

# Wanting to tell, but not knowing how

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MALE SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS' DISCLOSURE PROCESS

ODA SOPHIE GULLVIK FRAFJORD



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Oda Sophie Gullvik Frafjord

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Department of Sociology and Human Geography

Faculty of Social Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO



UiO : **Department of Sociology and Human Geography**  
University of Oslo



## Abstract

Sexual violence is a prevalent problem in Norway. However, male sexual assault victims are rarely emphasised in official action plans and service policies. While female victimization is more common than male, the observed gender discrepancy may be artificially high because men more rarely disclose their victimization. Previous research on male sexual victimization is limited; the bulk of research comes from biomedical disciplines. Few studies are based on a sociological perspective, in particular from the Nordic context.

In this thesis, I will investigate sexual victimization experiences in a sample of Norwegian men and their process of disclosure. I draw on sociological theories of grooming in the victimization process. Grooming is defined as a process by which a person prepares a child, significant adults, and the environment for the abuse of this child. I also use theories of stigma, in particular in the tradition after Erving Goffman, as well as theories and research on rape myths and masculinity.

I have conducted nine individual interviews with male victims of sexual assault, each lasting between one to two and a half hours. The informants were recruited by word-of-mouth from an acquaintance of mine and from support organizations for victims of sexual violence.

The results are presented in three empirical chapters: First, I outline the typical victimization process, and show how grooming was a key element. Second, I describe years of secrecy, selfblame, shame and stigma among the participants. Third, I outline key elements in the process of disclosure. These are the key findings:

- Consummated rapes typically characterized the victimization, and perpetrators were in a position of trust and authority. Grooming of both the victim and their environment was consistently part of the victimization process. Most victims never tried to disclose during the period they were assaulted.
- The victims had problems in understanding what had happened to them, still they developed feelings of self-blame and guilt. Typically, they tried to suppress or trivialize the assaults as a way to move on with their lives. For some, this created extensive disclosure delays, because the memories got so distorted that they had a hard time making sense of them once they were confronted by their past years later.

- When they gradually began to remember and recognize what had happened, they faced societal barriers linked to stereotypes of the typical sexual assault victim, masculinity ideals and institutional blocking. All informants had eventually disclosed their victimization, typically to their partners. When asked directly by the police, three informants disclosed to them. It took between 7 and 61 years before they disclosed.
- For some informants this was due to physical or mental health symptoms, resulting in a perceived necessity to open up and search support. However, for some judicial aspects were important, as they disclosed when an official investigation of their perpetrator was initiated.
- More generally, narrative resources and role models were also important, meaning that when someone the informants could recognize themselves in, publicly disclosed their victimization it showed the informants that they were not alone, that what they had experienced indeed was a sexual assault.

The conclusion is that disclosure barriers are created before the onset of assault through the process of grooming. Once the assault(s) has happened, the informants are confused, feels shame and uncertainty and try to forget. After years of suppressing and trivializing, their social and health problems grow bigger and suppression og trivializing is not working for them. Therefore, they want to find a way to disclose. The facilitators varies, but all have in common that the informants use them to disclose to someone they trust. Disclosing to someone they trust is not necessarily negative if it is followed by disclosing to the authorities or public service providers. However, if the disclosure does not go beyond those closest, the service provisions for male victims of sexual assault will not be developed.

## Foreword

First and foremost I must thank the informants who made this thesis possible. You have given me your time, trust and your personal stories. I appreciate you being so open and vulnerable with me, even though I know it cost you emotionally. Thank you so much.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Jonathan, my very first informant, waved at me from the front porch telling me to go to the back of the house and onto the terrace. The sun was behind him, so I could only make out his outline. As I walked closer to the terrace, I saw him: A man nearly two meters tall, weighing at least 100 kilos. As he introduced himself, I noticed his voice was dark and loud. He was not at all what I had imagined. Then again, I hadn't really imagined anything. Never had a stereotypical image of the male sexual assault survivor been on my mind. In fact, not counting the past year, never had male sexual victimization much occupied my thoughts, been discussed, or disclosed to me. Sexual violence is a field of research that interests me greatly - perpetrated against the female population, including transgender people, lesbians, and bisexuals. But never have I stopped to ask, "what about the male population?" Sure, I knew that there existed men who had experienced sexual violence, but I always associated that with something *other* than the sexual violence that occurs every day. My ignorance, given my scholarly interest in particular, is inexcusable. However, I understand how many in our society may still be somewhat ignorant about the issue. We rarely hear the stories the male victim of sexual assault has to tell, and they are still a highly stigmatized and invisible group in our modern society.

On the origin of stigma, the perhaps most significant contributor to the topic, Erving Goffman, writes that the term stigma was coined by the Greeks, which referred to physical markers that "exposed something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier. The signs were cut or burnt into the body and advertised that the bearer was a slave, a criminal, or a traitor - a blemished person, ritually polluted, to be avoided, especially in public places." (Goffman, 1963: 11). Goffman further writes that today the term is applied more to the disgrace itself, less to physical evidence of it (ibid.)

