One of the ways in which this was discussed was in regards to survivors who live in remote or rural areas.

**Diane (KI):** *A lot of New Zealand is rural, and they just don't have any way to... to cope with this. You know? They don't have much exposure. They haven't had much discussion.*

This lack of support within rural communities could lead survivors to believe that there is little support within their society, leading to feelings that nothing would be done if they chose to make a report. These negative feelings regarding location were also evident for those survivors that were assaulted within locations known for sexual activity. Dean provides commentary on the perceptions surrounding assaults occurring in sexualised environments.

**Dean (S):** *Again, people I know have been assaulted in well-known cruising locations... which they still exist in Auckland. And yeah, being a known... for a better term, being a known gay person to be assaulted in a well-known cruising location, whether you were there to pick-up or not, the perception is that you were there to find something. And the redneck attitude that prevails says "you got what you deserved".*

It can be seen that society's perceptions can extend to the location and environment that the survivor is in. These perceptions were evident within discussions, as many of the participants reported that their known frequenting of these environments could lead to minimisation of the seriousness of the assault by police. This may lead survivors to report less readily if they commonly attend sexualised locations rather than more neutral environments in which police may have a lesser amount of prejudiced opinions.

**Summary.** The social theme in barriers to reporting was the theme to which most of the participants' interview comments related. This theme consisted of nine individual subareas. The first subarea, family, was a largely discussed area in which participant comments focused on the ways that family can have an impact on reporting decisions. The queer community was a lesser discussed area, yet interview comments described many of the ways in which the queer community can influence and play a role in deciding not to go to the police, such as by feeling that such a decision would result in alienation from the community. Participants also made discussions of the ways in which both negative and positive support can impact on an individual's thoughts towards making a report. Many of the comments made in interviews also revealed the ways that culture and religion could influence a survivor's way of thinking about the assault and reporting. The issues surrounding homosexuality and gender were the most talked about area within this theme, with the greatest focus being placed on the role of identity and orientation. A great number of societal myths were raised in conversations as well, with explanations as to how these myths can get in the way of the decision to report to police. Participants also commonly discussed the way in which a fear of being judged is an important area within this theme. This judgement can be seen to relate with the subarea of homophobia and prejudice as well. Lastly, discussions also included comments on how a survivor's location

and environment can influence their choice in reporting. The many comments made within the social theme not only make this the most commonly discussed theme, but also show several of the ways that the key areas within the social theme can have an influence on many of the areas within the other themes as well.

### Institutional Barriers

Another theme emerging from the interviews is that of institutional factors. Areas in this theme pertained to institutional factors such as courts, counselling services, and the police. The key areas identified included: poor responses, services and counselling, cons to reporting, the law, court dynamics, limitations, and police. The following diagram (Figure 4) shows these key areas in relation to associated subareas. In general, the institutional theme yielded the least amount of commentary out of all four of the main themes identified. When discussing barriers, participants focused more on discussing areas outside of the institutional arena. This may be due to minimal experiences and understandings within institutional areas. This section provides further explanations of the key areas and identified connections.



Figure 4. Overview of barrier areas within the institutional theme.

**Poor responses.** Within interviews, many participants brought up the fact that poor responses can have an impact on a survivor's reporting decision. The majority of these comments were in relation to poor police responses, yet some

participants briefly touched on the ways that service providers, such as counsellors, may also respond poorly to cases of sexual assault. These comments were made in regards to historically poor responses as well as poor responses directly received by individuals. In the case of historically poor responses, this refers to those responses having taken place in the past. Prior dealings with counsellors or the police can be seen as examples of these types of responses. Poor past responses within the community, such as police raids of gay venues, can also serve as barriers in this area, particularly if a survivor is aware of any negative effects they may have had on other individuals.

Andy provided a good description that helps to show how historically poor responses that are anecdotal can hinder an individual's decision to report. His explanation also alludes to how this area ties in with those under the social theme.

***Andy (KI):** Yeah, I mean it gets down to stories that they've heard from other people. You know... the collective 'they'. So they see the police as a whole unit of homophobes, you know, because a friend, or a friend of a friend of theirs, thirty years ago had something happen and that's it. So there's all that anecdotal stuff that would prevent people from coming forwards for sure.*

These historical events are ones that survivors may not have necessarily been a part of, but would still have an impact on them by the ways in which they can relate to it. A relationship was found between comments made here and those made regarding new understandings. Participants made mention of the fact that in the past, homosexual activity was illegal. Because of this, many past actions such as police arresting and charging individuals based on their homosexual activities could contribute to an individual's psyche.

Comments regarding individual poor responses reflected experiences that were more recent and direct for survivors. An example of this was given by Helen, who heard of a case in which a survivor was told by police that he actually deserved the abuse. Hemi provided an emotionally charged account of his feelings towards poor police responses such as this based on the experiences of friends of his that were sexually abused. His account also emphasises his own lack of trust in the way police handle reports. This lack of trust in the police based on poor responses was often discussed by many of the participants.

**Hemi (S):** *So I don't have that kind of strong faith and trust in the New Zealand Police, because I've seen the way that they have handled some of the cases and basically said "oh well, this person was asking for it"; which really pisses me off big time, because no one's asked for it! You know? Why aren't you guys listening to people that have been in that particular area?*

**Services and counselling.** In the area of services and counselling, participants made mention of many of the reasons why they may or may not choose to go and seek counselling for abuse. Counselling itself may not specifically be seen as a barrier, yet there are some specifics that will be discussed within the limitation area of this section that would be affected by a decision to seek counselling. In this area, the focus was more on the decision to seek counselling itself.

Max said that he first sought out counselling to see whether the sexual assault did any damage to him. He goes on to conclude that counselling allowed for him to come to the realisation that he may not have been as damaged by the assault as he originally thought. The benefits of going to a counselling service in which there is a shared understanding existing between survivors and service provider was also mentioned by survivors.

**Dean (S):** *It was easier to tell him because he revealed quite a lot of his own story, and instantly said to me that "this gentleman has been there and done that, and knows the sort of mental state that you go through".*

With these benefits being evident, the purpose of counselling is to address the survivor's individual mental well-being, and discussions on reporting were often not brought up by therapists. Geoff commented on this by giving an example where he had once suggested to a client that he should report to the police. This resulted in the client cutting ties with the service for approximately three-months, leading Geoff to refrain from pressing the issue of reporting in future discussions with survivors, unless they were to bring it up in conversation themselves.

From the comments made regarding reasons for not making use of services and counselling, a relationship between gender roles and societal myths appeared to emerge. Often, participants reported that counselling was not



perceived by men to be along the lines of a natural path to take. Discussion was also made highlighting the fact that counselling services may be based more around the needs of women, thus unable to fully understand the differences present for gay and bisexual men.

From his previous experience with a counsellor in his youth, Rangi explains why he decided to put off going to counselling until further issues emerged in his adult life. His account also highlights the ways in which counsellors may express societal myths about abuse to their clients.

**Rangi (S):** *I did try to seek out counselling when I was twenty, but the, uh... counsellor sort of just put me off because he basically told me that “people who are abused and gay, can potentially end up being paedophiles”.*

**Cons to reporting.** Within the cons to reporting area of the institutional theme, a limited amount of commentary was made by participants. The discussions here helped to show how reporting to the police could possibly make things worse for some survivors.

**Rita (KI):** *Well, I think that personally, that people surely can't get away with that stuff, you know? But then, on the other hand, you have to weigh up the impact that it has on... on the victim.*

**Diane (KI):** *And you know; you have to understand that I'm sure that there are some people who are even harmed more by reporting than not reporting.*

These comments suggest the possibility that a reporting decision may be detrimental to some survivors, yet they do not explain what, if any, benefits would result from deciding not to report. This may lead survivors to veer away from making a report, and shares a relationship with the area of avoidance.

For some survivors, their intentions may be focused on areas outside of those regarding apprehending the perpetrator. Andy makes a well stated comment on how motivation for reporting is important to consider. His comment helps to highlight the fact that for some survivors, a forced method of reporting could very well be damaging if it is not in line with their intentions.

***Andy (KI):** Yeah... um, maybe they do get support from just saying it out loud to another person. So maybe that just helps, because again, you need to look at their intention on reporting. Do they want to punish? Do they just want to offload? Or do they want to prevent someone else from going through the same thing? So it all depends on the motivation on why they would report.*

**The law.** Discussions surrounding the role of the law were made by all participants. These discussions can be broken down into three areas: no understanding of the law, the role of the law, and issues with the law.

Most of the key informants made mention of the various ways in which survivors may be unaware of the law and how well they are covered under the law within their discussions. Key informants highlighted the large percentage of survivors they have worked with that were uninformed of how protected they are under the law. The lack of knowledge in this area would likely lead to an avoidance of police reporting. Gary highlights the ways in which queer-identified youth, in particular, may be unaware of the law and how this can influence their thinking.

***Gary (KI):** Basically, they're not out and suddenly the case becomes something to talk about in the paper, or... you know? People think movie... like basically, movie style scenarios go up in their head. They don't really understand how the system works either. They don't understand what kind of help they can get, naturally because they're in crisis.*

Within the subarea of the role of the law, comments focused more exclusively on what exactly is involved within the law and reporting. Diane explained that reporting to the police would involve a legal expectation that if a crime has occurred, it would result in charges being laid, and it would be taken to court. This may be something survivors may have mixed feelings about. Andy highlights the fact that in certain cases, survivors may become hesitant on going forward upon making an initial report and thus choose to go back on their original decision. In cases like this, he states that there is still a chance that the police would go forward with it regardless of the fact a survivor may have changed their mind. This could be something survivors would be hesitant about, leading them to think twice about making an initial report to police. Such a relationship was found between the role of the law and the areas of cognitive mindset and court

procedures.

To add to this, issues within the law itself also pose as a barrier to reporting. Helen describes how definitions within the law, such as the way rape is defined, may be more heteronormative and thus exclude those individuals who identify as gay or bisexual. This is clearly evident in terms of the wording pertaining to rape within the New Zealand Crimes Act (1961), particularly under section 128(2). This section currently reads that “Person A rapes person B if person A has sexual connection with person B, effected by the penetration of person B’s genitalia by person A’s penis”. Genitalia is defined within the Act to include “a surgically constructed or reconstructed organ analogous to naturally occurring male or female genitalia”. This wording of genitalia is made in reference to the sexual organs of the penis and vagina, failing to include the anus as a part of genitalia as it does not function as a reproductive sex organ. It can be seen that the interpretation of how rape is defined under section 128(2) of this act is gendered in its nature of referring to rape as an act committed by a man on a woman, and thus excludes both male-on-male sexual assaults and those perpetrated by women on men within its definition of what constitutes rape (Wellington Community Law Centre, 2011). Male-on-male sexual assault is clearly covered within the act under the definition of unlawful sexual connection, yet the lack of inclusion within the legal definition of rape could very well make many survivors feel as though they are unable to have their assault seen in a way that would have as much gravity as that of rape within legal contexts.

Rita explained further barriers surrounding how cases are handled by the New Zealand courts and how judicial processes within New Zealand show differences when compared to those seen elsewhere, such as in the United States. Rather than survivors hiring their own lawyers in cases of sexual abuse taken to court in New Zealand, cases are normally seen as community concerns and are thus put on trial by an appointed prosecutor who works on behalf of the Crown, police and the public (Ministry of Justice, 2010).

**Rita (KI):** *So people do not actually have legal representation themselves. They can’t choose to say, “Well actually, I want that lawyer to represent me”.*

Rita also mentioned that survivors may take on the role of a witness within their court cases. These legal issues arising in court whereby a survivor would be seen and referred to as a witness for the Crown (Ministry of Justice, 2010), rather than a victim, may allow survivors to feel that the focus is taken away from their own victimisation. Comments show that issues such as these within New Zealand law would easily result in a decreased likelihood of following through with a report.

**Court dynamics.** Along with discussions of the law, participants discussed aspects of court dynamics.

***Rita (KI):** You know, when someone pleads guilty, which is not that likely... if the offender pleads guilty, that's fine; it's reasonably straightforward. If they don't plead guilty, then you would have to kind of give evidence and be cross examined and all that stuff.*

Rita's discussion highlights many of the ways in which court processes themselves can act as barriers. Not only does she bring up the fact that making a report and going to court does not guarantee that a perpetrator would be sent to jail, she also describes the great deal of involvement needed for survivors as well as the potential for additional distress. The impact of this is further touched upon by Helen.

***Helen (KI):** So there's all that trauma, and then all the subsequent trauma related to court and everything, which can be pretty horrific.*

Survivors seem to know that the process of reporting to the police would inherently lead to taking things to court. Dean gives his perspective on this as a survivor, and also makes mention of the fact that information can be brought up within the court that could negatively impact the survivor, referring to assault where alcohol has been a factor. With these possibilities being present within the court system, it can very well lead survivors to believe that choosing to deal with the assault on their own would be a much easier option than making a report to the police and eventually dealing with the workings of the court system.

**Dean (S):** *Even though you're completely smashed, if you're not comfortable with what was going on, then that says [pause]... but again, it's the time, and the legal process, and the length of time... and it comes down to, in this case, he said he said.*

**Limitations.** Another key area that was discussed by participants was regarding limitations in the area of programmes, counsellors, access, and focus. The majority of participants discussed these, other than the topic of access which two of the four survivors discussed.

In regards to programmes, most respondents made mention of the fact that there are no specific services available that assist or address the particular needs of gay and bisexual male survivors in New Zealand. It was also mentioned by Diane that the more generalised sexual abuse services that are available make use of a more cognitive approach, failing to address non-cognitive aspects of the abuse experience, such as those related to physical responses within the body as a result of the trauma experienced. With adequate programmes not being available to address the needs of gay and bisexual men, there is a chance that they may further feel helpless in regards to addressing their abuse. The comments within this section also appeared to have a relationship with those made regarding the focus of services.

Discussions also revolved around limitations present with counsellors working in the area of sexual abuse. Hemi described his annoyance at the fact that a psychologist he had been working with failed to listen to what he had to say, making him feel as though his abuse was not being believed and taken seriously. Dean explained the way in which having a counsellor who has shared similar experiences can be beneficial, as mentioned previously, yet often difficult for survivors to be able to find. His statement refers to his own difficulty in finding an appropriate counsellor that he felt he could work well with.

**Dean (S):** *I tend to deal better with, having seen a lot of therapists over the years, people that have actually been there and done that. Your average textbook therapist is like nah... they're too easy to manipulate and to bullshit, whereas somebody who has actually been there can see through it.*

Another comment made by Gary helped to explain the way in which counsellors could further push a survivor away from deciding to make a report to

the police by making them feel pressured.

**Gary (KI):** *Well, things like overzealous phone counsellors, um... because someone is same-sex attracted, or it's a guy-and-guy situation, suddenly it becomes "you have to report to the police", as opposed to other reactions.*

Within the subarea of access, respondents referred to the difficulties present in accessing what little services may be available. Aspects of location were important here as comments showed that survivors living within rural areas may face an increased limitation in being able to access and make use of services. Gary went on to describe that the limited amount of community workers working in this area across New Zealand can also limit some individuals from seeking out others for support in making a report to police.

Despite the presence of more generalised sexual abuse programmes, there still appears to be issues in the focus of such programmes, and the counsellors associated with them. Max helps to show the way that survivors can be aware of this, which could further lead them to avoid making use of any services available.

**Max (S):** *I mean, rape on men is probably far less common than women. Yeah, and services wouldn't, I'd say... be prepared for them.*

**Police.** Finally, the most discussed area within this theme was that of the police. Within this area, discussions were based on the priorities of the police, the police process, and perceptions held for the police. This was a hotly discussed area, with Andy providing a great deal of insight based on his experiences with the New Zealand Police.

The majority of comments relating to the priorities of the police were made by key informants. Rita highlighted the fact that the reporting of historical abuse is something that would be seen as less of a priority for the police, as it would involve a larger amount of time in being able to gather enough evidence to make a case in court versus a more recently occurring crime. She also helped to describe the way in which police can further struggle based on the nature of the assault.

**Rita (KI):** *I know particularly that the police, um... is really struggling with the amount of sexual assaults that are happening that they can't do anything about because the people who have been assaulted were too drunk.*

The process involved in reporting was also seen by many to be something that can hold survivors back from going through with a report. Discussions here commonly brought up the fact that the process itself can be lengthy and torturing, often leading survivors to get wound-up and frustrated about their involvement in the process. There can also be worries arising once the process of reporting goes beyond the involvement of the survivor and starts to involve other people.

**Andy (KI):** *Just in the very fact of the reporting procedure. People have to get spoken to, witnesses have to get spoken to, and offenders have to get spoken to... and you can't keep their mouth shut, you know?*

With the difficulties present within the process of reporting itself, respondents discussed the ways in which survivors may have negative perceptions of the police. Gary provided his perception of how survivors view police based on those he has worked with.

**Geoff (KI):** *"Well, fuck the police! What are they going to do?" [laughs]. That's the general thing. "What are they going to do? They're not going to help me". That's the general perception of the police.*

This generally negative perception of the police was further highlighted by Dean, whose commentary helps to show the way in which these perceptions may influence a survivor's decision to report for fear of what type of police officer they would end up dealing with.