Tyler & Slater (2018) argues that when examining stigma, we must also look at where stigma is produced, by whom, and for what. The consequences one faces after being subjected to a sexual assault is often explored and explained within the clinical and institutional settings (Hlavka, 2017: 483). Of course, psychological perspectives are vital for the victims and their care in the healthcare profession. However, psychology often operates at a micro level.

Therefore, to research the disclosure barriers of male sexual victims, one must also raise the question to a macrosocial level to see how the levels influence each other in creating disclosure barriers. Cultural narratives can influence who is stigmatized, and in turn contribute to sexual assault victims internalizing that stigma (Hlavka, 2017: 483). To only explore the individual level would be to disclaim society's liability. Keeping this in mind, this thesis will explore both societal and individual barriers for disclosure.

## A brief historical overview

The 20th century saw a series of shifts in attitudes and beliefs regarding sexual violence. For much of the century, the existence of this phenomenon had been denied or severely minimized. In Norway the shift into including males as potential sexual assault victims can be seen in the 1962 revision of the Norwegian penal code, which included:

*«People of both genders can be both subject and object to most sexual offences» (Justis og politidepartementet, 1962: 1, my translation)*

However, by the mid-1970s and early 1980s, child sexual abuse (CSA) had become a topic in the mental health field, but the victims were still largely categorized exclusively as females (Mendel, 1995: 7-8). Despite the development in beliefs and knowledge regarding childhood sexual abuse since the 20th century, many male victims still felt underrecognized and underserved (Mendel, 1995: 8).

The world has changed since Mendel wrote about the slow development regarding acknowledgment of male sexual assault victims in 1995. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that this field has developed a great deal over the last 26 years. However, the following quote from the Norwegian health-researcher Torbjørn Herlof Andersen (2012), who has specialized on male sexual victimization, shows that is not necessarily the case:

"The way the phenomenon "male victims of sexual assault" is constructed and understood have developed very little since I over 14 years ago got close to the field. The inertia in the discourse surrounding "the male part" of assaults is astounding" (Andersen, 2012: 90, my translation).

Cohen (2014) further writes that the neglect of male victims of sexual assault crosses disciplinary, political and theoretical boundaries. Therefore, the broad existing literature on sexual assaults remains skewed towards female victimhood in general. In those instances male victims are recognized in literature it is largely limited to institutionalized settings, such as prisons (p. 35).

Despite the historical gap in Norwegian research concerning male sexual victimization, there was a Norwegian study conducted in 1986 that did include male sexual victimization. In this study by Sætre, Holtet & Jebsen (1986) they found that in their sample of 1017 respondents, 14 percent of the males had experienced sexual assault before the age of 18, compared to 19 percent of the female respondents (p. 26). They further hypothesize that the perceived gender discrepancy in sexual assault rates in research is based on male's reluctance to view themselves as victims, as this contrasts their identity as men and traditional gender roles, and because they are afraid to be perceived as gay (p. 55). Other than this study, conducted 35 years ago, the research on sexual assaults in a Norwegian and sociological setting does not, to my knowledge, discuss or theorize on male sexual victimization in other concerns than prevalence.

Sexual violence is a prevalent challenge in Norway. Official statistics show that police reported cases of sexual violence have more than doubled from 2008 to 2018, with a slight decrease from 2018 to 2019. This does not necessarily mean that more sexual assaults are committed. The increase in reported cases may also result from more victims reporting the violence they have been subjected to. The number of police reported cases of sexual assault is relatively high, with 6744 reported cases in 2020 and 6 744 in 2019 (SSB, 2021).

In June 2017, The Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) asked the government to present a new action plan against rape and develop measures that specifically ensure a more comprehensive follow-up of rape victims in meetings with public authorities, the judiciary, and the health service. Simultaneously, the Parliament asked the government to ensure rape victims across the country access to sexual assault clinics and ensure full financing of the sexual assault clinics. Furthermore, the Parliament requested the government to implement several measures that ensure the police and the judiciary's competence in rape and abuse (Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet, 2019: 10).

In the action plan against rape, the Ministry of Justice and Public Safety (Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet, 2019) writes that rape victims need timely and competent medical follow-up access. Additionally, they write that an essential prerequisite for good and comprehensive follow-up of abuse victims is that all health personnel have sufficient competence in the physical and psychological consequences of abuse. The health legislation clearly states that healthcare services are responsible for preventing, detecting, and stopping violence and abuse (p. 18). Competence in healthcare is essential because many people find their situation so difficult that they do not seek emergency services. According to the Ministry of Justice and Public Safety (2019) vulnerable people often blame themselves and want to hide what has happened. Men, to a lesser extent than women, seek help after abuse (p. 34).

In 2007, an advisory document for staff in the public health care system, the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services (Sosial- og helsedepartementet), highlighted the difficulties in sexual assault disclosure for men. They wrote that men are generally afraid of the prejudices in the support services. Men who have sought help in the healthcare of the judicial system tell stories of being met with disbelief or skepticism (p. 13).