**Dean (S):** *The cops are perceived to be these big macho, rugby playing, meatheads... where unfortunately a lot of them are. I do know gay police officers. They do exist. How they survive in that environment; I have no idea. But the chances of striking one of them would be pretty remote.*

**Summary.** The institutional theme of barriers appeared to gather the least amount of commentary from interview participants. Much of this could be due to a lack of experience or understanding of the impact of institutional factors versus the more obvious factors contained within the personal and social themes. Comments within the institutional theme pertained to the barriers resulting from various institutional factors. Within the first of these factors, poor responses, participants disclosed the ways that both previous and individual unsatisfactory responses in areas such as the reactions of police can make survivors reluctant in going to the police to make a report of sexual assault. Discussions also focus on the way that services and counselling play a role as well, including the reasons why survivors may or may not go to these services rather than the police. Within the subarea of cons to reporting, participants described many of the ways in which reporting could very well negatively impact them, thus leading to decisions in which not reporting to the police may appear as a better alternative. Issues of the law were also often discussed within participant interviews, with comments focused on areas such as a lack of understanding of how one is covered under the law, leading to a tendency not to report. Discussed less frequently, yet still very relevant to the topic, was the area of court dynamics and the ways that they too can influence a reporting decision. This area helps to reiterate the fact that reporting is usually made with the intention of apprehending a perpetrator and that court processes are often assumed to follow. The limitations present within many areas such as programmes available for sexual abuse on gay and bisexual men, as well as their access, was another area often discussed. Comments describing many of these limitations can also be taken into account when examining ways in which barriers can be reduced to increase the frequency of reporting. The final area, and most commonly discussed, was that of the police. Within this area, participants focused their comments on the way in which the police themselves, and issues with their involvement, can further pose as barriers for reports being made. Despite this theme being discussed at a less frequent rate within interviews, many of the comments provided give way to great insights, especially pertaining to the lesser focused on barriers of institutional factors.



### Abuse-Specific Barriers

The final of the four themes surrounding barriers to reporting, the abuse-specific theme, generally received a great deal of discussion. Factors within this theme referred to particular aspects of the abuse itself that pose as barriers. Discussions were a bit scattered within this theme, with many of the subareas being talked about by only a few of the participants. The diagram below (Figure 5) shows the key areas and related subareas within this theme. Explanations and relationships for each of these areas will be detailed in the sections below.

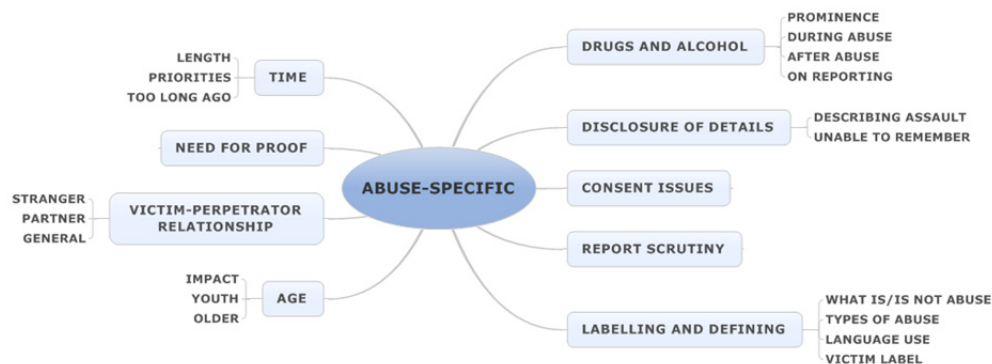


Figure 5. Overview of barrier areas within the abuse-specific theme.

**Time.** The concept of time, such as the length of time involved in the reporting process, survivors' time priorities, and the amount of time since the assault occurred, was discussed by participants. All participants, except for Diane, made mention of the ways in which time plays a role as a barrier to reporting.

A fair amount of commentary was given regarding the length of time required in making a police report by both key informants and survivors. The major time commitment needed, both at the time of reporting and afterwards, are shown within Rita and Hemi's comments.

**Rita (KI):** ...drawn out long process. Like it takes up to a year, year-and-a-half.

**Hemi (S):** *Yeah, it was really challenging. It took all day. It was long.*

With the significant amount of time being needed posing as a barrier, it is not surprising to see that the priorities of survivors regarding time commitments were also described as a barrier. Max explains that survivors may have varying priorities within their own lives. He gives an account of the fact that those who are seeking to catch the offender should be reporting to the police sooner rather than later, yet also explains that some survivors may be more focused on their own healing process instead of reporting. Max's comments show the way in which his personal priorities and time commitments got in the way of going to the police to make a report about his victimisation. With a strong relationship found between time priorities and defence mechanisms, Max's comment further highlights the way in which time priorities can be brought up as a method of avoidance.

**Max (S):** *And yeah, like the Monday after this happened, it happened on a Friday night... I started Uni. So there's just no time to think. Yeah.*

Participants also made discussions regarding abuse that had happened quite some time ago. It was seen that in cases of this sort, survivors would often feel as though their case would not be seen as a priority for the police due to the amount of time that had elapsed. Geoff explains that through his experience having worked with survivors who were abused in their youth, he sometimes finds that these individuals make comments about the need to think twice about reporting because their cases would be seen as historical. This highlights the fact that there may be differences in reporting decisions based on the amount of time having elapsed since the assault occurred, with historical assaults having less of a chance of being reported than those more recent.

**Need for proof.** Issues surrounding the need to prove an assault occurred was another area within the abuse-specific theme that participants focused on within interviews. Many of the participants talked about the fact that making a report doesn't necessarily mean you will be taken seriously or that the offender

will be apprehended and sentenced. Comments in this area tie-in with the fear that survivors may have about not being believed when making a disclosure. Within this area, it was shown that survivors may feel that reporting to the police would be an unwise decision in cases where they don't have any evidence to back up their claims.

Respondents explained that the proof needed would often be in the form of medical and physical evidence. Emphasis was also placed on the necessity of these types of proof within the courts to be able to increase the chances of a conviction for the perpetrator. It was highlighted that the more evidence a survivor could provide, the more likely their case would be capable of stand up in court. The fact that many survivors may be too traumatised to remember to keep physical evidence, such as the underwear they were wearing at the time, or attend sexual health clinics to obtain medical evidence can very well lead them to refrain from reporting to the police. Dean provides an example in which a survivor's behaviour under the influence of alcohol during the assault can also have an impact on proving a case in court. This internal awareness of a difficulty in proving a case can contribute to hesitations survivors may have about going to the police.

*Dean (S): It would be a very, very difficult case to prove. And by my own behaviour, it would be difficult to prove.*

**Victim-perpetrator relationship.** Another aspect discussed was that of the victim-perpetrator relationship, and the barriers that this can pose in reporting. Most of the commentary in this area was at the level of the overall specifics of this relationship, falling into the general subarea. A few participants also commented on stranger and partner aspects of the victim-perpetrator relationship, with Max and Dean providing comments in both sections from their perspectives as survivors.

In regards to cases in which the assault had been perpetrated by a stranger, conflicting ideas were brought up. It seems as though it could be the case that such relationships would allow for increased ease in reporting versus those in which the survivor knows the perpetrator personally, as there would be fewer emotional attachments and personal fears involved. With this being said,

respondents also made mention of the fact that often times survivors who are unaware of who assaulted them, often due to the influences of alcohol or being abused at a very young age, could be more reluctant to report due to the fact they may feel that they would have little ability in providing adequate details. Discussions regarding the ability to disclose details to the police will follow later in this chapter.

Abuse perpetrated by a partner was seen as being very challenging when thinking about making a report. In Dean's case, his victimisation by a co-worker made it not only hard for him to make a report, but also made it difficult to attend his job and face his abuser. With cases in which the relationship is one of a more intimate nature, there could be increased fear of a report being damaging to the partner's life or career. Helen gives a nice overview of the way in which having the perpetrator be known to you can make the idea of reporting quite a challenge.

***Helen (KI):*** So we're talking about standing up in court and saying that the man who was our fuck-buddy, or the man that was our partner, or the man that we picked up in the bar has sexually assaulted us. It means that we're... there are a whole bunch of things around what that's like within a small community anyway that are deeply problematic for people, let alone how awful that is a process to go through in itself.

Comments within the general section were a bit more varied in their nature. Geoff explains how perpetrators may often form relationships with youth, grooming them in a way to which they would be very unlikely to ever report to the police. Dean gives an example of the way in which such a formation of a relationship had an impact on him during his childhood abuse, resulting in him not thinking about making a report to police.

***Dean (S):*** And to be honest, I enjoyed the attention. It was an adult male paying me attention. I wasn't too cool with what was going on, but the fact that someone was actually paying me attention and not beating me up was quite a relief.

Finally, a limited amount of commentary was made by Diane, regarding the fact that the gender of the perpetrator could also play a role. The majority of discussions in interviews were made under the assumption that the abuse would be perpetrated by another man. Diane takes the focus of gender outside of this

assumption and explains how there is an increased difficulty in reporting for gay men who have been assaulted by a member of the opposite sex. Such issues can relate to those of gender roles as well as identity and orientation.

**Age.** The category of age focused on the age of survivors and yielded the greatest amount of comments within the abuse-specific theme. All respondents talked about youth within this area, with fewer respondents providing more limited comments in the context of older aged individuals. Regarding the impact on survivors in the area of age, all but Max gave responses towards this.

Within the area of impact, respondents discussed the way in which abuse can impact individuals in relation to their age. One way this was shown was in the case of survivors who choose to turn their focus away from their abuse. It seems as though this might be something they find appropriate at the time, especially if the abuse happened during their youth, yet the impact of the abuse will eventually be seen during the later stages of their lives. Rita explains how this is something she has witnessed within her own practice.

***Rita (KI):** I think predominately most of the people that I would see, if stuff had happened let's say within their teenage years, I probably would see them when they're in their late twenties, early thirties, forties, fifties... yes.*

Geoff also appears to take notice of this impact occurring in later stages of life for some survivors, and describes the way he has focused on this within the services he provides.

***Geoff (KI):** I try and get the younger ones. I want to work with the younger ones so they don't go off the beaten track, but we work with a lot of older guys too.*

The subarea of youth was the subarea that participants focused the majority of their comments on. The discussions here lent themselves to the way in which youth may experience abuse and the associated barriers more differently than older individuals. Key informants tended to comment on this much more than did survivors. The following comments provided by key informants illustrate many of the ways in which the age of youth can act as a barrier to

reporting, while also alluding to how they can be linked to other areas identified within this thesis. It appears as though many of these issues with youth may have to do with their stage of development and the ways in which they understand and process matters.

**Rita (KI):** *It's very important for young people what other people might think of them. I think Facebook has exploited that with this kind of, you know, "like" ...*

**Helen (KI):** *I think that some of those sexual experiences are often really early, if not first, sexual experiences for queer men. So, I think there's often some real identity issues around it.*

**Gary (KI):** *And quite often, there's scenarios where I might be talking to young people, and I read it as a form of assault, and I see it as dangerous power dynamics that are going on ... and they don't read it that way.*

Aspects regarding older age were not discussed as much, and only two of the survivors made singular comments on the area. Despite this, the comments from participants illustrate not only the way in which older individuals may handle situations differently based on their maturity level, but also some of the unique difficulties that they face. Gary describes the increased difficulty in disclosing sexual assault to the police for older gay and bisexual men.

**Gary (KI):** *So now, instead of programmes being just focused on youth, you have people going "Well, what about the old people?", and then more funding is being depleted because we have nothing for, you know, somebody who--. If somebody was to disclose about sexual assault in older persons in the community anywhere across Aotearoa, and they're the same sex, or if they were gay or bi, you're up shit creek. No one knows how to deal with it. 'A' you're old, you're still having sex, and you're gay ... and you know, it's survival of the fittest. It's like Kryptonite. You just got to keep going.*

**Drugs and alcohol.** Interestingly, participants made a large amount of comments within the area of drug and alcohol use. Many of the comments were about the prominence of drugs and alcohol within the queer community. Other areas of focus were in their use during the assault, after the assault, and the impact that their use would have on reporting.

Survivors giving feedback towards the frequent use of drugs and alcohol within the queer community tended to base this on their own immersion within the community. With Helen's comment that a large amount of sexual hook-ups are happening within the community under the influences of drugs and alcohol, the awareness of the impact these substances can have on being abused can begin to be seen. Geoff further highlights the high levels of drug and alcohol use based on survivors he has worked with.

**Geoff (KI):** *I think fifty-percent of the guys I work with have drugs and alcohol problem, which stems from the age of nineteen living in the... you know, from the very early ages when they were abused.*

The way in which being under the influence of drugs and alcohol during the assault can pose as a barrier to reporting was highlighted within Rita's interview. Participants mentioned the relationship shared here with feelings of guilt, which also can be found in Rita's comment. A relationship between this subarea and that of consent issues was also present.

**Rita (KI):** *Well... let's say if they've been drunk, it's um... cause I think what... I think what prevents them from going is this sense that they kind of are responsible for it. So they find it hard to look out and say "Ok, you know, I was out of it. This person came and took advantage of me".*

Participants also made mention of the fact that many abuse survivors may turn to alcohol and drugs after the assault as a form of solace and relief. It seems as though survivors may be using drugs and alcohol to suppress negative feelings they experience stemming from their abuse. Dean explains how this was indeed the case for him after having tried to keep feelings of his abuse suppressed in him. This relationship between the use of drugs and alcohol after abuse and an individual's cognitive mindset was also evident within participant comments.

**Dean (S):** *I just went into a state of mental shutdown, which got progressively worse until the insanity of it got so bad that I wound up picking up a drink again just to deal with it.*

Along with drug and alcohol use during and after abuse having an impact on reporting, participants also described how their use may have a more direct impact on a report itself. Comments from Diane and Andy highlighted a further relationship with this area and the fears survivors may have of not being believed or having their reports come back negatively on them.

***Diane (KI):*** *if someone is abusing alcohol, and they've been abused, sexually abused, they would probably be aware that the defence, or whoever, would claim that "they're just a drunk and they're not a reliable informant".*

***Andy (KI):*** *And again, maybe if they were high and got abused and assaulted or whatever, they wouldn't do it because they don't want to get in trouble for the drugs.*

**Disclosure of details.** As the process of reporting involves police having to collect information about the assault, a commonly discussed area within interviews pertained to the disclosure of such details. Generally, comments in this area revolved around the ways in which describing the assault, or not being able to remember details of the assault, could act as a barrier.

Of course, discussing the abuse is not something that survivors would easily want to talk about. To go back and mentally revisit the details of the assault while explaining them to a police officer when reporting can be a traumatising experience for many. Participants spoke of the fact that many survivors would find it difficult to talk about what happened to them during the assault, as this is something they would avoid wanting to reflect on and disclose. Rita helps to explain the detailed nature of what is required and asked about in a police report. Her comment helps to highlight the way that survivors may be fearful of this, and thus reluctant to speak with the police.

***Rita (KI):*** *You know, making a statement is not just something "well. I was walking down the road, and this happened". It's that it goes into absolute minute details. So they have to talk about what happened, how it happened, where their hands were, where the guy's hands were, or the woman's, or whatever... where the penis was, what happened, you know... all those things. And they need to be made of pretty strong stuff.*



Limited comments were also made regarding an inability to provide such details in a police report. Generally, these comments showed a relation to the areas of drug and alcohol use and youth. Participants discussed the way in which being under the influence of drugs may have an impact on an individual's memory of what happened during the assault, leading to a possibility for any details they can remember not being good enough to form a comprehensive report. Many survivors may also be unable to remember specific details about the appearance of the abuser or their name, and this would be something that would likely be seen more within survivors abused during childhood. This relationship between being unable to remember and being a youth was evident within comments made by participants.

**Consent issues.** Consent was also mentioned within a majority of interview responses. Much of what was said within this area related to definitions of what is or is not classified as sexual abuse. Participants explained that when a survivor has been found to have not consented to what occurred, there would be an increased likelihood of their report being taken seriously. In cases where consent may have occurred, or could be difficult to determine, discussions showed that fewer survivors would turn to the police to make a report if these issues were present for their assault. The following comment from Geoff highlights the way that consent can be an issue even further. The comment from Max following Geoff's helps to show the way in which these fears about consent can come through in the thought patterns of a survivor.

**Geoff (KI):** *They think that they've been half the problem, or the cause of it. They think that they might be guilty too, especially someone who might have allowed it because they didn't... like this young kid, he let it happen because he didn't know how to say no, and then the jury look at it as though he's given consent, but he hasn't.*

**Max (S):** *Because they did say we have to look at it from the perspective of the person that assaulted me, how they would have seen it if I had consented, which I think I did. So I was like, "Oh shit! What happens if they find out that I kind of did consent?"*

In addition to comments made regarding consent and the difficulties in defining what is and is not seen as consent, there was a relationship found between the areas of consent and drugs and alcohol, particularly during abuse. Participants described the way in which being under the influence of drugs and alcohol during the abuse could very well lead to an individual giving consent without being aware of this due to their intoxication. This can allow for difficulties to arise when reporting, as survivors may still be deemed as having legally given consent despite having been under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Within New Zealand, the Crimes Act (1961) does not include any actual definition of what constitutes consent, yet it does include a list of various circumstances where sexual activity was allowed but would not amount to consent under section 128A.

Another difficulty with consent in New Zealand's laws is in relation to age, as the Crimes Act (1961) states that children under the age of 12 are unable to consent but makes it unclear for those over this age. This was discussed by one of the key informants in relation to a client of theirs who was 12 years of age. In the key informant's opinion, the youth was too young to fully understand consent and how to say no to sexual advances. Despite this, the youth was found to have consented based on the views of the jury after having decided to report his abuse and take it to court. Survivors may be aware of issues like this regarding consent, and could therefore be fearful about reporting to the police in cases where consent cannot be fully proven as not having been given, particularly with respect to younger survivors.

**Report scrutiny.** The fear of having a report become scrutinised by those examining it was mentioned within all interviews. The comments showed how survivors can be fearful of not being believed or taken seriously when making a report to the police. Comments within this area can relate to those of myths. Many myths, such as the myth of gay men always wanting sex, could make it harder for survivors to convince individuals of their abuse if those they are disclosing to are upholding any of these myths. Gary describes the way in which report scrutiny is also present within the queer community itself by providing examples of the reactions some men may have within these communities towards survivors' disclosures.

**Gary (KI):** *Literally, no one believes what you're saying is true. Like "Oh, you're just being dramatic", "Oh, you're being a drama queen!", "Whatever! Guys always do that!", "It's ok. That's just what guys do", all these things around behaviour that actually (inaudible) us off. The garbage that's unsafe.*

The way in which gender and sexual orientation play a role in making this scrutiny even worse for gay and bisexual male survivors was also raised within interviews. Participants described the way in which a report of sexual assault on a gay or bisexual man may receive criticism. Dean gives his view of this by explaining that reports from these individuals may be received with the assumption that they were looking for sex and got more than they asked for, rather than the sympathy and empathy that may be received by female survivors. This view is also expressed within comments made by Hemi, further highlighting the notion of gender differences pertaining to report scrutiny.

**Hemi (S):** *Basically, a lot of male survivors that I've spoken to, that I know have been sexually abused, have said that they haven't reported it. The reason being that half of the time the New Zealand Police just throw it out and go "ah, it's not a big deal!". Where if it was a female... oh, it would be a big case... it would be on the news, you know? It would be on Police Ten 7.*

**Labelling and defining.** The area of labelling and defining was the second most talked about area within the abuse-specific theme. This area is broken down into the subareas of what is or is not abuse, the types of abuse, language and terminology used, and the victim label. The majority of comments in this area were made by key informants. In the subarea of language use, none of the survivors provided any commentary. The subarea of the victim label was another area here that gathered only one comment from survivors.

Regarding aspects of what would and would not be seen as abuse, discussions highlighted the fact that many survivors can refrain from going to the police if they are not clear about whether their assault would be truly seen as being criminal in nature. This can be particularly relevant for youth, as was seen in Dean's comments describing having viewed what had happened to him in his youth as 'fun and games' rather than abuse. The confusion over how to clearly define what is or is not abuse was described by Helen. Her comment helps to

show how this confusion is evident within the queer community.

**Helen (KI):** *I think there's some kind of idea that unwanted anal sex would not be ok within the queer men's community, but I'm not sure that the idea of actually being groped is sexual assault, or making someone give you a blowjob when you don't want to, or someone giving you a blowjob when you don't want them to. I don't think there's very high awareness of that being... that being criminal behaviour.*

There was also a sense that the type of assault has a role in reporting behaviour. It could be assumed that more invasive assaults could be clearly seen as criminal and thus more likely to be reported, yet Max's commentary provides evidence for the contrary. As a survivor, Max made attempts in eventually reporting his assault to the police. His comment describes how he would have been less willing to report his assault to the police had it been more invasive in nature. It appears that associating an assault with a 'rape' label would inherently encompass having to disclose more graphic details of the assault, leading survivors to often experience an increased sense of shame and embarrassment.

**Max (S):** *I think the severity of it as well. I didn't really get raped, but someone tried doing stuff. They didn't really succeed, and I don't really... it was externally. So if it was actually rape, I would feel a lot more... ashamed and stuff. I wouldn't have done what I had done exactly. I probably would have not reported it to the police if I actually got held down.*

It was also interesting to find key informants describing the way in which the language being used by those working in the area of sexual abuse can further hinder the likelihood of reporting. Generally, it was mentioned that by having service providers minimise their language use to simply using the word rape in regards to assault, there would be an increased chance of excluding survivors who may not identify what happened to them with the word rape. Suggestions were made to show that an expansion of vocabulary used, such as making inclusions for the term unwanted touching, could lead to further survivors identifying with and disclosing their experiences while also feeling more comfortable in making a report to the police.

Finally, it was mentioned that many survivors may prefer to not be

associated with the word victim. Helen explained the way in which calling what has happened to survivors a crime can be terrifying. This trepidation can lead to an increased reluctance in calling what has happened to them abusive, particularly within older queer men, and often this reluctance can include association with the victim label. A relationship can be seen between this subarea and the defence mechanisms within the personal theme.

**Summary.** The last of the four identified themes pertaining to barriers to reporting, the abuse-specific theme, yielded a reasonable amount of commentary. Subareas within this theme pertained to the many ways in which aspects of the abuse itself can function as barriers to reporting. One such area described was that pertaining to time, in which aspects of time can lead participants into not reporting. The negativity participants can experience is also discussed within the subarea of a need for proof, in which participants described a tendency to avoid making a report if they felt they had little evidence to back up their claims.

Discussions on the influences of the nature of the victim-perpetrator relationship further revealed many of the ways in which the type of relationship formed can act as a barrier itself. The age of the survivor was also seen as a key factor contributing to a lack in reporting, with many comments in this area showing increased difficulties in reporting for youth. Influences of drugs and alcohol was largely discussed by interview participants, with additional commentary explaining the fears of the impacts their use may have if a survivor did decide to go to the police. The need for details to be described to the officers involved in taking a report was found by many participants to be a barrier in the reporting process.

Participants also mentioned the ways in which difficulties to remember details can make survivors more reluctant to go through with a report. This reluctance was also seen regarding consent issues. Many of the comments here focused on the impact of consent, and the difficulty of deciding whether or not consent was given. This was seen to be not only difficult for survivors to realise, but also for courts to make decisions on, particularly with the involvement of drugs and alcohol. This fear of not being believed was further described within the area of report scrutiny, in which comments focused on the many ways that individuals may fear their reports would not be believed or taken as seriously as

they should be.

Lastly, a number of comments were made pertaining to issues of labelling and defining. Many of the comments here showed a relationship to knowledge issues, in which many survivors may be unaware of what constitutes abuse as well as the different forms of abuse. The comments detailed by participants within this theme seemed a bit less focused than those in the other themes, yet they helped to show the multitude of barriers that are present within this topic area.

### Reduction of Barriers

In addition to the four main themes surrounding barriers to reporting sexual assaults for gay and bisexual men, the appearance of comments relating to the reduction of these barriers also emerged from interviews conducted, together forming the reduction theme. The diagram below (Figure 6) illustrates the key areas participants described in relation to the ways in which barriers can be decreased. The disbursements of comments made under each of the key areas of this theme were more scattered, as participants offered differing advice towards reduction based on their areas of expertise and experience. Details for each of the areas are provided in the following sections along with supporting commentary to further highlight the suggestions made.

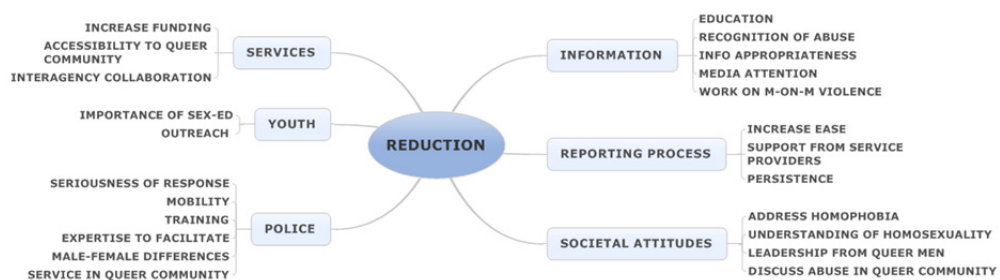


Figure 6. Overview of targeted areas within the reduction theme.

**Services.** Participants gave their advice on the ways in which reduction of barriers could begin within the area of services. The ways in which they spoke about services generally included information regarding an increased need for further funding, a need for services to become more visible and accessible to the queer community, and a need for interagency collaboration between various services working within the area of sexual abuse.

When talking about the need for further funding, participants pointed out the fact that services within New Zealand working in this area are currently not being as adequately funded as they can be. It was acknowledged that in order for service providers to keep up with the increase demand for their services, additional funding is needed. Geoff highlights the fact that the services he provides remain limited due to this lack of government funding.

***Geoff (KI):** We've probably kept it down a bit because... I can't sustain too many. There's only me doing it, so. But they have found... they do find that thirty-six percent of my referrals are coming from government agencies, yet they aren't funding us.*

Participants also mentioned the impact present from services being difficult to access for gay and bisexual men in New Zealand. They suggested that focus needs to be given to the ways that services can be made easier to access for those in the queer community. One suggestion for a way to do this was made by Rangi, and can be seen as a solution that would be fairly simple to implement.

***Rangi (S):** I think what we should have, especially for the males, is an 0800 number.*

The increased need for interagency collaboration was also identified within interviews. Suggestions made indicated that collaboration between specialist sectors of sexual and domestic violence specialist agencies and the queer community is wanted by survivors. This can be seen to relate to increased discussions within the queer community. Another good way collaboration could occur is by ensuring the police and those specialist agencies dealing with sexual abuse work together within the queer community on addressing similar issues.

**Youth.** Discussions within the area of youth relating to the reduction of barriers was a lesser talked about area within the reduction theme, yet much of what was brought up here was quite relevant. It seems as though many of the comments made within the other areas were said in a way that could include youth as well. This being said, Helen, Max, and Gary provided specific comments directed towards the area of youth. Their comments were focused in the areas pertaining to the importance of furthering sexual education in youth and the need for additional outreach to youth.

Max highlights the way he believes an increase in sexual education in youth by way of Sex-Ed programmes in schools is important is achieving a reduction of barriers. Related discussions to this centred on the fact that most schools do not provide much information to students in the way of explaining that men can be sexually abused as well as women.

***Max (S):** Um... back in Sex-Ed, when we had Sex-Ed... there was a class full of boys, and the teacher was a pushover, and no one wanted to listen. So we didn't do Sex-Ed pretty much for the last two or three years, which is the most important because you actually talk about the important stuff. So maybe that led to it. Like maybe if I'd known of safe places to go from that, you know?*

Helen explained the ways in which she is beginning to see increased activism and interest within queer youth. She stated that she is starting to see queer youth speaking up and acknowledging that sexual abuse needs to be further talked about. Interview content helped to highlight the benefit that providing increased outreach to youth would have within reducing barriers. This would specifically be beneficial in addressing those barriers that may have an increased influence on youth.

**Police.** All participants, except for Rita, provided comments relating to the police within this theme. These comments pertained to an increase in the seriousness of police responses, increased mobility of officers, an increase in officer training, expertise needed to facilitate, acknowledgement of the differences between men and women, and an increase in providing police services to the queer community.

Many of the comments focused on getting police to increase their



responses stemmed from the fact that the participants in this research often believed police were not taking survivor reports seriously. Hemi gives his view on how the handling of reports from gay and bisexual men needs to change.

***Hemi (S):** To be able to believe every single word of what they are saying, because they are the one that has been sexually abused, not you. Meaning that if they are reporting it to the police, it is really important that the New Zealand Police, or a counsellor, or a GP, or close family, or anyone to who they... you know, express that to actually believe what they are saying.*

Suggestions were made pertaining to the mobility of the police. Participants noted an increased need for police support within rural communities, and suggested that any programmes put into place by the police would need to be accessible outside of a specific urban area. Andy suggested that police could do more to get outside of the office and into the queer community as well. He suggests that the police should get into the queer community and get to know individuals in a more personal way, rather than creating further negative perceptions by focusing all their concentration into doing things like questioning community members about whether they are in possession of illegal drugs.

Andy further suggests that an increase in police training could help to reduce existing barriers. He makes mention of the fact that Diversity Liaison Officers within the New Zealand Police hold a position which is a portfolio role, meaning that the aspects of this role come into play on top of their regular policing duties. Comments were also made to suggest creating a position of a permanent Diversity Liaison Officer, who would have a more concentrated focus on resolving issues in this area. This was suggested to be beneficial within larger communities, such as those located in Auckland.

Participants also noted that in order to efficiently address the needs of the community, the police should ensure that they have the expertise to be able to facilitate this. Discussing sexual abuse with victims can be a painfully difficult area to work in, and there needs to be assurance that those who are working in this role have the proper knowledge of issues that can be present.

As seen within Hemi's interviews, there seems to be conversations occurring trying to get the police to recognise that abuse affects men as well as women. Many police officers may elect to respond to sexual assault in a

standardised manner without taking into account the effects of gender differences. Helen states that there are specific differences between homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in the way they affect queer men versus queer women. She suggests an increased need for queer men to become involved within the sexual violence sector in order to facilitate change. This could be achieved by having queer-identified police officers involved in the development of future programmes.

There was also commentary made regarding a need for increased police services within the queer community. It seems as though participants discuss the fact that queer individuals are present both within the police force and the sexual violence sector, yet these individuals are not doing as much as they should within the queer community itself.

**Information.** The most substantial amount of comments within the theme of reducing barriers pertained to the area of information on the sexual assault of men. Comments here can relate to the barriers discussed in a lack of knowledge within the person theme. Participants felt that increased knowledge would be one of the best ways to work at reducing barriers to reporting sexual assaults for gay and bisexual men. The comments within this section can be broken down into those related to increases in education on the sexual assault of men and the rights of gay and bisexual male victims, a better recognition of abuse, ensuring information provided is appropriate, media attention, and work within the area of male-on-male violence.

The largest amount of commentary in this area was in the need for increased education. All but one participant gave feedback in regards to this. Helen explains her view that preventing abuse from happening and get survivors to report assaults can only effectively occur by ensuring that those involved have a good understanding of the various underlying issues. The following statements from Andy and Geoff further highlight ways in which education towards reporting and the police can be increased.

*Andy (KI): having more word of mouth going around that the cops are there. They'll hear any case, any story. They won't make any (inaudible) judgements. So it's really about, you know... getting that word of mouth around and getting the police, certainly DLOs, more visible.*

**Geoff (KI):** *Just particularly to know they've got as much rights... they haven't done anything wrong for starters, you know? They're entitled to have their story heard and have the perpetrator dealt with.*

Comments regarding increased recognition of abuse focused more on being able to inform the community that sexual abuse does happen to gay and bisexual men. It was also suggested that any information provided to increase recognition of abuse should also include details on the steps an individual can take to make a report to the police. Furthermore, there were comments made in regards to getting this recognition within the police force so that there is less chance police will dismiss abuse occurring to gay and bisexual men as something that is less serious in nature.

The appropriateness of information being provided to individuals was also seen as an area of major importance. Helen highlights the fact that many conversations within the sexual and domestic violence sector may be facilitated by women, giving way to the possibility of failures in adequately expressing the differences between queer men and those of queer women. Gary gave an account of the way in which services may not be providing appropriate information in the ways they advertise to queer-identified men while explaining issues that could arise.

**Gary (KI):** *Say you assaulted somebody and you went to [a male-oriented counselling service], and you're gay, and you turned up to talk about your issue... you'd be sitting in a room full of, what... ex-gang members or gang members who've spent half their life running you down the street thinking "You're a fucking poufter!". Would you go to that meeting? I don't think so.*

It was also interesting to hear participants discuss the way in which an increased focus by the media could help to reduce stigma around reporting. Diane explained how New Zealand has recently increased media attention in the area of stopping smoking and drink-driving. She suggests that media campaigns geared at sexual violence to men could help increase reporting rates of gay and bisexual men to the police.

Additionally, comments highlighted the fact that much of the focus on sexual violence is geared towards violence committed on women. Similar

findings are seen with the amount of research being conducted in this area. One of the survivors made mention of the fact that he has read plenty of books and articles pertaining to sexual assault on women but has found information pertaining to that of male victims to be sparse. Andy brings up the fact that the New Zealand Police do not have any specific way of precisely recording the nature of assaults in a way that would allow for statistical data on how many assaults are occurring to be collected and reported on for gay and bisexual men. This lack of information pertaining to the queer community can also be found in the fact that the New Zealand census still fails to record any information about the sexual orientation of individuals living within the country. Data within this area could very well increase the viability of methods used to reduce barriers to reporting.

**Reporting process.** As participants discussed the difficulties present within the current state of the reporting process, it was not surprising to see comments being made pertaining to this process in the theme of reduction. Within this area, comments related to increasing the ease of the process, having support from service providers during the process, as well as the need for persistence if any difficulties arise within the reporting process.

To address the area of increasing the ease of the reporting process itself, comments tended to suggest the benefits of having a middleman involved. It seems as though the process of reporting and not knowing who you will be encountering at the police station could lead to reservations from survivors. The presence of a middleman could assist in making the process easier and more efficient. In addition, comments were made regarding the training of the officers involved in handling reports. Diane provides an example in regards to her view on the need for specialised training.

***Diane (KI):** I think what would be good is if there were specially designated officers who have special training, who could handle the whole thing from beginning to end, and who weren't just like where you walk into the police station, and you pick miscellaneous cop and you have to tell your story.*

The function of having a support person with you in making a report was described to be beneficial in increasing the ease of reporting. Benefits here included the ability for a support service worker involved to be more familiar with and aware of the legal system, thus able to explain and assist participants with their decisions throughout the entire process. This could function in a similar way that a middleman would.

In addition, Helen made mention of an increased need for persistence from survivors. Often times it was seen that survivors may get frustrated if things were not going their way within a reporting process. With this being said, Helen feels that survivors need to know that they should continue to be persistent if their needs are not being met, rather than backing down and deciding not to follow through with their report.