Although the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health and Care Services recognize that men to a lesser extent than women seek professional help, they do not provide any concrete measures concerning assistance after rape for men. However, they write that the sexual assault clinics (overgrepsmottakene) should be made known in all parts of the population but emphasize that they will spread easily accessible and multilingual information about the sexual assault clinics. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that this measure is primarily aimed at females and the ethnic minority population, not men (p. 42). Men are not mentioned as potential victims in the "targeted efforts" portion of the action plan. Besides, men are highlighted as perpetrators who need targeted efforts to understand and respect boundaries and be made aware of the consequences of being reported for sexual assault (p. 31).

Although sexual violence is a significant issue in our society and the government and various organizations work to shed light on the problem, prevent and prosecute these offenses, parts of the population's victimization largely remains a silent issue. These groups include, but are not limited to, males, transgender, non-binary, elderly, ethnic minorities, and the disabled. The targeted efforts and action plans from the Norwegian government represents one of the challenges facing men – they are mainly considered as potential assailants, not as potential victims. One could make the argument that this is reasonable, considering women are

subjected to sexual violence far more often than are men. However, we still need to ask: Does this mean that the men who are victims doesn't deserve our attention?

## The importance of disclosure

A key aim of the study is to obtain new knowledge regarding the disclosure process after male sexual victimization. When disclosing assault, previous studies suggest that the victim is more likely to reach out to an informal resource, such as a friend or family member, than to a formal resource, such as the police or a health care facility. However, overall rates of disclosing to anyone are low (Fleming & Muscari, 2021: 207).

Fleming and Muscari (2021) further argues that disclosing a traumatic event may have a positive impact on their health and future help seeking (p. 208).

From a sociological standpoint, one can elaborate on this argument. With better mental health one can become more involved in society, and disclosing can therefore have a positive effect in the areas of work, family life, education, economy and participation in society. In addition, if male victims of sexual assault do not disclose their victimization, there will not be developed sufficient service providers for them. By not disclosing and creating the need for public service, one creates a circle of invisibility: male victims don't get the help they need, because they don't disclose - but they don't disclose because they are not provided services. Because the consequences of not disclosing sexual assault can have such an impact, not only on the individual level, but also on the meso- and macrolevel, it is important to explore what hinders disclosure – and what facilitates disclosure. In addition, it is important to explore the effect of disclosure: what was the response? As Jackson, Valentine, Woodward & Pantalone (2017) finds, negative responses to disclosure – especially from formal resources – can lead to a secondary victimization where the victim perceives the response to be victim-blaming and shaming (p. 276).

## Research questions

There are, to my knowledge, no previous studies on disclosure processes of male sexual assaults in a Norwegian context. Therefore, this thesis will explore this topic by aiming to answer the following research questions:

1. How was the victimization process?

First, I will explore the victimization process, focus on who the perpetrators were, what kind of acts were involved and whether grooming was a key element.

2. What were the disclosure barriers in my sample?

Second, I focus on the possible consequences of the assaults, in terms of secrecy, selfblame, shame and stigma among the participants, and how these created disclosure barriers in the sample.

3. What can facilitate disclosure for male victims of sexual assault?

Third, I will try to identify key elements in the process of disclosure. What were the facilitators? To whom did the victims tell about the victimization?

### *Definitions and clarifications*

The Child, Youth, and family directorate of Norway (Bufdir) defines sexual assaults as “physical and mental violations of another person's sexual integrity”. It includes any sexual act against someone who does not, or cannot, consent (Bufdir, 2018). In this thesis, I will use the term "sexual assault," or SA, which will encompass all instances of sexual violations, from inappropriate touching to rape.

Disclosure is a key topic of this thesis and must therefore be defined. In this thesis disclosure is defined in accordance with Campbell, Greeson, Fehler-Cabral & Kennedy (2015) as: “the act of informing someone about an assault” (Campbell et al., 2015: 825). Further, disclosure can range from the intentional disclosure to the unintentional (blurring it out). Informing to both a formal resource such as the police or health-care services, and to informal resource such as family and friends are included in the definition (Ibid.)

Much of the previous research uses terms such as sexual abuse, sexual assault, and rape. When referencing these articles, the terms they use will prevail. In addition, because much of the research conducted in this field is from the USA and Great Britain, the judicial framework will differ from Norway. Therefore, it is essential to note the laws on sexual assault in Norway for this study. In Norway, the Norwegian Penal Code (straffeloven) relevant laws to keep in mind are attached in appendix 1.

### *Thesis outline*

Chapter 1 presented the background for this thesis, research questions, definitions, and a brief historical overview. Chapter 2 will present previous research concerning male victimization, rape myths and disclosure processes. Chapter 3 will present the theoretical framework - stigma, Nils Christie's influential concept "The Ideal Victim", and research on masculinity. Chapter 4 will describe the method used in this thesis. In chapters 5,6 and 7 the results are presented. Finally, in chapter 8 I discuss the findings and conclude.