**Societal attitudes.** Finally, a number of comments were made in regards to societal aspects of reducing barriers. The comments pertained to the addressing of homophobia, and increased understanding of homosexuality within society, leadership from queer men, and increased discussions within the queer community.

Only Diane discussed directly addressing homophobia. She felt as though doing this would be the most effective way of tackling many of the barriers involved in reporting. With homophobia being seen as a contributing factor to many of the other barrier areas, addressing of the issues involved here would likely assist in reducing barriers.

Not only is it important to address homophobia, but respondents also explained the importance of increasing societal understanding of homosexuality. With issues such as the recent legalisation of gay marriage through the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013 coming to the forefront of attention in the New Zealand public, it seems as though now is the perfect time to address this within society. An increase in individuals' diversity of understandings surrounding homosexuality may allow for decreased fears of encountering homophobic reactions and judgements when reporting for survivors.

Many of the respondents mentioned that much of the work within the area of sexual abuse is being conducted by women. They felt that better leadership from queer-identified men could further increase individuals' understandings

while assisting in providing survivors with the appropriate support they need. Hemi highlights this need to be understood within his comment.

***Hemi (S):** I think that for those like us male survivors, if we had a stronger voice in being able to open up and be able to speak the pain that we go through each day... then we may be able to turn it around to have people actually fully understanding what it's like.*

Finally, there were many comments made which pertained to the fact that discussions of abuse within the queer community appear to be avoided. Max explained that he does not remember ever having talked about the idea of gay rape, stressing his opinion of it being avoided in discussions within queer communities. Helen added to this by giving her opinion on the importance of starting such discussions within the queer community. She felt that discussions focusing on what types of behaviours are seen as aspects of good relationships and which are outside of this, and along the lines of abuse, need to occur in order to decrease many of the barriers present and lead to increased levels of reporting.

**Summary.** In addition to the identification of the four themes surrounding barriers to reporting, participant interviews resulted in the emergence of a fifth and separate theme; the reduction of barriers. Within the theme of reduction, comments were focused on the many ways that barriers can be addressed to lead to their decrease. Many comments related to the area of services in which issues pertaining to the way these services are funded and run were brought up. Suggestions here focused on the need for additional funding by the government, further accessibility for members of the queer community, and an increased collaborative approach by those agencies involved in the reduction of sexual violence.

Youth was another important area discussed within interviews. As many of the barriers identified were seen to have an increased effect on young survivors, comments highlighted the importance to further youth outreach in this area. The need for further discussion of male sexual abuse within sexual education programmes in schools was another important topic that was discussed. A large area of discussion pertained to that of the police and the ways in which barrier reduction can start from them. Suggestions here were in the ways of increasing

the seriousness of their responses, further mobility, increased training, ensuring the expertise needed is obtained, emphasising male and female differences within the police while also increasing services provided to the queer community.

As many of these barrier reduction strategies would be very much tied into aspects of education, it was not surprising to see that the subarea of a need for further information yielded the largest amount of comments and suggestions within the reduction theme. In addition, the difficulties of the reporting process itself were addressed with suggestions made pertaining to issues such as increasing the ease of the process itself as well as increasing the support survivors receive throughout the entire process. The last area within this theme was that of society. Within the area of society, ways in which societal contributions and focus can lead to the decreasing of barriers was discussed. Overall, participants gave many good suggestions for ways in which barriers can be addressed and worked towards their reduction. Many of the suggestions made can be seen to focus on addressing more than one specific barrier if they were to be implemented as a way of reducing the barriers currently in existence.

### **Chapter Summary**

In addressing the barriers to reporting sexual assaults for gay and bisexual male survivors in New Zealand, four main themes emerged pertaining to the barriers that currently exist. These barrier themes were labelled as the personal, social, institutional, and abuse-specific themes.

The first theme, the personal theme, detailed the many barriers related to aspects of the personal self of individual survivors. Individuals' cognitive mindsets and the negative emotions they may experience after sexual abuse were the main areas of discussion within this theme. The relationship they share and the impact they have on key areas identified within other themes, such as in relation to drug and alcohol use after assault, appears to be quite strong.

Most discussions focused on aspects within the social theme, pertaining to the influence of social factors on decisions to report. Many areas emerged within this theme, such as culture and religion, yet the majority of comments fell into the area of homosexuality and gender than any of the other areas in this theme. This helps to highlight the importance of taking into account issues of sexual orientation and gender in relation to the reporting of sexual assault to the police.

The institutional theme was the least talked about theme within interviews, yet did result in the identification of many important barriers to take into account. The majority of comments within this theme focus on issues of the police as well as limitations in areas such as the focus and access of programmes. This theme is one in which being able to understand the barriers within it may be harder for those who have no experience or understanding of institutions.

The final of the four emerging themes of barriers to reporting, the abuse-specific theme, takes into account the various factors within the abuse itself that can result in less interest in making a police report. The three most commonly discussed areas within this theme were those of age, labelling and defining, and drug and alcohol use. These subcategories share many relationships, such as the relationship between youth and difficulties defining what is or is not sexual abuse.

In addition to the four barrier themes emerging from interviews, a fifth theme resulted pertaining to the reduction of barriers. Within this area, most participants focused on describing the various ways that information on the topic can be improved in order to increase reporting rates. It can clearly be seen how this can have a relationship to discussions pertaining to a lack of education on the topic.

Overall, the themes identified as well as their associated key areas help to show the many barriers that gay and bisexual male survivors can currently face when deciding whether or not they want to report their victimisation to the police. Participants have made some great suggestions for the ways in which these themes can be addressed in order to have them decrease. Additionally, the fact that many of the suggestions made can result in decreases of more than one barrier provides a further incentive to examine the existence of such barriers and take the necessary steps in working towards their decrease.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the present findings in relation to the literature reviewed. This chapter will also include discussion on queer-specific barriers and how the various barriers identified can form linkages with each other. Limitations for this study will also be stated.



## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

This chapter focuses on elaborating discussions of the research findings pertaining to barriers and their reduction. It helps to further explain the many complexities that gay and bisexual male survivors can face when making a decision whether or not to report to the police. The discussions made in this chapter relate the findings of this study to the literature reviewed, helping to illustrate many of the similarities and differences present.

Queer-specific barriers are also discussed, with information provided pertaining to their importance in being able to comprehensively understand the barriers that gay and bisexual men may face. The way that individual barriers can form linkages with one another is also highlighted. The many intricacies and influences of these linkages is illustrated through the use of a case study based on Rangi's own experiences with his abuse. A discussion on the implications of the reduction methods proposed by participants in the study is also provided, detailing both the benefits and difficulties of such solutions.

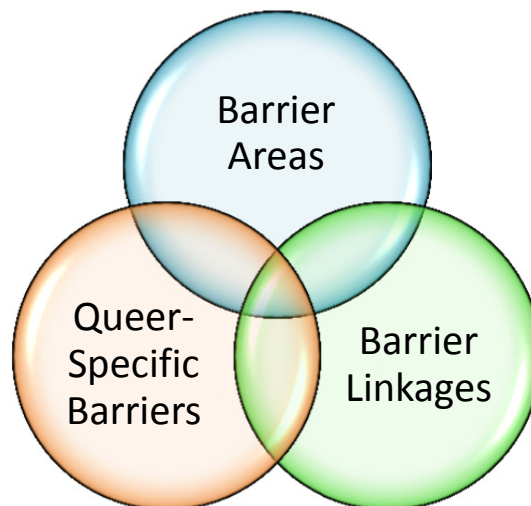
The chapter ends with a discussion on the limitations that existed for this study. Following this chapter, a conclusion is given to illustrate the importance of these findings, while also providing suggestions for additional areas to examine in future research.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings discussed in the previous chapter helped to illuminate the many complexities surrounding barriers to reporting sexual assaults to the police for gay and bisexual men within New Zealand. Not only do the findings allow for a solid overview of the many barriers currently affecting gay and bisexual male survivors; they also show the many ways in which they are able to tie into each other by forming various linkages with one another.

The illustration provided in Figure 7 displays the main areas of importance for gay and bisexual male victims arising from interview discussions: barrier areas, queer-specific barriers, and barrier linkages. The most salient of these three areas is that of barrier areas; the specific thematic areas in which the barriers experienced by survivors are located. The area of queer-specific barriers is in reference to the subtle nuances that exist for men identifying as gay or bisexual.

Barrier linkages refers to the many links being formed between different barriers, and the weight that these links may have. All three of these major areas need to be taken into account in a holistic manner as they are interwoven with each other. Together they help to show the complex tapestry that surrounds survivors' decisions not to report sexual assault to the police.



*Figure 7.* Overview of areas of primary importance for gay/bi male survivors.

Throughout all the interviews conducted, the barriers pertaining to the social and personal themes came to the forefront of discussions, with less mention made of abuse-specific barriers, and even less mention of those related to the institutional theme. This followed a similar pattern to how barriers were discussed within the literature on the topic. As a majority of what was said pertained to the social theme, both in the literature and this study, it becomes important to refrain from making this theme the central focus when examining barriers to reporting. Barriers related to the other themes are likely to also be present, even if they are less obvious than those in the social theme, and they could very well have a strong impact on a survivor's decision not to report to the police.

From a general overview of the barriers identified, it becomes apparent that many of these barriers affect not only gay and bisexual men, but women and straight men as well, such as the barriers of emotions and court dynamics. With

this being said, awareness needs to be raised about how these barrier areas may have unique features that function in differing ways for gay and bisexual men. These queer-specific barrier features will be discussed further within this chapter. Many of the suggestions for reducing barriers appear to lend their focus to reducing specific individual barriers for gay and bisexual men. Despite such a focus, these suggestions may also result in further decreases in many other barrier areas that share relationships with the specific area being targeted for reduction.

The findings of this study share many similarities with the literature reviewed on the topic, primarily in the emphasis placed on particular barrier themes. In both the literature and this study, the majority of information pertained to the social theme, a large amount in the personal theme, and a lesser focus on the institutional and abuse-specific themes. All the barrier areas discussed within the literature were brought up by participants in the study, except in regards to fears of retaliation or retribution discussed by previous researchers (Fileborn, 2012; Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003). When discussing the barrier area of fear, participants discussed a general sense of fear or dread, in which a fear of retaliation/retribution may be included, yet was not explicitly stated as being something that would prevent reporting.

By firstly examining the most commonly discussed theme, the social theme, we find that all the identified areas were shown within the literature (Braun et al., 2009; Davies, 2002; Fenaughty et al., 2006; Fileborn, 2012; Leonard et al., 2008; Tilbrook et al., 2010; Tjaden et al., 1999), except in regards to the area of judgement. Of course, aspects of judgements seem to overshadow much of the literature on the topic, yet little focus was given to position this as a specific barrier area. As for the remaining barrier areas identified within the social theme, the findings of this study were similar to what had been discussed in prior research. The similarities present will be expanded on further within the discussions in this chapter.

Within the family barrier area, Tilbrook and colleagues (2010) gave a particular emphasis on the lack of support from family and friends of GLBT identified survivors of abuse within a same-sex relationship. The findings of the current study went beyond what was contained in the literature, and further discussed this area in situations where the abuse had occurred outside of a relationship context. The views of the family, brought up by Fenaughty and

colleagues (2006), were also similarly seen within this study. Participants in the current research often spoke about the ways in which familial support could be seen as unhelpful for survivors, thus pushing them away from wanting to make a report. Interestingly, the impact on the family posing as a barrier was not mentioned within the literature reviewed. This could be due to impact on family members seeming to be slightly removed from the individual aspects of a survivor, yet findings from this study give way to a further understanding of the ability for this area to have an effect on reporting decisions.

The ways in which the queer community can pose as a barrier, such as through the alienation of victims from the community, was discussed in a similar manner within interviews and the literature (Duke & Davidson, 2009; Fileborn, 2012; Leventhal & Lundy, 1999; Mulroney & Chan, 2005, Tilbrook et al., 2010). This area appeared to be seen as one of primary importance within the literature, yet participants in this study gave a lesser amount of focus on it despite raising issues pertaining to it in their commentaries. This may have been due to the relatively small size of New Zealand's queer community. Future research should expand its examination of the role the queer community plays, and account for issues such as the effects the size of a survivor's queer community has on reporting decisions.

Tilbrook and colleagues (2010) made mention of the lack of adequate support from family and friends, which was similarly found within participant comments. Outside of this though, the literature failed to account for the ways in which positive support could also function as a barrier to reporting, such as by making the survivor feel as though they are strong enough to move on without reporting. Of course, this may be beneficial to some survivors, yet it would allow for a decreased likelihood of apprehending perpetrators of sexual violence if survivors end up choosing not to make a report.

Aspects of culture and religion were highlighted within the literature on the topic. Fenaughty and colleagues (2006) gave a good account of the ways this may occur for Māori survivors in particular. As two of the survivors identified as Māori men, their comments further supported the literature on this. It seemed as though for these men, many of their intentions showed cultural differences in that they were often focused around the idea of forgiveness rather than punishment of the perpetrator. This type of cultural difference in how survivors see their sexual

abuse, and the impact it has on them, is something that service providers need to be aware. Pressure should not be placed on influencing survivors to make a report to police if this is something that would be detrimental to them or be seen as a culturally inappropriate decision.

The many myths reviewed within the literature (Braun et al., 2009; Tilbrook et al., 2010; Tjaden et al., 1999) also arose in the current research, particularly in regards to the myth of sexual violence non-existence in same-sex relationships and the false belief that men are unable to be raped or it being less traumatic for them. The myths were further expanded within participant interviews and included additional myths such as the belief that gay men constantly seek sex, the possibility that the abuse made the survivor become gay, and that sexual abuse survivors will go on to become perpetrators in the future. The many myths discussed both within the literature and the participant comments help to strengthen the likelihood of this being one that poses a significant barrier to reporting.

Homophobia and prejudice, both from society and institutions, was heavily brought up within the literature and appeared to be one of the most commonly discussed barrier areas (Berman et al., 1999; Braun et al., 2009; CCASA, n.d.; Davies, 2002; Gillum & DiFulvio, 2012; Gold et al., 2009; Hodge & Canter, 1998; Hunter et al., 2000; Leonard et al., 2008; Tilbrook et al., 2010; Wotherspoon, 1991). Participants in the study often spoke about the many ways that homophobia and prejudice can function as a barrier, but tended to give less emphasis to this barrier within the social theme; placing stronger emphases on homosexuality and gender, family, judgements, support, and culture and religion. Clearly, the area of homophobia and prejudice does pose as a barrier, yet in comparison to other barrier areas, it may not function as strongly as the literature tends to suggest it does. It is also worth mentioning here that New Zealand sentencing of offenders does take homophobia into account, allowing for increased sentences for those perpetrators deemed to have been motivated by homophobia (Wellington Community Law Centre, 2011), but again this is something that many survivors may be lacking knowledge of.

Leonard and colleagues (2008) brought forth the impact that spatial isolation may have on survivors residing in a remote location away from queer communities. Additional comments found in the literature also highlighted how

many perpetrators may victimise individuals within sexualised settings (Davies, 2002). Discussions were made with the study that paralleled the literature in this area. The area of location and environment appears to have a function as a barrier, yet it is unclear to what extent this may be. Further elaboration may be beneficial within this barrier area to get a clearer picture of the function it serves in reducing the likelihood to report.

Aspects of homosexuality and gender came across in much of the literature, such as through discussions on the effect of heterosexism on characteristics of masculinity (Fenaughty et al., 2006). With this being said, the literature seemed to take a broad approach to this area, giving little evidence to position this as a barrier rather than a larger theme affecting barriers. The findings of this study quite often involved an overarching theme pertaining to homosexuality and gender, yet also provided specific details in discussions that gave justification for how this can pose as a barrier area in reporting itself.

Turning to the personal theme, the reviewed literature provided a large amount of information pertaining to defence mechanisms, emotions, and privacy/confidentiality, knowledge, and mental health. These are areas that were discussed to a large extent by participants. With this being said, the literature also failed to give support for other barrier areas, particularly in regards to the highly discussed area in the study of the cognitive mindset of survivors.

The literature tends to do a good job of explaining the many ways that survivors may minimise their experiences as a defence mechanism (Fenaughty et al., 2006; Fileborn, 2012; Rumney, 2008) and this was also commonly brought up in participant interviews. Participants spoke of the ways in which denial and avoidance were also used as defence mechanisms leading them not to report, but this appeared to receive little focus within the current literature.

The function of undesirable emotions building up within sexual abuse survivors was a largely discussed barrier within the personal theme. The literature commonly raised the ways in which fears, such as the fear of retaliation (Fileborn, 2012; Finkelhor & Wolak, 2003), and blame arising from a victim-blaming culture (Davies, 2002; Doherty & Anderson, 2004; Gordon & Crehan, 1998; Rumney, 2008) can pose as barriers to reporting but did not go as far as taking feelings of hopelessness and helplessness into account. This may have not been greatly discussed within the literature, yet was disclosed by participants in this

study. From the internalised nature of these emotions, it appears as though feelings of helplessness and hopelessness may have been lesser discussed within the literature as survivors may have a difficult time opening and describing the ways that they sense these feelings after being abused to researchers. This may be due to it being more emotionally difficult for survivors to talk about feeling hopeless and helpless rather than expressing the emotions that society may expect survivors to have after assaults, such as shame and embarrassment.

Discussions pertaining to the ways in which privacy and confidentiality, both of the assault and an individual's sexual orientation, were found within this study and the literature (CCASA, n.d.; Elliot, 1998; Fenaughty et al., 2006; Hodge & Canter, 1998; Hunter et al., 2000; Leonard et al., 2008; Miller, 2010; Tilbrook et al., 2010). With this being said, the literature seems to place significant emphasis on the fear aspect of having details of the assault and the survivor's sexual orientation revealed. Participant comments in this area did mention a fear component, yet they also often went beyond this notion of fear and focused on an individual's right to having their privacy maintained.