## **2.0 Previous research on male sexual victimization**

### Male sexual victimization

Many never report sexual assault, and the number of victims is assumed to be higher than reported to authorities (Ministry of Justice and Public Safety, 2019: 10). The National Criminal Investigation Service's (Kripos) official statistics for 2014 show that there were reported 1223 rapes. Of the reported victims in these cases, 95% were women, and 5% were men (Kripos, 2015: 14).

A prevalence study conducted by Hjemdal & Thoresen (2014) included 20.000 male informants between 18-75 years of age. Their study found that 8,8 % of the male informants reported having experienced at least one of the following:

1. Unwanted sexual contact while intoxicated/unable to consent or stop it.
2. Being touched on the genitals by use of threats or force.
3. Being pressured to engaging in sexual acts.
4. Other forms of sexual violations/assaults.

If all questions of sexual assault are viewed as one, approximately 11,3 % confirmed having experienced at least one form of sexual assault or sexual violation (p. 85). In addition, Thoresen & Myhre (2014) found that 7,8 % of the male informants reported having experienced at least one form of sexual assault or violation before age 18 (p. 62).

The discrepancy between the official statistics presented by Kripos and the statistics found in the prevalence study of Thoresen & Hjemdal (2014) substantiates the claims that there are several unreported male victims of sexual assault.

### Rape myths

Rape myths might be a contributing factor to the discrepancy in police reported male sexual victimization and the self-reporting in prevalence studies.



Stermac, Del Bove & Addison (2004) writes that literature on survivors of sexual assaults has increased, yet it has remained predominantly focused on female victims. The existing societal myths regarding male rape, such as the belief that men cannot be forced to have sex against their will, that men whom men sexually assault must be gay, or the belief that men are less affected by sexual assault than women, is one of the disclosure barriers male victims experiences. These myths also increase the stigma against the male victims - hindering the development of appropriate services and empirical research (p. 901).

Chapleau et a. (2008) writes that rape myths have been a barrier to female sexual assault disclosure and play a vital role in misperceptions and treatment of female rape victims. They further argue that rape myths exist about males as well and that they need to be explored and understood. Less is known about male rape myths than female rape myths. However, previous research has identified these myths: 1) being raped by a male attacker is synonymous with the loss of masculinity, 2) men whom men sexually assault must be gay, 3) men are incapable of functioning sexually unless they are sexually aroused, 4) men cannot be forced to have sex against their will, 5) men are less affected by sexual assault than women, 6) men are in a constant state of readiness to accept any sexual opportunity, and 7) a man is expected to be able to defend himself against sexual assault. Rape myths are stereotypical or false beliefs about victims' culpability, the innocence of rapists, and the illegitimacy of rape as a serious crime (p. 601-603).

Chapleau et al. (2008) also found that men are more accepting of the myth that male rape victims are responsible for being raped than are women. However, men were less accepting of the myth that men would not be upset after a sexual assault and the least accepting of the idea that men do not get raped. Consistent with previous research, men were more accepting of rape myths against both male and female victims. Men's acceptance of rape myths did not significantly differ based on the gender of the victim (p. 611).

Smith, Pine & Hawley (1988) studied the acceptance of rape myths in the general population. They found that men judged male victims of sexual assault by females to more likely have encouraged or initiated the episode, to derive more pleasure from it, and to have experienced less stress. Smith et al. (1988) writes that the overall male reaction to this victim-assailant condition can be summed up by what one subject wrote at the bottom of his rating form: "Some guys have all the luck!" The male subjects' response in this study suggests that they

viewed the episode in sexual terms and failed to grasp the assaultive nature of the rape (p. 110). Smith et al. claim that viewing rape as a sexual rather than an aggressive interaction is a fundamental and widely shared myth in our culture (p. 110). In their study, while showing a general pattern of responses that paralleled the more extreme judgments and attributions of the males, female subjects viewed the episode as more stressful for both male and female victims. Smith et al. (1988) attribute this response by female subjects to the fact that women, who are far more likely to be the victim of a rape and who appear to have a more realistic conception of it, can empathize with male heterosexual rape victims better than most males can (p. 110).

Javaid (2015a) is also concerned with male rape myths as a barrier to disclosure. He claims that male rape myths silence male victims of rape and exacerbate their victimhood experience, resulting in societies not understanding the full depth of sexual violence and cause victims to be reluctant to report their crime (p. 272). He further claims that the cause of the stereotypes and male rape myths is the gender role socialization and, as a result, the social construction of masculinity that socializes men into becoming sexually dominant, intense, violent, and invulnerable. This socialization process, as such, produces what is known as the myth of male invulnerability (p. 273). Javaid (2015b) further argues that it can be harmful to men's sense of self and their identities as men when they fail to achieve society's gender ideals. He further claims that societal expectations regarding what is required and expected from men challenge perceptions of sexual victimization and victimization in general. These expectations can lead to male victims of sexual assault being perceived as failures as men because they did not fight off their perpetrator (p. 274). After a sexual assault, men may remain silent, which allows them to avoid the stigma and embarrassment expected when reporting a sexual assault to the police (Javaid, 2015b: 289). Javaid (2015b) also argues that not reporting male rape to the police may be regarded as a much more masculine response than "snitching" to the police. When suffering in silence, men can prevent the potential stigma, shame, and embarrassment expected when reporting male rape to the police (p. 278).