Comments regarding the cognitive mindset of survivors were raised quite readily within participant discussions, and there were many connections being made between this barrier area and others identified. This is an area that can be considered more of an internal barrier, as externally one cannot see how the thoughts survivors experience can lend them to choose not to make a report. Further studies should focus on being able to expand insights in this area by making use of the personalised inside perspectives of survivors themselves. The same can be said in regards to aspects of revisiting the assault, which survivors briefly touched on in interviews, as this too was lacking within the literature.

The research reviewed provided some support in the ways a survivor's past experiences as well as their lack of knowledge in certain areas can function as a barrier to reporting (Doll et al., 1992; Leventhal & Lundy, 1999; Mossman et al., 2009). These areas appear to have a significant role in survivors' decisions not to report and need to be examined at greater lengths in future studies. Identifications of specific gaps in education pertaining to the sexual abuse of gay and bisexual men from future studies may lead to increased efforts in furthering the education available in this area.

With many survivors experiencing poor mental health stemming from

their abuse, there also needs to be increased focus on the ways that this can hinder a reporting decision. Efforts seem to be constantly made by researchers to address the effects that sexual abuse has on mental health (Ryan & Rivers, 2003; Sweet, 2010), yet the literature does not seem to place any significant emphasis on the examining the role poor states of mental health can have on reporting decisions. This is an area that should be further expanded on in future studies.

Comments pertaining to the abuse-specific theme appeared less often within participant interviews than those in the personal and social themes, yet this lack of focus was much stronger when looking at the literature. The only areas from the literature that tied-in to the barrier areas identified within this theme were those of report scrutiny and labelling and defining.

Examining credibility concerns, both the participants and the literature make mention of the ways in which reports of sexual assault can face the possibility of being scrutinised for their credibility (Braun et al., 2009; Fileborn, 2012; Hodge & Canter, 1998). The literature makes mention of how this credibility can relate to difficulties in proving the abuse occurred and that consent was not given. The findings from the interview commentaries allowed the barrier of credibility discussed within the literature to be broken down into the separate barrier areas of report scrutiny, need for proof, and consent issues. The analysis conducted showed that not only can a report be scrutinised in various ways, but the need for proof (such as by providing medical and physical evidence) and issues surrounding what constitutes consent warranted their division into separate barrier areas. A survivor may very well be able to provide evidence as proof of a sexual act having taken place, yet a jury may still see the act as having been one in which consent was given. The discussion here further highlights how barrier areas can be commonly associated with one another.

Aspects of labelling and defining issues were often discussed within the reviewed literature, particularly in relation to difficulties in defining what is and is not classified as sexual abuse (Fenaughty et al., 2006; Rothman et al., 2011; Sweet, 2010). This was similarly found within the study, yet participant comments further extended to the ways in which the language being used, the impact of being labelled as a victim, and the differences in the types of abuse can also pose as barriers within this barrier area. These subareas need to be included within further research on methods of increasing reporting, particularly for



research that is targeted at improving service providers' responses.

The literature did not provide any focus on the ways in which aspects of time, the victim-perpetrator relationship, age, drugs and alcohol, and disclosure of details can also function as barriers. The findings of this study further highlight the many ways in which these areas deserve inclusion in the overall picture of the barriers that gay and bisexual male survivors may face. Of particular interest here were the discussions surrounding drug and alcohol use by interview participants. This was an area that was talked about quite frequently but appears to lack significantly within the literature in this area. Comments made in this study by participants, particularly survivors, indicated that drug and alcohol use may pose as a considerably greater barrier for gay and bisexual men than women or straight men due to their high usage within the queer community. Future studies could very well benefit by looking at this further and determining just how high of an increased frequency in their use may be occurring, as well as the significance of any effects from such increased levels on reporting decisions from these men.

Lastly, the majority of what was brought forth within all the literature reviewed in this area tended to focus on gay and bisexual sexual assault victims in general without making any distinctions based on the age of the survivor. Findings from this study help to show the way in which youth may face barriers in differing ways than older men, with many of the barrier areas described also having increased weight for young survivors. It would be beneficial for future research to separate youth from adults and further examine differences that may be present between these groups based on their age and stages of development.

The final barrier theme to discuss is that of the institutional theme. This was an area that was barely touched on by the literature and was also very limited in terms of the commentary within the study. Comments from participants seemed to be given more erratically for this theme, with a limited consensus on the barrier areas identified. Unlike areas in the prior themes that achieved commentary from all participants, most of the areas within the institutional theme received only a few comments from a select number of participants.

Within the literature reviewed, the only aspect of this theme being largely discussed was in regards to an inappropriate or lack of services (Cheung et al., 2009; Leonard et al., 2008; Mariner, 2001; Tilbrook et al., 2010). The discussions made within the literature pertain to the barrier area of limitations, specifically

those relating to programmes and focuses. A lot was said within the research on the possibility for services to be lacking for gay and bisexual men, yet this was something that was found to be mixed among the comments made by participants. Many of the participants stated that there were no services available to this group, yet others made comments stating that the services are there but are not easily accessible. To better differentiate and expand on the limitations found within this study, the barrier area of limitations was split into subareas to account for those pertaining to programmes, counsellors, access, and focus. This was a barrier area that received much attention throughout interview conversations.

Receiving the most amount of commentary within this theme, was the barrier area of the police. Participants found that the priorities, process, and perceptions of the police could all function as barriers to reporting, yet this was not clearly evident within the research reviewed. Additional research, particularly within the area of criminal justice, should be carried out in the future to further examine the ways that the police themselves may function as a barrier to reporting for gay and bisexual male survivors.

Discussions made by participants regarding the ways that poor responses could hinder reporting can also be seen to be somewhat related to the police, as the majority of comments in this area pertained to responses from the police themselves. The way in which poor historical responses can result in a fear of police was discussed within the literature (Leonard et al., 2008), yet expansion is needed in future examinations as a fuller understanding of the issues within this area would be beneficial in regards to working towards eliminating barriers from within criminal justice institutions.

The law itself was another interesting barrier area that was found within this study, yet not adequately addressed in previous research. Much of what was said in interviews here pertained to the differences that queer-identified men experience within the law versus women and straight men, such as in the protection and rights that the law offers them. These subtle differences are further discussed within the section on queer-specific barriers that follows.

As reporting sexual assault to the police is often done with the assumption that the perpetrator would be apprehended and court procedures would follow, participants identified the dynamics of court as a barrier to reporting. This was not clearly seen within the literature, as much of what has been published seems

to focus solely on the process of going to the police, failing to take into account the ways in which what may follow after making a report can also lead survivors into turning away from a reporting decision.

Finally, cons to reporting was another interesting barrier area identified within this study that was not seen within the literature reviewed. It is important to remain cognisant of the fact that many individuals may feel that a decision to report to the police would make things worse for them than if they did not go through with a report. One of the ways this was seen within interviews was in relation to mental health, where participants felt as though following through with a report could result in decreased mental health within some survivors. The various possible detrimental effects of reporting on mental health was not a focus of the literature reviewed, yet should be an area for further examination in future studies. Of course, reporting to the police is pertinent to criminal justice, yet for some individuals it may function in extremely negative ways. The decision to report is of a personal nature, and service providers working within this area should remain aware of this in order to further understand why some individuals may choose never to make a report, even if barriers begin to become reduced.

**Queer-specific barriers.** The focus of this study is to identify the various barriers that deter gay and bisexual male sexual assault victims from reporting sexual assaults to the police. As seen within the findings, many of the identified barriers are also faced by female and straight male sexual assault victims. It therefore becomes important to give focus here to some of the queer-specific aspects of the barrier areas identified.

The key barrier areas of homosexuality and gender, queer community, and the subarea of privacy/confidentiality of orientation are the three areas that show specific application to gay and bisexual men. The first two of these key barriers all fall under the social theme, while the subarea of privacy/confidentiality of orientation is included under the personal theme. The barrier areas of homophobia and prejudice, myths, law, limitations, and mental health pertain largely to gay and bisexual men while also being somewhat applicable to straight men and women as well. All other identified areas are applicable to gay and bisexual men, but do not share as many of the queer-specific aspects as the areas mentioned above, and thus can appear to be more generally experienced by all

sexual assault victims regardless of their sexual orientation.

The way that homosexuality and gender function as a barrier to reporting plays a strong role for gay and bisexual male survivors. In his commentary on the causes and consequences of male adult sexual assault, Wall (2011) describes the conflict being faced by these men in regards to the dominant understandings of masculinity that are present within patriarchal societies. He views these understandings as being marked by sexism and homophobia, allowing for the relationship between homosexuality and gender and that of homophobia and prejudice to be further evident. Rumney (2009) raises the question of whether these negative societal attitudes expressed towards homosexuality would function as an additional form of victimisation to those individuals already having to cope with their initial victimisation. This study goes beyond the idea of such a double victimisation and gives support to show that queer-identified survivors face many alternate forms of indirect victimisation after their initial assault. The many barriers identified in this study could very well each pose as their own form of additional victimisation. This can be mostly seen within the areas of homophobia, lack of services, and issues within the law. The road to recovery through reporting is not an easy road for any survivor, and their encounters with many of the barriers identified in this study may allow them to feel further victimisation in addition to what they have already had to go through.

The need for additional research on the various subtle differences that queer-identified men experience in regards to the barriers they face has been highlighted within research (Todahl, Linville, Bustin, Wheeler, & Gau, 2009). This study has begun to examine some of these nuances, particularly through its inclusion of gay and bisexual survivors and their views. Many of the men in this study wanted their voices to be heard. Their comments highlight that there are differences present, and that sexual assault cannot be grouped under one umbrella term with the assumption that all victims will experience the same reactions and barriers.

This study helped to illustrate many of the myths that surround the sexual assault of gay and bisexual men. With homophobic reactions appearing to play a large role in preventing gay and bisexual men from going to the police, it can be seen that many of these reactions are further perpetuated by the presence of such myths. Wall (2011) states that the internalised homophobia within gay and

bisexual male survivors can easily be linked to the societal myths that result in the further reinforcement of the self-blame survivors can experience. Many of the survivors interviewed framed some of their discussions of the barriers they experienced in ways that showed this increased self-blame. This was particularly expressed by those survivors who were assaulted while under the influence of alcohol. It was quite common to hear these individuals make quick remarks about how they may have been partially to blame for having gone out and been drinking. These views are likely associated with homophobic attitudes that seek to place the blame on them for their assault. Many of these attitudes may be those that are expressed by other men. Studies have shown that heterosexual men tend to express more homophobic attitudes than do women (Davies, 2004; Kite & Whitley, 1996).

With the New Zealand Police being a male-dominated institution where less than one-third of officers are women (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2012), the likelihood of survivors encountering a heterosexual officer is higher than that of a female or gay/bisexual male officer. This would often lead survivors into believing that any report made would be met with homophobic reactions as they would be likely to encounter a heterosexual male officer during their reporting, as supported through this study's statements from both key informants and survivors. This further highlights the association between homophobic attitudes and limitations on services for these men. It is important to note here that despite the barrier of homophobia and prejudice seeming to be applicable to gay and bisexual men, it is also a barrier that can function for heterosexual men as well. Heterosexual male survivors reporting to police may encounter many of the myths associated with homophobia and could be assumed to be homosexual themselves and thus judged in homophobic ways based on the fact that they were victimised by another man.

In the context of the queer community, many of the issues identified are unique to this population of men who identify and associate themselves with the queer community itself. It can be seen that with the minimal discussions being made about sexual violence within the queer community, men who live within this community may feel decreased levels of safety in their community when compared to those who live their lives outside of the queer community. Many of the people working in the sexual violence sector may not have a full and complete

understanding of the workings of the queer community. As a result, members of the community may question whether any prospective services will actually be safe and designed to meet their own unique needs (Wall, 2011). With the many ways that gay and bisexual men have been found to be marginalised, the findings pertaining to the queer community in this study support the notion that a lack of focus on sexual violence in the queer community may be in order to avoid further discrimination beyond what they are already experiencing (Todahl et al., 2009).

As social understandings of homosexuality have increased, seen through social movements such as the legalisation of same-sex marriage, we may start seeing decreases in the fears many members of the queer community have. As this study shows that many gay and bisexual men seek to conceal their sexual orientation, we may begin to find decreases in this as social acceptance of gay and bisexual men begins to increase. The power of societal myths may begin to decrease as well, yet current held myths continue to show various specifications to gay and bisexual male survivors by the ways in which they operate.

This study highlighted ways in which the law itself has some queer-specific aspects that hinder reporting, such as New Zealand's definition of rape, which excludes gay and bisexual men from being legally understood to having been raped. Many of the barriers identified in this study may have influences within the criminal justice system and its judicial processes as well, such as issues with consent and evidence needed for both reports and court processes. In these findings, awareness is raised to the fact that many of these barrier areas can also show effects beyond the issue of reporting to the police. Future studies should aim to further understandings in this area by continuing to examine how gay and bisexual men are marginalised within the criminal justice system and the effects of the various barrier areas identified.

Turning to limitations of gay and bisexual men, this study helped to highlight the ways that this group of individuals becomes limited within the area of services for sexual assault survivors. In general, services for male survivors are never as readily available as those for female survivors (Bullock & Beckson, 2011). Participants within this study identified not only the lack of services for all men in New Zealand regardless of orientation, but also highlighted the current absence in specific services for gay and bisexual men that aim to incorporate their needs into the programmes they offer.

Max's comment about how he would have been less willing to report his assault had it involved actual penetration shares a common thread with the findings of additional research showing that the act of penetration itself makes male survivors less likely to seek out counselling services (Monk-Turner & Light, 2010). In addition to this, participants also helped to support Bullock and Beckson's (2011) assertions that, while the power dynamic of an assault against a gay or bisexual man is similar to that of an assault against a woman, the work of many feminist-based groups can function in ways that limit available services, especially in regards to those of the medical community. This was supported in this study by participant comments highlighting the way that feminist-based counselling services are sometimes tailored to the needs of women and do not sufficiently address aspects of masculinity and its role in the abuse of gay and bisexual men. Many of the barriers they face are similar to those of women, yet services need to be aware of the specific differences present and ensure that their approaches account for these differences rather than treating individuals with approaches that have been seen to work with female survivors. Men's general reluctance to approach counselling services was noted within this study, and participants felt the involvement of queer-identified men is needed within the sexual violence sector to best address the queer-specific concerns of this group of men.

Finally, there are some important aspects regarding the mental health of gay and bisexual men that need to be addressed. Prior research has shown that gay youth, in particular, face an increased vulnerability regarding issues of mental health (Garnets, Herek, & Levy, 1990). Additionally, research has also shown that there is an increased likelihood for trauma-related anxieties, borderline personality, substance abuse, dissociative symptoms, and risky sexual behaviour that could result in increased risks of contracting HIV among men-who-have-sex-with-men (Kalichman et al., 2001; Leigh, 1990). With these mental health issues in mind, future efforts need to be made to address the role that they play in reporting sexual assault as well as any effects the assault itself may have on them. This study helped to show that mental health poses a barrier to reporting while also highlighting the way that a lack in reporting can contribute to decreased levels of mental health in survivors. Survivors themselves can face many issues within their mental health prior to the assault occurring, such as depression and

anxiety associated with not being able to be open about their sexuality. The focus on the area of mental health thus becomes even more pertinent to further understandings in how to best address the needs of those gay and bisexual survivors who may have had issues regarding their mental health prior to the assault occurring, working towards preventing these concerns from rapidly worsening after the occurrence of an assault.

**Barrier linkages.** Gay and bisexual men face a large number of barriers when deciding whether or not to report a sexual assault to the police. The relationships presented help to show the ways in which many of these barrier areas can be linked to one another. In addition to these direct relationships, many of the identified barrier areas can also be indirectly influenced by other areas. An example of such an indirect influence can be seen between the area of culture and religion and that of family views. Examining the comments made in these areas, a direct relationship was not found within the current study. Despite this lack of a direct relationship, one can easily understand the many ways in which cultural and religious views and teachings may influence the views of a family member.

With the large number of ties that can be made between identified barrier areas, it becomes evident that a decision not to report will likely result from experiencing the effects of more than one specific barrier. The following summary and diagram (Figure 8) based on Rangi's account of his abuse helps to illustrate the ways that survivors may easily become tangled within the complex webs formed by these barrier linkages. The diagram provided is simplified to show many of the barriers and their possible linkages experienced by Rangi. In actuality, there are likely many more linkages that could exist and be incorporated within this web, and the likelihood of being able to derive a complete picture of every single aspect is a challenging feat. This example makes use of the details Rangi provided in his interview, as well as identified barriers and relationships, to give what is felt to be a good overall depiction of the many barriers he would have faced in deciding to report and their relation and influence to one another.



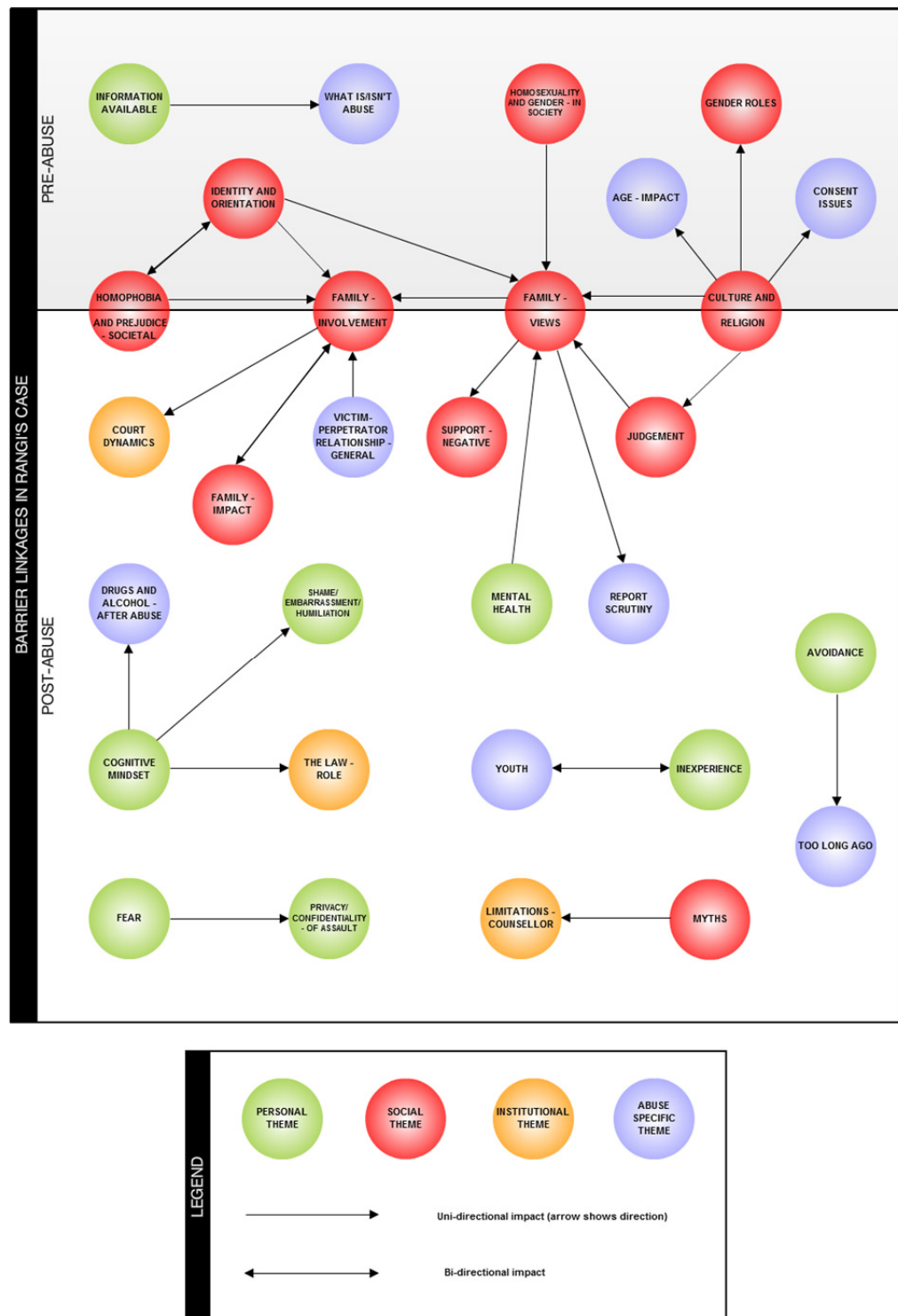


Figure 8. Example of barrier linkages in Rangi's case.

To help understand the barrier linkages in Rangi's case it is important to understand the background of his abuse. Within his interview, Rangi identified himself as a gay Māori man who is part of a large whānau. He has identified with his gay sexual orientation since his youth, and this is something that his mother and many brothers are aware of. His abuse stems from his childhood. Rangi stated that he was sexually abused by uncles on both his mother and father's side of the family. He also disclosed having been abused by a priest upon entering boarding school. The abuse he experienced affected him in many ways, and it was only recently that he began to talk about it with service providers and his family.

The barriers that Rangi faced, which resulted in him choosing not to report to the police, are illustrated in Figure 8. From this figure, one can see that the majority of these barriers had an impact on Rangi after the occurrence of his abuse, yet it can also be seen that some barriers would have been in place prior to the abuse having happened. In addition, four barrier areas appeared to have an impact both pre and post-abuse. The various linkages between barriers coming out of Rangi's interview are also shown within the figure, along with arrows to indicate the direction in which the impact occurs. Colour has been included in the figure to allow for an ease in understanding the linkages between barrier themes; with green orbs being used to represent areas within the personal theme, red orbs for the social theme, orange orbs for the institutional theme, and blue orbs for the abuse-specific theme. From a quick glance, it is apparent that the majority of the barriers affecting Rangi fell within the social theme, with relatively few being noted within the institutional theme. This further shows the relative weights of each theme as found both within the literature and the present study.

Rangi commented within his interview on some of the ways that barriers may have had a role before his abuse took place. One of the more simpler ways discussed was that he had never been taught about what would be considered good or bad touching. This is shown within the diagram as a lack of information available impacting on understandings of what is or is not abuse. In his discussion pertaining to culture, Rangi made statements in relation to being raised to respect your elders and do whatever they ask of you. He also stated that it is quite uncommon to see men cry within his culture, and that this was something he only experienced twice in his life, both times occurring at a funeral. This impact

of culture is shown within the figure, with the relationship between gender roles and culture and religion also having emerged from the study's findings.

Additionally, Rangi's statements also give way to the direct impact culture and religion can have on the views of the family as well as the way in which these views are mitigated by judgements after the occurrence of abuse.

Furthering discussions relating to the views of the family, Rangi commented on the fact that sex was never talked about within his house when he was growing up. It can be seen that this lack of discussions on sexuality may have been impacted on by both societal perceptions of homosexuality and gender as well as understandings in regards to identity and orientation. From Rangi's interview, it appears as though his mother's understanding of these areas may be somewhat limited, as she is currently making efforts to further understand the issues behind these areas after having been informed about the abuse. With this being said, it appears as though her involvement would be influenced by the views she holds. This impact of family views on family involvement is depicted within the figure.

The involvement of Rangi's mother, along with his siblings, was something that was mentioned often within his interview. The majority of discussions in this area were focused on post-abuse, yet Rangi did disclose that his brothers used to try to beat him up in hopes of turning him straight. This negative involvement of his brothers can be seen to stem from the impact of homophobia and prejudice within society as well as a limited understanding of sexual orientation. Both these two areas can also share an impact with each other, as depicted within the figure.

Turning towards Rangi's family involvement after the abuse, Rangi disclosed the fact that one of his abusers had tried to exhibit control of him around his family. This shows the way in which the victim-perpetrator relationship can impact on the family's involvement. A linkage can also be noted between the family involvement and the impact on the family, as highlighted by Rangi's fear between having his mother too involved and the effects this may have on her. Rangi's fear of getting the family too involved is shown by the fact that all he desires is to have his abusers apologise for his actions rather than pressing charges and taking them to court. This linkage between the family's involvement and court dynamics is also shown within Figure 8.

As familial factors appear to be at the forefront of Rangi's reasons for not reporting, we can further see linkages between the views of the family and other barrier areas. Rangi disclosed the difficulty he experienced in trying to get his family to accept that the abuse actually did happen to him. He felt as though this lack of acceptance often stemmed from issues regarding his mental health. This impact of mental health on the views of the family is noted within the figure. Having experienced negative views from members of his family, Rangi disclosed that these views led him to receive negative support as well as having his claims scrutinised.

Rangi explained that after being abused, he turned to drugs and alcohol in the hopes of alleviating his negative mental state. This shows the way that cognitive mindset can impact on the decision to use drugs and alcohol after being abused. He also described the way that his cognitive mindset may have led to him experiencing a sense of shame, and may have attributed to his decision not to press charges. These relationships were ones that were found within this study. Rangi also said that he is still considering going down the path of making a report in the future, yet this decision on what role the legal process would play is currently under the influence of his cognitive state of mind.

With many of these linkages between barriers being discussed, there were also some less interwoven linkages brought forth in Rangi's case. His disclosure of the way in which he experienced fear of losing his mother, should he choose to tell her about the abuse, led him to keep his abuse hidden for many years. This shows the way that fear can be linked to privacy and confidentiality of assault. Rangi's decision to move on with his life while hiding his abuse, choosing to talk about it only recently, helps to illustrate the way that avoidance can be linked with time concerns of abuse having occurred too long ago. Rangi also made statements about the ways in which he was uninformed about sexuality in youth, leading him to believe that what he experienced was something men may commonly do, thus feeling as though it was normal behaviour at the time. This shows the way in which youth and inexperience can share a link between each other.

Finally, brief conversation was made about a prior attempt to seek counselling. Rangi explained the way in which a counsellor he dealt with many years ago was influenced by societal myths, leading to statements being made regarding the possibility of Rangi becoming an abuser himself in the future. This

impact of societal myths on the counsellor led Rangi to shy away from counselling for many years, only choosing to seek further counselling more recently.

This snapshot of Rangi's abuse highlights the many barriers he experienced as well as the interactions between them. It may look complex at first glance, yet in actuality this level of complexity would likely be further increased had a larger amount of time been spent interviewing Rangi and getting him to open up with additional information about his abuse. With this being said, the diagram suits its purpose of helping to show the complexity of barriers and their interactions. Not all individuals will experience the same linkages between barrier areas, as each survivor will have gone through their own experience. By looking at this diagram, it can be more readily understood that survivors do not choose to refrain from reporting their abuse to the police for simply one or two reasons. Their decision not to report would rather stem from a complex interweaving of various barrier areas. With the complexity of such barrier networks, we can thus begin to further understand the many difficulties survivors can face when choosing to report to the police.

**Implications of reduction methods.** The many comments made by participants regarding methods to decrease barriers allowed for the reduction theme to emerge as a fifth and separate theme associated with barriers. The theme of reduction may not have been central to the focus of this thesis, but still remains important to consider as many of the suggestions made were highly beneficial in addressing methods for reducing barriers identified in the study. Most importantly, not only do the suggestions in this area provide ways to decrease barriers, but each of the areas within this theme would likely work to decrease more than one barrier area at a time if implemented.

One example of the way in which multiple barriers can be decreased is found within Andy's suggestion that police officers go out into the queer community more often. Such a reduction solution could lead to a reduction in barriers associated with a lack of knowledge, queer community, and perceptions of police, for instance. It would allow for a positive police presence within the queer community addressing any concerns that arise, while also allowing members of the community to become more informed about the services they can

receive from the police. This would likely also result in current police perceptions shifting towards those of a more positive nature, ultimately allowing future survivors to feel more aware and comfortable about approaching the police in regards to a sexual assault.

Individual solutions may seem simple enough to implement, but one solution alone will not be able to cover the wide range of issues relating to reporting by gay and bisexual male survivors. There are many challenges that can arise in regards to the implementation of reduction solutions. These challenges are faced not only by those working within the sexual violence sector, but also by researchers, educators, the queer community, and any policy makers who are involved (Carmody, 2009).

Those who are seeking to take steps in implementing reduction solutions must also remain aware of the fact that many male survivors may not be open about their sexual orientations. Suggestions made by participants in this study about increasing media attention on the issues surrounding assault would likely prove beneficial, especially if done in a way that emphasises confidentiality. It has been discussed in research (Pierre & Senn, 2010) that online advertising of services, such as the telephone numbers of various helplines as well as the services that the police provide for assault victims, may be beneficial to the many survivors who are unsure or 'closeted' about their sexual orientation and go online to seek out advice. This may seem to be a viable solution, but it is important to keep in mind that material being delivered needs to remain accurate.

In this study, Gary highlighted the way in which a simple search he conducted for online material to distribute to survivors resulted in many websites providing information that was inaccurate or had inappropriate wording. Appropriate language and wording are very important to the advertising of available services. This study showed how the language used by those working with survivors can be detrimental to survivors' willingness to make reports to the police. The use of gender-neutral language has been suggested in order to ensure limited judgements are made (Frankowski, 2004). This can be done by using the word partner rather than husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend, or other gender-related terms. This would allow survivors to feel comfortable in knowing that they are not being judged based on their sexual orientation.

Clearly, the many solutions put forth by participants in this study would

likely have positive effects on allowing survivors to increase their willingness to report, yet the ways in which they can become implemented are not straightforward and easy solutions. Another major limitation in this area is the cost associated with putting solutions into practice. Solutions that appear to be costly to implement may be met with a lack of available funding, ultimately leading those involved to turn to less-costly solutions no matter how well the original solution may have worked. Lack of funding was mentioned in this study, and is often cited as a primary concern by various organisations within New Zealand's sexual violence sector.

The recent appointment of New Zealand Cabinet minister Paula Bennett to oversee the ministerial responsibilities of the sexual violence sector brings with it a possibility for funding concerns for New Zealand's sexual violence sector to be addressed (Radio New Zealand, 2013). As demands for services increase, assurance that adequate funding will begin to be provided is hoped for in order to meet these growing demands. It is my hopes that this thesis will help to contribute to a growth in awareness of the needs of gay and bisexual victims of sexual assaults, as well as the many barriers and challenges they face in deciding to disclose their victimisation to police. New Zealand has begun to take a stance on issues of sexual abuse, and the growing demands for funding and services to fit the needs of gay and bisexual male survivors should be included within future efforts to reduce abuse and increase reporting within New Zealand.

**Limitations.** One of the limitations of this study was that nothing was explicitly stated within interviews to indicate that the abusers needed to be men. Much of what participants said was done so under the assumption that survivors would be sexually assaulted by other men. Only a limited amount of comments were made about the fact that the assault can also occur at the hands of a female abuser. It would have been beneficial to have indicated to participants that the assault did not necessarily have to be perpetrated by a man. By avoiding the tendency to adhere to assumptions that perpetrators are men, there would have been an increased ability to have allowed for greater discussions on differences that could have resulted in barriers if survivors had been victimised by women.

As this study consisted of six key informants and four survivors, future research should aim to make use of a larger sample size in order to allow for

increased generalisation to the population of focus. For this study, two of the key informants interviewed identified as New Zealanders but had gained most of their work experience overseas. This poses a limitation as the responses they provided may have been biased based on their experiences with survivors outside of New Zealand. The difficulty in recruiting a police officer from the New Zealand Police to serve as a key informant also limited the study somewhat by failing to account for the internal views of the police force. Efforts to try to lessen this were made through the recruitment of two survivors, one of which was a former police officer and the other who serves as an external consultant to the New Zealand Police.

Another limitation present lay within the reliance on key informants for the recruitment of survivors. This method could easily allow for key informants to prepare survivors on what to say prior to being interviewed. Additionally, it also allows for selection of suitable survivors to be made based on the opinions of the key informant doing the recruitment. In this study, one of the key informants knew of a possible survivor to contact for recruitment but felt that they may have had too many mental health issues to be fully aware of what would be involved with the study. The decision to exclude this possible survivor based on their mental health status seemed reasonable but could have resulted in the missing of pertinent information, particularly in regards to those survivors who are experiencing poor mental health.

Recruitment criteria for this study stated that participants had to be over the age of eighteen, and thus any interested survivors below this age needed to be excluded from the study. As the findings show that there are many implications for youth as well, it would have been beneficial to have recruited survivors under the age of 18 to allow for a better understanding of the barriers faced by youth in today's society. Many of the participants within the study disclosed the barriers they faced within their youth, but this information fails to account for differences within society and youth culture over time. Future efforts to include youth within studies such as this would allow for an increased understanding of the barriers that youth are currently experiencing and being affected by.

Finally, the way in which the thematic analysis itself was conducted may show a limitation, in that there are many various ways it can be performed and each approach could result in a different interpretation of the results (Mays, Pope, & Popay, 2005). It was felt that the nature of this study would benefit more from



a qualitative design to allow for data to emerge from interview texts, yet future methods of addressing this topic would benefit from employing the use of triangulation to allow for increased validation of any emerging data (Curtis & Curtis, 2011; Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011).

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

This thesis set out to discover and reflect on the various barriers gay and bisexual male survivors of sexual assault encounter when it comes to making a report to the police. Prior research in this area is sparse and lacks in providing a clear overall picture of the various barriers these men face. A specific gap in information pertaining to that of the New Zealand society and its survivors also exists. To address this gap and assist in providing an overall representation of barriers, it was vital to include the insights of both survivors of sexual assaults and service providers in this research. Through the narratives they provide based on their lived experiences and knowledge of the topic, a gain can be made in increasing understandings of the various barriers in existence that contribute to the under-reporting of sexual assault. Discussions also allowed room for inquiry on suggestions to help reduce any current barriers and increase rates of reporting.

As society is continuously increasing its efforts in understanding and including aspects of sexuality within discussions of social issues, it is now time for these efforts to include a focus on the abuse of gay and bisexual men. Most importantly, this shift away from traditionally held heteronormative views needs to further increase societal awareness that sexual abuse can happen to anyone of any gender and orientation (Welch & Mason, 2007). Despite many barriers to reporting being faced by any survivor regardless of gender or orientation, it is important to be aware of the specific ways gay and bisexual men are affected, rather than letting their abuse fall subject to the myths that seek to blame them or disregard their claims under the incorrect beliefs that sexual assault is something only women can face. This study focused on assisting in furthering understandings in the area by developing its findings based on the views of service providers and gay and bisexual male survivors living within New Zealand/Aotearoa.

To gather insights on barriers, this research employed semi-structured interviews with six key informants and four survivors of sexual assault. Of the survivors interviewed, three identified as gay and one as bisexual. Their experiences with sexual assault ranged from having been abused as children, to more recent cases of assault in adulthood. All participants within this study were over the age of 18 and living in New Zealand, allowing for a culturally

appropriate perspective to be given.