Javaid (2015b) argues that, although male experiences of rape and sexual assault are similar to female sexual assaults and rapes, there are some gendered differences in how men deal with these crimes. The gendered differences are particularly essential concerning men's willingness to report to officials and masculine ways wherein some men frame their experiences (p. 271).

## Experiences with professionals

The previous research presented states that men are hesitant to report sexual assaults to the authorities and that they in large part do not seek professional help after an assault. However, it is vital to explore men's experiences with professional support staff when they do seek help, as the assistance they receive may be an essential disclosure facilitator.

In a study conducted by Donnelly & Kenyon (1995), they used the Yellow Pages in a large Metropolitan area to identify a sample of Rape Crisis service providers. All 41 agencies advertising Rape Crisis or sexual assault services were contacted (p.443). They found that 11 agencies indicated that they did not provide services to males and that four agencies had provided services to male sexual assault victims within the past year (p. 444). Ten agencies that have never seen male victims, but theoretically could, said that they would deal with them in the same way as female victims. Most of these informants felt that sexual assaults against men were not a problem; however, they never saw male victims. Few acknowledged that the reason might be that they were unresponsive to these men's needs. Many believe that men could not be raped or that they were raped only because they wanted to be. One law enforcement representative stated, "Honey, we don't do men. Why would you want to study something like that for? Men can't be raped." Other informants indicated that they did not treat men because they saw no need for it (p. 444). One informant in their study pointed out that if male rape were acknowledged as a problem, men would co-opt the publicity and resources needed for women. The informant felt that the small number of men who were victimized did not justify risking resources that could be used to assist women. Furthermore, the law enforcement officials viewed male rape victims as "like women." They spoke of them as being gay and not real men, but pseudo-women. Victims were viewed as weak, passive, and unable to defend themselves (p. 447).

However, it is important to stress that Donnelly & Kenyon (1996) conducted their study in the state of Georgia, USA. As previously noted, the laws on sexual assaults in Georgia are heavily gendered and do not acknowledge male victims' existence. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that studies conducted in Norway, where the laws on sexual assaults are gender-neutral, on the beliefs and assistance to male victims of sexual assault would have quite a different result. However, the advisory document from the Ministry of Health and Care

Services (2007) states that men seeking help after sexual assaults in Norway also report having met prejudice, disbelief, and skepticism from the professional support staff (p. 13).

Javaid (2018) studied the service male rape victims received from the police in the UK. He found that police culture often consists of beliefs, values, norms and cultural knowledge that caused them to view male victims of rape as below women on the “victim-hierarchy”. Their prejudice led to male rape victims not receiving the services they needed (p. 395).

In a study on male victims of domestic violence, Douglas and Hines (2011) found that male victims of domestic violence often experienced disbelief, belittling and hostility from police, medical facilities and domestic violence resources. A large proportion of those who sought help from domestic violence hotlines (63.9%) or online resources (42.9%) were told that they only help women. Of the 132 men who sought help from a domestic violence agency 86 of them said that this resource was not at all helpful. Further, 81 of those men said that they were given the impression that the agency was biased against men, and some of the men were accused of being the batterer in the relationship (p. 480). Concerning police services in their study they found that of 129 informants only 54.9% stated that the police believed that their female partner was the aggressor in the domestic disputes. Regarding the mental and physical medical facilities, only 30% stated that they got information on where to seek help for domestic violence (Douglas & Hines, 2011: 480).

## Disclosing

One can argue that the field of male sexual victimization has been slow to develop because the men who experience sexual assault, despite the severe repercussions they endure, remain silent about their experiences. They, therefore, go unreported (Kripos, 2015: 14).

However, advancing the field is only one of the arguments for facilitating male sexual assault victims' disclosures. As Andersen (2012) pointed out, these men might struggle with health, learning, relationships, and psychiatric illness after the assault. The Ministry of Justice and Public Safety claims that there is consequential damage after sexual assaults for both the victims and the general society because it can affect the victims' course of education, workability, finances, and participation in society in general (p. 17). Therefore, it can be argued that facilitating disclosure for male sexual assault victims will be beneficial for the

victim, who can get help to process and work past the trauma. Furthermore, it might also benefit society because the victim has a better chance of being a productive member of said society. Alaggia, Collin-Vézina & Lateef (2019) claims that "identifying and understanding factors that promote or inhibit child sexual abuse disclosures has the potential to facilitate earlier disclosures, assist survivors to receive services without delay, and prevent further sexual victimization. Timely access to therapeutic services might mitigate risk to the mental health of survivors of all ages" (p. 262).