The findings of this research showed many parallels to what had been found within the literature. Much of what was talked about tended to pertain to social and personal factors, with a more minimal focus being given to the ways that institutional and abuse-specific factors function to hinder reports from being made.

The barriers identified in the personal theme included defence mechanisms, cognitive mindset, revisiting, knowledge, emotions, privacy/confidentiality, past experience, and mental health. Barriers present within the social theme consisted of family, queer community, support, culture and religion, homosexuality and gender, myths, judgement, homophobia and prejudice, and location and environment. Institutional barriers included poor responses, services and counselling, cons to reporting, the law, court dynamics, limitations, and police. Within the abuse-specific theme, the barriers present included time, need for proof, victim-perpetrator relationship, age, drugs and alcohol, disclosure of details, consent issues, report scrutiny, and labelling and defining. As for the themes surrounding the reduction of barriers, these included services, youth, police, information, reporting process, and societal attitudes.

All the barriers identified under the social theme, except for the area of judgement, were consistent with what was found in the literature. Judgement was not explicitly stated within the literature, but can be easily seen to overshadow many of the other barriers identified. Barriers within the personal theme were generally covered in both the study and the literature, yet there seems to be a gap in the literature pertaining to the importance of the cognitive mindset of survivors. This was an area that was largely discussed in interviews and deserves further exploration in further studies to better understand the ways that the thought patterns of these individuals can contribute to under-reporting.

The tendency to focus on societal and personal barriers may be due to their ability to come to the forefront of a survivor's thoughts in comparison to barriers within the institutional and abuse-specific themes. Many of the participants interviewed had limited experiences in dealing with institutions such as the police and the courts, which could possibly contribute to the minimal discussions on the role institutional barriers play. These discussions were not as uniform in how they came across during interviews, as many participants only made mention of one or

two barriers areas within the abuse-specific theme. Overall, institutions do seem to play a role in under-reporting, yet future studies would benefit but examining the ways in which they operate further.

Abuse-specific barriers were quite vast, yet not as commonly discussed within the current literature on the topic. The findings helped to show that youth, in particular, may have differing encounters with many of the barriers identified than adult survivors. This gives further justification to examining youth issues beyond the general scope of barriers in future studies. A comparative study would be beneficial in addressing differences between barriers faced by youth and those of adults, along with the impact and weight these barriers have on reporting.

Many of the complexities surrounding reporting were discussed, helping to illustrate the importance of understanding the ways barriers can form interconnected networks with one another. With the seemingly overwhelming array of barriers identified, conversations with participants helped to emphasise that as each survivor's assault is unique, so too would be their experience with barriers to reporting. As an example, Rangi was able to open up and offer some insight into the way different barriers played out for him based on his experience of abuse. The information he provided allowed for a representation to be created that shows an example of not only the various barriers he encountered in his experience, but also the complexity that results from the interconnected relations between barriers.

The many subtle nuances present for gay and bisexual men were also central to understanding their challenges with barriers to reporting. Much of what they experience can be faced by any individual regardless of sex or orientation, yet queer-specific differences become pertinent in increasing understandings of the topic. With prior research identifying the need to address these differences (Todahl et al., 2009), efforts were made to include this within discussions. A particular emphasis was given in regards to aspects of the law and mental health of gay and bisexual survivors. Future research should examine queer-specific details in greater depth, particularly in hopes of furthering equality for gay and bisexual men within the law and the criminal justice system.

From interviews with survivors, it became more and more clear that these men are desperately hoping to see an increased shift in societal understandings of sexual abuse of gay and bisexual men. The challenges they faced having

encountered many of the barriers identified will hopefully begin to decrease as further research becomes available on this topic. In taking the first steps to try to work towards this change, participants offered their suggestions on methods that could be put into practice to assist in reducing many of the present barriers. Many of these suggestions emphasised the importance of further education on sexual abuse of gay and bisexual men, particularly within the queer community as participants felt that this is something that is not being adequately done at present. The suggestions they offered appear to be highly beneficial, as they can easily result in reductions in multiple barrier areas through their implementation. With this being said, the difficulty faced in receiving funding for any solutions was also commonly stated by service providers. This was examined further in regards to the implications of the suggested reduction methods. It will be interesting to see if Paula Bennett's recent appointment to oversee sexual violence organisations (Radio New Zealand, 2013) will take into account the increased demand for addressing the needs of gay and bisexual male survivors, and account for this in terms of funding allocation.

With research in this area still in its infancy, it is my hope that this study will be useful in bringing focus to these issues for gay and bisexual men, particularly within New Zealand. Not only does this study contribute in valuable ways towards the ever growing New Zealand based literature, it also highlights the concern in addressing this problem within a changing society worldwide that is beginning to offer further inclusion for gay and bisexual men. The findings of this study are beneficial to furthering research in this area, but are by no means a final solution to this problem. Rather, they allow for increased understandings in the area, giving hope that these barriers can be sought to be reduced in the future. I anticipate that such future efforts will make the decision and ability for reporting to the police much easier for survivors of sexual assaults, allowing for increased reports to be seen and justice to be rightfully served.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Participant Letter (KI)

Peter Patlakas  
*School of Psychology*  
 Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
 The University of Waikato  
 Private Bag 3105  
 Hamilton, New Zealand 3240

Tel: 022 071 2236  
 Email: peterpatlakas@hotmail.com



To whom it may concern,

RE: Identifying Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assaults to the Police for Gay and Bisexual Victims in New Zealand/Aotearoa

My name is Peter Patlakas and I am a graduate student at The University of Waikato. I am currently conducting research for my Master of Science degree in Psychology, focusing on the identification of barriers that prevent gay and bisexual men in New Zealand/Aotearoa from reporting sexual assaults to the police.

As much of the research on barriers to reporting currently focuses on barriers for women and men in general, my research will attempt to identify issues that are specific to gay and bisexual male victims. As a gay male myself, I feel passionate reducing the barriers that affect these victims, allowing for an increased ability for offences to be reported to the police. Identifying these barriers will be of the utmost importance if we want to achieve a goal of increased police reporting.

In order to best discover what stops gay and bisexual men from reporting sexual assaults to the police, I am approaching service providers who would likely provide services for this group, to invite them to be interviewed for my research and serve as key informants. Your role as a key informant would be one of sharing your expert insights on barriers you have seen clients face in your practice. Any statistical information you could provide that may be beneficial to this project would also be appreciated. In addition to this, I am also encouraging any interested key informants to assist in recruiting any gay/bisexual survivors of sexual assault that would be willing to disclose their views on the barriers that exist.

If you are interested in serving as a key informant, I need your role to involve service provision to gay and bisexual men who have been victims of sexual assaults. Any survivors you may assist in recruiting for this research should identify as being gay or bisexual males who have been victims of sexual assaults, as well as being willing to engage in conversations around the barriers they faced within an interview. If you are unable to serve as a key informant you may still be able to assist in recruiting survivors.

I would be grateful if you would be able to assist in recruitment by providing anyone whom you feel may be interested with a copy of the attached letter and information sheet. At the bottom of the letter for interested survivors, there is a space for key informants to add their name, helping to make the recruitment process more clear for survivors.

In order to not cause any risks to survivors, I ask you to please not include any people whom you feel may be negatively affected by participating in this study.

If you are interested in acting as a key informant, please read through the attached information sheets and contact me to arrange an interview time. If you require further copies of the letter for survivors, feel free to contact me and I will provide these for you.

Kind regards,

Peter Patlakas

## Appendix B: Participant Letter (S)

Peter Patlakas  
 School of Psychology  
 Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
 The University of Waikato  
 Private Bag 3105  
 Hamilton, New Zealand 3240

Tel: 022 071 2236  
 Email: peterpatlakas@hotmail.com



To whom it may concern,

**RE: Identifying Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assaults to the Police for Gay and Bisexual Victims in New Zealand/Aotearoa**

You will have received this letter from a service provider you have been in contact with, though that service provider has not provided me with any information about you (not even your name).

My name is Peter Patlakas and I am a gay male originally from Canada who is completing research towards my Master of Science in Psychology at the University of Waikato. Included with this letter you should find an information sheet providing you with further information of what is involved within the study I am conducting. In short, I would like to invite you to talk to me about the barriers that you feel gay and bisexual men experience in regards to reporting sexual assaults to the police, as well as any barriers you may have personally experienced yourself.

Your personal contribution to this study would be greatly appreciated. Interviews will be conducted at the University of Waikato, and transportation can be arranged for you should you wish.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this information. The choice to participate in this study is entirely up to you and the service provider who referred you to me will have no knowledge of whether or not you agree to participate.

If you are interested in contributing to this study, please read the information sheet attached. (If the information sheet is not attached, please contact me to have one sent to you.) Also, feel free to contact me at any time if you would like any further information about this study.

Kind regards,

---

Peter Patlakas (Researcher)

---

Referring Service Provider

## Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet (KI)

Peter Patlakas  
School of Psychology  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
The University of Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton, New Zealand 3240

Tel: 022 071 2236  
Email: peterpatlakas@hotmail.com



### Identifying Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assaults to the Police for Gay and Bisexual Victims in New Zealand/Aotearoa

#### Key Informants

#### What is the study about?

This study seeks to identify barriers that gay and bisexual men who have been victims of sexual assaults in New Zealand face in regards to reporting to the police, through the use of information from key informants and survivors. The research results will be used for my Master's thesis while also being a valuable source of information in regards to future efforts in tackling these barriers.

#### Who is involved in the study?

This study will be conducted by me, Peter Patlakas. I am a gay male student, originally from Canada, and am currently completing my Masters of Science in the School of Psychology at the University of Waikato. I will be supervised by Cate Curtis and Neville Robertson. Their contact details as well as my own are provided at the end of this information sheet. You are welcome to contact anyone involved with this study should you have any questions regarding this research.



#### Why am I being asked to participate?

As a member of an agency or group that provides services to victims of sexual assaults, specifically those involving gay and bisexual males, you will have a valuable perspective and insight into the barriers these individuals face in terms of reporting sexual assaults to the police in New Zealand.

### What will I be asked to do?

I would like you to participate in a one-on-one interview with me at a time and place that suits us both. The interview will last for approximately one hour.

### What will I be asked during the interview?

I am interested in your insights as service providers on the barriers that you feel affects gay and bisexual males when it comes to reporting sexual assaults to the police. I would like to open discussion to themes such as ...

- Thoughts around reporting sexual assaults.
- Barriers that gay and bisexual men face in reporting sexual assaults to police.
- Personal experiences and opinions of barriers.
- Ways to reduce barriers.
- Any further information you can contribute to the study.

### What happens to my information?

Our conversation will be recorded. In addition, I may also take written notes during the interview. From these, I will type up our conversation into a transcript which I will send to you for comments and corrections. You will also be able to withdraw any information at that point that you feel should not be included in the study.

You will be asked to get any feedback to me within two weeks of the date of receiving the transcript (approximately three weeks from the interview). If I do not hear from you by then, I will assume that you are fine with the transcript.

The information you give will be combined with other information on the topic and analysed to be used within my Master's thesis.

### Will others know who I am?

Generally, no. In writing my research, I will refer to you by a pseudonym (fake name). All potentially identifying information such as locations and identifiable events will be removed in the writing. However, while all care is taken to protect your personal privacy, it is possible that you may be recognised by some readers, particularly if you hold a specific position or specialised profile role.

The completed thesis may be potentially accessible by the public through the university library. Information obtained from this study may also be used in the preparation of an article for submission to academic journals. Should you wish, a summary of the findings of this research can be made available to you upon completion of the study.

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

You are entitled to ...

- Ask questions about the study.
- Ask for the audio recorder to be switched off at any point during interview should you want to state any information and not have it included in the transcript.
- Refuse to answer specific questions.
- Withdraw from the research during or after the interview up to two weeks after I have sent you the interview transcript for comments.
- Have the information from the interview corrected, added to, or withdrawn, up until two weeks after I have sent you the interview transcript.
- Be given details on how to access completed results.
- Expect that any information you provide is kept in secure storage. All information will be stored in password protected files accessible to only the researchers involved in the study.
- Contact me or my supervisors if you have any questions or concerns, or if you would like to receive further information about the study.



### Will there be any risks or discomforts in participating?

It is possible that some topics may cause some discomfort. However, you can refuse to respond to any question and we will move on to another topic. Counselling and support numbers will be provided for you to access for various service providers.

### What do I need to do now?

If you would like to participate in this study, please contact me. Alternatively, I will be in touch with you if I have not heard back from you within a few days. We will then negotiate a time and place to meet that suits us both. I would prefer to talk with you in person, but if that is not possible, I could arrange an interview over the telephone or through Skype. You can also email me your views on this study at the contact email provided below.

### Contact Details

Researcher: **Peter Patlakas**, Master of Science student, School of Psychology, The University of Waikato. *Phone:* 022 0712236. *Email:* peterpatlakas@hotmail.com

Primary Supervisor: **Dr Cate Curtis**, School of Psychology, The University of Waikato. *Phone:* 07 8384466 ext 8669. *Email:* ccurtis@waikato.ac.nz

Secondary Supervisor: **Dr Neville Robertson**, School of Psychology, The University of Waikato. *Phone:* 07 8384466 ext 8300. *Email:* scorpio@waikato.ac.nz

This research has been approved by the School of Psychology Ethics Committee. You may contact the Committee Convenor, **Dr Nicola Starkey**, School of Psychology, The University of Waikato. *Phone:* 07 8384466 ext 6472. *Email:* nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz

## Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet (S)

Peter Patlakas  
School of Psychology  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
The University of Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton, New Zealand 3240

Tel: 022 071 2236  
Email: peterpatlakas@hotmail.com



### Identifying Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assaults to the Police for Gay and Bisexual Victims in New Zealand/Aotearoa

#### Survivors

#### What is the study about?

This study seeks to identify barriers that gay and bisexual men who have been victims of sexual assaults in New Zealand face in regards to reporting to the police, through the use of information from key informants and survivors. The research results will be used for my Master's thesis while also being a valuable source of information in regards to future efforts in reducing these barriers.

#### Who is involved in the study?

This study will be conducted by me, Peter Patlakas. I am a gay male student, originally from Canada, and am currently completing my Masters of Science in the School of Psychology at the University of Waikato. I will be supervised by Cate Curtis and Neville Robertson. Their contact details as well as my own are provided at the end of this information sheet. You are welcome to contact anyone involved with this study should you have any questions regarding this research.



#### Why am I being asked to participate?

As a survivor of a sexual assault, you will be able to provide personal insightful information as to the barriers gay and bisexual men face in reporting sexual assaults to the police within New Zealand.

#### What will I be asked to do?

I would like you to participate in a one-on-one interview with me at a time and place that suits us both. You may also bring a support person with you to the interview if you would like. The interview will last for approximately one hour.

#### What will I be asked during the interview?

I am interested in your personal insights as a survivor on the barriers that you feel affects gay and bisexual males when it comes to reporting sexual assaults to the police. I would like to open discussion to themes such as ...

- Thoughts around reporting sexual assaults.
- Barriers that gay and bisexual men face in reporting sexual assaults to police.
- Personal experiences and opinions of barriers.
- Ways to reduce barriers.
- Any further information you can contribute to the study.

#### What happens to my information?

Our conversation will be recorded. In addition, I may also take written notes during the interview. From these, I will type up our conversation into a transcript which I will send to you for comments and corrections. You will also be able to withdraw any information at that point that you feel should not be included in the study.

You will be asked to get any feedback to me within two weeks of the date of receiving the transcript. If I do not hear from you by then, I will assume that you are fine with the transcript.

Portions of the transcript will be combined with other information on the topic and used within my Master's thesis. The completed thesis may be potentially accessible by the public through the university library. Information obtained from this study may also be used in the preparation of an article for submission to academic journals. Should you wish, a summary of the findings of this research can be made available to you upon completion of the study.



### Will others know who I am?

Generally, no. In writing my research, I will refer to you by a pseudonym (fake name). All potentially identifying information such as locations and identifiable events will be removed in the writing. However, while all care will be taken to protect your personal privacy, it is possible that you may be recognised by some readers, particularly if you are an individual who may have been involved in a high profile case with details already in the media.

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

You are entitled to ...

- Ask questions about the study.
- Ask for the audio recorder to be switched off at any point during interviewing should you want to state any information and not have it included in the transcript.
- Refuse to answer specific questions.
- Withdraw from the research during or after the interview up to two weeks after I have sent you the interview transcript for comments.
- Have the information from the interview corrected, added to, or withdrawn, up until two weeks after I have sent you the interview transcript.
- Be given details on how to access completed results.
- Expect that any information you provide is kept in secure storage. All information will be stored in password protected files accessible to only the researchers involved in the study.
- Contact me or my supervisors if you have any questions or concerns, or if you would like to receive further information about the study.

### Will there be any risks or discomforts in participating?

It is possible that at certain points topics may cause some discomfort. You can refuse to respond to certain questions and we will move on to another topic. Counselling and support numbers will be provided for you to access for various service providers.

### What do I need to do now?

If you would like to participate in this study and contribute to my research, please contact me. We will then negotiate a time and place to meet that suits us both. I would prefer to talk with you in person, but if that is not possible, I could arrange an interview over the telephone or through Skype. You can also email me your views on this study at the contact email provided below.