Steine, Winje, Nordhus, Milde, Bjorvatn, Grønli, & Pallesen (2016) found in their study that it took an average of 17,2 years from the sexual abuse till their informants disclosed to anyone the assault they had endured. The longer the latency in disclosing, the more symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, depression, and insomnia they exhibited (p. 895). This result, however, stems from a study with only 508 informants, and where the informants have disclosed their experiences. Furthermore, this is not a prevalence study, but a study conducted with informants from centers against sexual violence. Therefore, the results can vary in other studies, such as the prevalence study of Hjemdal & Thoresen, which found that 30% of men and women who had endured sexual assaults as adults had never disclosed this to anyone (p. 87). In addition, between 30-50 % of victims of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) had never disclosed this to anyone (p. 66).

Chapleau, Oswald & Russell (2008) claim that men are 1.5 times less likely to report a rape by a male perpetrator to the police than are women (p. 601).

Existing academic literature on male sexual assaults suggests that the prevalence of sexual assault on males is higher than traditionally believed. The limited literature attending to male rape suggests that the consequences of sexual assaults for men are just as distressing as it is for female survivors. Many male victims report feelings of shock, humiliation, embarrassment, behavioral changes, and rape-related phobias persisting for many years after the assault. Longer-term emotional reactions include increased anger and irritability, conflicting sexual orientation, loss of self-respect, and sexual dysfunction similar to female rape victims (Stermac, Del Bove & Addison, 2004: 902). Chapleau et al. (2008) also found that men experience the same post-trauma responses as women, such as vulnerability, depression, suicidal thoughts, sleep disturbances, social isolation, sexual dysfunction, and confusion about their sexual orientation if the perpetrator was male (p. 601).

### **3.0 Theoretical foundation**

#### Power and powerlessness

Previous research claims that male sexual assault, as with female sexual assaults, sexual gratification is not the primary motivation for the perpetrator. The primary motivation is power and control, and, for male perpetrators, to assert their masculinity (Javaid 2015b; Connell 2005; Groth & Burgess 1980).

Hernes (1978) claims that despite it being one of the most common terms concerning creating an understanding of social life, power is also one of the most difficult terms to define. Still, Hernes (1978) provides eight possible definitions, two of which are relevant to this study:

1) Power is power over others, specifically, making others act in ways beneficial to ourselves, even if they resist, by the use of punishment or reward. Power cannot be considered as existing only in pairs but as a network of actors. In other words, we must consider all direct and indirect relationships of dependency that exist between the actors.

2) Power is not something an actor has; it is something one exercises. An actor will invest his resources where they will have the most effect (p. 15-16.)

Furthermore, Hernes (1978) argues that those who exercise power do so to achieve something (p. 23).

Powerlessness is when actors do not have clear interests or do not know that, or how, they are being influenced by others (Hernes, 1978: 134). Additionally, if the cause of the powerlessness is individualized, the search for resolve will be directed inward rather than outward. In general, problems perceived as personal, and not shared with others, will not cause collective action (Hernes, 1978: 138).

Arendt & Janss (2012) claims that, in contrast to strength or force, power does not depend on a single individual but is something that springs from human interaction. Power is always a potential and not immutable, measurable, reliable as force and strength (p.206). Arendt & Janss (2012) goes on to say that only in a "with each other" that is close enough for the possibility of action to be kept open at all times can power arise (p. 207).

Both Hernes' (1978) and Arendt & Janss' (2012) statements about power are made in a political and societal context. However, their remarks are relevant to exploring disclosure barriers and facilitators in male sexual assaults, as power dynamics are present in every level of the experience - from the sexual assault itself to seeking (or not seeking) help, support and healing.

Another perspective on power that is relevant to this thesis is that of Pierre Bourdieu and his symbolic power. Bourdieu (1979) defines symbolic power as “the power to construct reality” (Bourdieu, 1979: 79). Bourdieu (1989) writes that those who clearly possess symbolic power in our society is the government, but they do not have the monopoly and there are always conflicts between symbolic powers in a society that aim to lay claim on the legitimate divisions. In this sense, one can say that “symbolic power is a power of world-making” (Bourdieu, 1989: 22). This world-making often takes form in labels and work through dualist oppositions such as masculine/feminine, strong/weak and high/low (ibid.).

### “The Ideal Victim”

Christie (2018/1986) writes that being a victim is not an objective thing, and it will not be the same to all people in situations one could describe as the same. Potential victimization depends on the participants definition of the situation. Furthermore, he writes that the phenomenon of being a victim can be investigated both at the personality level and at the social system level (p.11). The term “ideal victim” is defined by Christie (2018/1986) as “a person or a category of individuals who – when hit by crime – most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim. The ideal victim is, in my use of the term, a sort of public status of the same type and level of abstraction as that for example of a “hero” or a “traitor.” (Christie, 2018/1986: 12). An example given by Christie (2018/1986) of the ideal victim is the old lady walking outside in the middle of day, on her way home after caring after a sick relative. She is hit and robbed by a big man who takes her money and buys alcohol or drugs with it. The old lady is an ideal victim because of five attributes: (1) The victim is weak. Sick, old or very young people are well suited as ideal victims. (2) The victim was carrying out a respectable project. (3) She was where she could not possibly be blamed for being. (4) The offender was big and bad. (5) The offender was unknown and in no personal relationship to her (Christie, 2018/1986: 12).

Christie (2018) writes that being a victim is not an objective thing, and it will not be the same to all people in situations one could describe as the same. Potential victimization depends on the participants definition of the situation. Furthermore, he writes that the phenomenon of being a victim can be investigated both at the personality level and at the social system level (p.11).

As well as ideal victims, there are also ideal offenders and the two are interdependent – the more ideal the victim is, the more ideal the offender becomes and vice versa. The ideal offender is male, dangerous and far removed from the sphere of the victim. However, just as most victims are not ideal, neither are most offenders. Most offenders are known by the victim and close with them. (Christie, 2018/1986: 18-19.) Christie (2018/1986) makes it clear that the ideal victims are not the most frequent victims, and therefore don't represent the real victims (p. 20).

Bows (2018) writes that the attributes that Christie (2018/1986) deems qualifying for ideal victim status, are nowhere more important than in rape cases and in particular pertaining to how rape myths and stereotypes depicts the “real” victims of rape: young, female and attractive who is attacked by a male stranger late at night on her way home (p. 229). Despite these myths and stereotypes of the classic rape scenario, very few rape situations conform to this idea, and very few victims are ideal (Bows, 2018: p. 232).

## Stigma

Goffman (1963) claims that we categorize people and their attributes into categories where they naturally belong – assuming their social identity, and this categorization allows us to deal with others without strain. This process of categorizing is often subconscious, and we will likely not become aware of them until the person we have placed in a category breaks with our anticipations of them. Thus, there is a difference between a person's virtual social identity – the one we assume they possess – and their actual social identity – the identity they, in fact, have. One (or more) of the attributes his virtual social identity did not reveal, but his actual social identity does, can be bad, dangerous, or weak. This may reduce him from a whole and normal person to a tainted one. These attributes, which make us view him as a tainted person,



are stigmas (p. 11-12). Discrepancies in attributes between virtual and actual social identities do not need to discredit the individual; they might make us regard him in even higher esteem (Goffman, 1963: 13).

Goffman (1963) differentiates stigmatized people as being either discredited or discreditable. The discredited has differentness – stigma markers – that are immediately apparent and known to everyone he encounters. The differentness in the discreditable is not immediately obvious and may even not be known unless disclosed. To the discreditable information, management may be vital for his social survival (p. 57). Visibility, therefore, plays a crucial role in the management of one's stigma. Goffman emphasizes that visibility must not be taken for «known-about-ness». Visibility is when one's stigma is readily apparent and does not need to be told about.

Furthermore, a stigma does not need to be obtrusive, even if it is visible. Lastly, visibility and what Goffman calls «perceived focus» must not be entangled, meaning that different visible stigmas create different perceptions of the one who bears the stigma. For example, we can enjoy a social gathering with an ill person, but we might not think they are a good worker. We might also believe that a person with facial disfigurement is a competent worker, but their disfigurement might make socializing with him difficult (Goffman, 1963: 64-67).

According to Goffman (1963), managing information about one's stigma occurs in one of two ways; passing or covering. Passing is when someone with a discreditable attribute claims to belong in another category than one he truly belongs in. He deceives the ones around him to hide his stigma (p. 93). Covering is when someone admits their stigma or its visible to others, but they try to minimize the visibility or obtrusiveness to keep it from «looming large»(p. 125). Goffman (1963) outlines three different types of stigma: 1) various physical deformities, 2) (perceived) personality traits such as weak will, unnatural desires, treacherous and rigid beliefs, and dishonesty, and 3) race, nation, and religion. Although these stigmas differ from one another, they all entail an individual whose stigma excludes him socially and makes the people around him overlook his other attributes – attributes that may be positive (p. 14).

Goffman (1963) writes that although a stranger might discredit someone, this categorization *can* change. As people gradually grow closer to one another, sympathy, understanding, and a realistic impression of personal qualities will develop, and the discrediting factor may no longer be visible. The categorization does not always change, and

sometimes those with prejudices sustain these even though they get better acquainted with those they are prejudiced against (Goffman, 1963: 68-70).

According to Goffman (1963) there are two ways those without a stigma can react to those with: hostile or accepting (p. 15-19).