### Contact Details

Researcher: **Peter Patlakas**, Master of Science student, School of Psychology, The University of Waikato. *Phone:* 022 0712236. *Email:* peterpatlakas@hotmail.com

Primary Supervisor: **Cate Curtis**, School of Psychology, The University of Waikato. *Phone:* 07 8384466 ext 8669. *Email:* ccurtis@waikato.ac.nz

Secondary Supervisor: **Neville Robertson**, School of Psychology, The University of Waikato. *Phone:* 07 8384466 ext 8300. *Email:* scorpio@waikato.ac.nz

This research has been approved by the School of Psychology Ethics Committee. You may contact the Committee Convenor, **Dr Nicola Starkey**, School of Psychology, The University of Waikato. *Phone:* 07 8384466 ext 6472. *Email:* nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz

## Appendix E: Consent Form

### Consent Form



School of Psychology



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

#### PARTICIPANT'S COPY

Research Project: Finding the Key: Identifying Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assaults to the Police for Gay and Bisexual Victims in New Zealand/Aotearoa

Name of Researcher: Peter Patlakas

Name of Supervisor (if applicable): Cate Curtis & Neville Robertson

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Nicola Starkey, phone: 838 4466 ext.6472, e-mail nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz)

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Consent Form



School of Psychology



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

#### RESEARCHER'S COPY

Research Project: Finding the Key: Identifying Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assaults to the Police for Gay and Bisexual Victims in New Zealand/Aotearoa

Name of Researcher: Peter Patlakas

Name of Supervisor (if applicable): Cate Curtis & Neville Robertson

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Admin\_com/psychology forms/consent form

## Appendix F: Support Contacts Hand-Out

*If you are in need of someone to talk to  
the following services can help:*

- **OUTLine** (Free, confidential telephone counselling service for the GLBTTFIQQ community)
    - Phone: 0800 OUT LINE (688 5463)
    - Website: [www.outlinenz.com](http://www.outlinenz.com)
    - Hours: Weekdays 10 AM – 9 PM, Weekends/Holidays 6 PM – 9 PM
  - **Lifeline** (Free, professional counselling and support)
    - Phone: 0800 543 354
    - Website: [www.lifeline.org.nz](http://www.lifeline.org.nz)
    - Hours: 24 Hours, 7 Days/Week
  - **Youthline** (Free, confidential and non-judgemental counselling service for youth)
    - Phone: 0800 376 633
    - Website: [www.youthline.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz)
    - Hours: Monday to Saturday 4 PM – 10 PM, Sunday 7 PM – 10 PM
- 

*If you are in need of someone to talk to  
the following services can help:*

- **OUTLine** (Free, confidential telephone counselling service for the GLBTTFIQQ community)
  - Phone: 0800 OUT LINE (688 5463)
  - Website: [www.outlinenz.com](http://www.outlinenz.com)
  - Hours: Weekdays 10 AM – 9 PM, Weekends/Holidays 6 PM – 9 PM
- **Lifeline** (Free, professional counselling and support)
  - Phone: 0800 543 354
  - Website: [www.lifeline.org.nz](http://www.lifeline.org.nz)
  - Hours: 24 Hours, 7 Days/Week
- **Youthline** (Free, confidential and non-judgemental counselling service for youth)
  - Phone: 0800 376 633
  - Website: [www.youthline.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz)
  - Hours: Monday to Saturday 4 PM – 10 PM, Sunday 7 PM – 10 PM

## Appendix G: Interview Guide (KI)

Peter Patlakas  
 School of Psychology  
 Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
 The University of Waikato  
 Private Bag 3105  
 Hamilton, New Zealand 3240  
 Tel: 022 071 2236  
 Email: peterpatlakas@hotmail.com



### Identifying Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assaults to the Police for Gay and Bisexual Victims in New Zealand/Aotearoa

#### Key Informant Interview Guide

#### Preliminaries

- ☐ Thank interviewee for taking part.
- ☐ Introduce myself.
- ☐ Explain the nature of the project and how the information will be used.
- ☐ Reiterate confidentiality and anonymity issues surrounding recording.
- ☐ Check if there are any questions that need answering.
- ☐ Confirm consent (written or verbal if requested by participant).

#### Context

1) To get started, I would like to get a bit of background information about yourself and the type of work that you are involved in.

- ☐ From what type of educational background does your experience come from?
- ☐ What is the role of the organisation you work for?
- ☐ What is your role within the organisation?
- ☐ What responsibilities are involved in your role?

2) As we are interviewing based on the key role you play in helping gay and bisexual victims of sexual assaults as well as others, I would like to ask you a few more questions about the services you provide.

- ☐ What exact services do you offer?
- ☐ Are these services free to victims or is there a cost?
- ☐ How do victims find out about your services?
- ☐ Any specific services for gay and bisexual victims?

### Experiences and Perceptions

3) Now could you tell me about your observations working with gay and bisexual victims of sexual assaults, in particular around reporting to the police?

Possible prompts:

- ☐ Challenges dealing with gay and bisexual victims of sexual assaults?
- ☐ Sexuality's impact on services provided? How?
- ☐ First person they turn to for support?
- ☐ Further referrals?
- ☐ Importance of reporting sexual assaults to police?
- ☐ Discussions on why they haven't reported?
- ☐ Reasons they state they do not go to the police?
- ☐ Interpretations and conclusions for non-reporting?
- ☐ Specific barriers preventing gay and bisexual men from reporting to the police?
- ☐ Any emphasis placed on reasons/benefits for reporting?
- ☐ Should victims report more to the police, and why?
- ☐ Frequency of non-reporting, and stats associated?
- ☐ Relate with the victims reluctance to report? In what ways?
- ☐ Personal experiences/stories you to illustrate barriers that gay and bisexual men face?
- ☐ How would you advise gay and bisexual men to best go about reporting?
- ☐ How can we challenge barriers?
- ☐ Any false barriers?

### End Interview

4) That's about all the questions that I have to ask you. Is there anything else that you feel we didn't cover that would be important or useful for me to know? Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me today. Hearing about your experiences working with gay and bisexual victims of sexual assaults helps me to better understand the nature of the barriers they face when it comes to reporting to the police. I appreciate the time and effort you have put into discussing this with me. Hopefully we will be able to get an increased understanding of how we can best serve these victims and decrease the barriers they face in reporting these types of assaults. Thank you again for your time.



## Appendix H: Interview Guide (S)

Peter Patlakas  
School of Psychology  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
The University of Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton, New Zealand 3240

Tel: 022 071 2236  
Email: peterpatlakas@hotmail.com



### Identifying Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assaults to the Police for Gay and Bisexual Victims in New Zealand/Aotearoa

#### Survivor Interview Guide

#### Preliminaries

- ☐ Thank interviewee for taking part.
- ☐ Introduce myself.
- ☐ Explain the nature of the project and how the information will be used.
- ☐ Reiterate confidentiality and anonymity issues surrounding recording.
- ☐ Explain that the main focus of the interview is in regards to the nature of barriers to reporting, and how these barriers could be dealt with, rather than the assault itself.
- ☐ Check if there are any questions that need answering.
- ☐ Confirm consent (written or verbal if requested by participant).

#### Context

1) To get started, I would like to get a bit of background information about yourself and your background.

- ☐ How would you describe your sexuality?
- ☐ How long have you identified with your indicated sexuality?

2) As we are interviewing based on your experience as a gay/bisexual survivor of sexual assaults, I would like to ask you a few further questions about the background.

- ☐ Did you seek any services after the assault?
- ☐ Was the assault related to an intimate partner or a stranger?
- ☐ Are you comfortable in discussing reasons for not having reported to police?
- ☐ Are you currently making use of any continued support services?

### Experiences and Perceptions

3) Many men find it hard to report sexual assaults, and often never do. I would like to get an understanding of the reasoning you feel this may be, and how this may be different for gay and bisexual victims of sexual assaults. Now I would like to ask you some questions regarding your decision to not report the sexual assault. I won't ask specific details about the assault, but if you feel that some details may be needed to explain your reasoning for not reporting, feel free to discuss them. Are you comfortable with going on?

Perhaps we could begin with who you told about the assault, if any one?

Possible prompts:

- ☐ First person you told?
- ☐ How long before telling anyone?

What about support services?

- ☐ When did you come in contact with support services, and why?
- ☐ Any further support to help cope?
- ☐ Anything done or said that made it more difficult for you?

Now, could you tell me of your thoughts or experiences about reporting to the police?

- ☐ What made you decide not to go to the police?
- ☐ Did not reporting make thing better or worse, and why?
- ☐ What specific barrier would you say there are for gay and bisexual men?
- ☐ How are these barriers different than those for women and men in general?
- ☐ Did you face any of these barriers yourself, and how?
- ☐ Would you advise other victims to report or not, and why?
- ☐ What do you think could be done to increase reporting to the police?



#### End Interview

4) That's about all the questions that I have to ask you. Is there anything else that you feel we didn't cover that would be important or useful for me to know? Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me today. I know can be really hard to discuss this topic in detail. I really appreciated hearing about your personal experiences in regards to the barriers you faced when deciding whether or not to report the assault, as it helps me to understand these issues better. The information you have given me will help me to better understand the nature of barriers gay and bisexual men face when decided whether to report an assault to police or not. I appreciate the time and effort you have put into discussing this with me. It is a very hard topic to sit down and discuss, but your efforts will be able to get an increased understanding of how we can best serve gay and bisexual victims and decrease the barriers they face in reporting these types of assaults. Remember that if this interview has brought up anything you would like to talk about, counselling services are readily available for you. Thank you again for your time.

## Appendix I: Post-Interview Letter (KI)

Peter Patlakas  
School of Psychology  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
The University of Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton, New Zealand 3240

Tel: 022 071 2236  
Email: peterpatlakas@hotmail.com



Dear

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and allow me to interview you for my research. The knowledge you have contributed is highly valued and I offer you my sincerest gratitude for sharing that information with me.

Attached is a copy of our interview transcript for your review. Please take this opportunity to read through it and let me know if you feel any corrections are necessary, not only any wording changes that may be needed, but also delete or expand further on sections you feel need more detail. Please return the transcript in the envelope provided, within 2 weeks, if you have made any changes. If I do not receive anything back from you by the end of this time then I will assume you have read through the transcript and feel it is an accurate record of our conversation.

I appreciate your participation in the interview process and know that it may have been somewhat of a challenging and difficult process. Should you feel that our conversation brought up any issues that you would like to discuss with someone, I encourage you to make use of the support services listed on the sheet given to you at the end of the interview. I have also listed the support services on the back of this letter.

Thank you once again for taking the time to share and contribute your knowledge to this important research. Should you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Regards,

Peter Patlakas (M.Sc. Student Researcher)

*If you are in need of someone to talk to  
the following services can help:*

- **OUTLine** (Free, confidential telephone counselling service for the GLBTTFIQQ community)
  - *Phone:* 0800 OUT LINE (688 5463)
  - *Website:* [www.outlinenz.com](http://www.outlinenz.com)
  - *Hours:* Weekdays 10 AM – 9 PM, Weekends/Holidays 6 PM – 9 PM
- **Lifeline** (Free, professional counselling and support)
  - *Phone:* 0800 543 354
  - *Website:* [www.lifeline.org.nz](http://www.lifeline.org.nz)
  - *Hours:* 24 Hours, 7 Days/Week
- **Youthline** (Free, confidential and non-judgemental counselling service for youth)
  - *Phone:* 0800 376 633
  - *Website:* [www.youthline.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz)
  - *Hours:* Monday to Saturday 4 PM – 10 PM, Sunday 7 PM – 10 PM

## Appendix J: Post-Interview Letter (S)

Peter Patlakas  
School of Psychology  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
The University of Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton, New Zealand 3240

Tel: 022 071 2236  
Email: peterpatlakas@hotmail.com



Dear

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and allow me to interview you for my research. The discussions you have contributed are highly valued and I offer you my sincerest gratitude for sharing your personal insights with me.

Attached is a copy of our interview transcript for your review. Please take this opportunity to read through it and let me know if you feel any corrections are necessary, not only any wording changes that may be needed, but also delete or expand further on sections you feel need more detail. Please return the transcript in the envelope provided, within 2 weeks, if you have made any changes. If I do not receive anything back from you by the end of this time then I will assume you have read through the transcript and feel it is an accurate record of our conversation.

I appreciate your participation in the interview process and know that it may have been somewhat of a challenging and difficult process. Should you feel that our conversation brought up any issues that you would like to discuss with someone, I encourage you to speak with the service providers that referred you to this project and/or make use of the support services listed on the sheet given to you at the end of the interview. I have also listed the support services on the back of this letter.

Thank you once again for taking the time to share and contribute your knowledge to this important research. Please enjoy the \$10 coffee voucher enclosed as a token of my appreciation for the important contribution you have made to my study. Should you have any further questions to comments, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Regards,

Peter Patlakas (M.Sc. Student Researcher)

*If you are in need of someone to talk to  
the following services can help:*

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  - *Hours:* 24 Hours, 7 Days/Week
- **Youthline** (Free, confidential and non-judgemental counselling service for youth)
  - *Phone:* 0800 376 633
  - *Website:* [www.youthline.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz)
  - *Hours:* Monday to Saturday 4 PM – 10 PM, Sunday 7 PM – 10 PM

## Appendix K: Presentation Slides for the NZ Police

### Barriers to reporting sexual assaults to police for gay and bisexual men: Preliminary thesis findings

M.Sc. Thesis in Psychology

Peter Patlakas

The University of Waikato  
peterpatlakas@hotmail.com

(Patlakas, 2013)

### Thesis Background

- **Aims:** Identify themes surrounding barriers and suggestions on ways to decrease them
- **Interviews:** 6 service providers, 4 gay/bi male survivors of sexual assault
- **Key Areas Identified:** Personal, Social, Institutional, Abuse Specific, Reduction

(Patlakas, 2013)



## Barrier findings applicable to police:

### Personal

- **Shame/Embarrassment/Humiliation:** "...or they're literally being laughed out of the police station. I've heard of that happening to people"
- **Expertise:** "You know, if you've had no previous dealings with the police... then I don't think that people actually really know... you know, what training the police have had, whether they've got, uh... that there's this liaison person I think apparently at the moment"
- **Information Available:** "Which was kind of... they didn't really explain a lot to me, and what to expect"

(Petlakos, 2013)

## Barrier findings applicable to police:

### Social

- **Identity and Orientation (Issues):** "A lot of cases actually go unnoticed as being homophobic or potential homophobic... because no one is saying anything about it"
- **Homophobia (Institutional):** "And so if a gay guy's been sexually abused... who's... you know, the public aren't going to be too worried because they'd probably think he's asked for it. And the police are more likely to take the side of the public, but that is changing"
- **Myths:** "...offender based stats, saying that 'there's a very high...', something like 'forty-percent of our group turn into offenders', who wants to say that they've been sexually abused? And our kids are picking this up too, because 'everyone's going to think that I'm going to become an abuser'. You know? So this shuts a door"

(Petlakos, 2013)

## Barrier findings applicable to police: **Institutional**

- **Police (Perceptions):** "Most of the people that I've spoken to, especially male survivors like my partner who's been sexually abused, said that they don't have trust in the police"
- **The Law (No Understanding):** "Yeah. I mean, I think the law is probably a barrier that queer men are, umm, they're probably--. Most queer men I talk to are *really* unaware of how protected they are under the law"
- **Poor Responses (Historical):** "Yeah, I mean it gets down to stories that they've heard from other people. You know... the collective *they*. So *they* see the police as a whole unit of homophobes, you know, because a friend or a friend of a friend of theirs thirty-years-ago had something happen and that's it. So there's all that anecdotal stuff that would prevent people from coming forwards for sure"

(Petlakos, 2013)

## Barrier findings applicable to police: **Abuse Specific**

- **Report Scrutiny (Not Taken Seriously):** "Basically, a lot of male survivors that I've spoken to that I know have been sexually abused have said that they haven't reported it. The reason being that half of the time the New Zealand Police just throw it out and go 'ah, it's not a big deal'. Where if it was a female? Oh, it would be a big case, it would be on the news, you know? It would be on Police Ten 7"
- **Labeling and Defining (Types of Abuse):** "I didn't really get raped, but someone tried doing stuff. They didn't really succeed and I don't really... it was externally. So if it was actually rape, I would feel a lot more... ashamed and stuff. I wouldn't have done what I had done exactly. I probably would have not reported it to the police if I actually got held down"
- **Drugs and Alcohol (On Reporting):** "And again, maybe if they were high and got abused and assaulted or whatever, they wouldn't do it because they don't want to get in trouble for the drugs"

(Petlakos, 2013)



## Question

What can we do  
to address  
these barriers?

(Petlakos, 2013)

## Barrier findings applicable to police: **Reduction**

- **Information (Education):** "All I can think of is just... having more word of mouth going around that the cops are there. They'll hear any case, any story, they won't make any (inaudible) judgements. So it's really about, you know... getting that word of mouth around and getting the police, certainly DLO's, more visible"
- **Reporting Process (Increase Ease):** "I think what would be good is if there were specially designated officers who had special training, who could handle the whole thing from beginning to end and who weren't just like where you walk into the police station and you pick miscellaneous cop and you have to tell your story"
- **Youth (Outreach to Youth):** "I mean, I don't know how much females get educated about rape, but I doubt any high school would be talking to males about if you get raped, because 'males don't get raped' right?"

(Petlakos, 2013)

And there are many more...



(Patlakas, 2013)

Thesis will be available on the University of Waikato library website once completed

[www.waikato.ac.nz/library](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/library)

Contact Info:

Peter Patlakas  
The University of Waikato

[peterpatlakas@hotmail.com](mailto:peterpatlakas@hotmail.com)

(Patlakas, 2013)