Orne (2013) criticizes Goffman (1963) for only considering acceptance or hostility as the possible reactions from others to the revelation of stigma, and that he only considering passing or covering as the possible strategies to avoid others' reactions to ones stigma (p. 230). In his studies of how LGBT+ people deal with the stigma of being queer Orne (2013) found that the reactions described by Goffman represent two extremes, and that there is "the middle zone": "a space where others are ambiguously hostile, uncertain, "tolerant," socially awkward, or invasively questioning of them upon learning of their sexuality" (Orne, 2013: 230). Orne (2013) furthermore categorize the strategies to deal with this middle zone in to three groups, and uses the metaphor of a bullet for the reactions queer people encounter: 1) One can take the bullet or stand in the way of the reactions to educate them, 2) one can deflect the bullet by tailoring ones identity label to appear more acceptable to others, and 3) one can dodge the bullet all together by not socializing with hostile people, and cutting off those who are hostile from future interaction. These strategies are made available to stigmatized people only when they understand the worldviews of the others they encounter. Also, despite knowing that they are viewed by others as discreditable, they remain stigma resistant (p. 230). Orne (2013) seeks to expand our understanding of identity management in four ways: 1) he disagrees that the motivation for stigma management is to avoid hostile reactions, as some stigmatized people confronts hostility head on to educate others, 2) he claims that Goffman homogenizes stigmatized groups, and avoids reflecting on the difference within these groups, 3) Orne criticizes Goffman's identification of sympathetic others, those who provide acceptance to the stigmatized. These safe spaces can often provide the same unsafety that one encounters outside them, and 4) Goffman claims that the stigmatized and "normal" share a frame of reference for a given stigma, which Orne disagrees with (p. 231).

## Masculinity

Previous research claims that male rape myths play a crucial role in male sexual assault victims remaining silent. This is mainly because they are afraid of being viewed as weak, feminine, and gay. Previous research has also found that this fear is not unfounded, as

informants in studies display these views on male victims. It is therefore essential to include theories on masculinity and the role it plays in society.

Connell (2005) writes that masculinity is not something about which a generalizing science can be produced. We can, however, have coherent knowledge about the issues raised in the attempts at generalizing masculinity. She further argues that masculinity should be viewed as part of a larger structure, not an isolated subject (p. 67). Connell (2005) further claims that masculinity exists only as a contrast to femininity and that cultures that do not consider men and women as bearers of polarized character types do not have a concept of masculinity - in the sense of modern European and American culture (p. 68). She further accounts for different views on masculinity, depending on which scientific tradition one subscribes to;

Essentialist definitions often choose one feature which defines the core of masculinity, and then they will hang an account of men's lives on that. There is, however, a weakness to the essentialized approach - the feature they choose is arbitrary, and nothing obliges essentialists to agree with one another (p. 68).

Positivist social science defines masculinity as "what men actually are." Connell (2005) finds three problems with this:

1. Assumptions in gender underpin the "neutral" descriptions of what men actually are.
2. To list what men and women do requires that they first be sorted into the categories "men" and "women."
3. To define masculinity as what men are empirically rules out masculine women and feminine men.

Men differ among themselves. Likewise, women differ among themselves (p. 69).

Normative definitions take the differences among men into account and define masculinity as "what men ought to be." This definition, too, has problems: Few men fit the standards.

Connell (2005) questions what is normative about a norm hardly anyone meets? Does this mean that most men are unmasculine? Moreover, how is it measured? (p.70). Semiotic definitions view masculinity as simply not feminity (Connell, 2005: 70).

Connell (2005) concludes that *masculinity* can be briefly defined as "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (Connell, 2005: 71).

Connell (2005) presents the concept of *hegemonic masculinity* and writes that hegemony refers to one group claiming and sustaining a leading position in social life.

Further, *hegemonic masculinity* can be defined as gender practices that embody the currently accepted answer to the patriarchy's legitimacy, thereby guaranteeing men's dominant position and women's subordination. However, this does not mean that those who most visibly bear hegemonic masculinity are always the most powerful. Hegemonic masculinity embodies the currently accepted strategy for male dominance to remain, and new groups may challenge all solutions and construct a new hegemony should the conditions change (p. 77). She further places hegemonic masculinity on the top of the hierarchy of masculinity, surpassing subordinate, complicit and marginalized masculinities (ibid).

Javaid (2017) claims that male victims of sexual assault are at the bottom of the hierarchy of masculinities, as they fall under the category of subordinate masculinity (p. 9). Further, Javaid (2017) conducted a study on male sexual victimization, finding that sexual assaults affects men's masculinity and self-image, and this hinders them from embodying hegemonic masculinity. In addition, they are excluded from the category of hegemonic masculinity because they were unable to defend themselves during an assault (p. 15).

In order to reclaim their masculinity, some male victims demonstrate it when disclosing their victimization. This is often demonstrated through rationalizing their vulnerabilities by blaming 1) being too drunk to control the situation, or 2) fighting back. Being too drunk will explain why they could not defend themselves during the assault without having to give up their masculinity, while at the same time reasserting it: binge-drinking is often associated with the risk-taking behavior encouraged in hegemonic masculinity. By (successfully) fighting back or getting even, male victims will assert their masculinity as they were stronger than the perpetrator (Weiss, 2010: 289-290).

Connell (2005) writes that what is socially constructed as hegemonic masculinity is not fixed, but can be challenged by new constructs. Yang (2020) argues that we should treat hegemonic masculinity "not as something to abolish, but as something to take over" (Yang, 2020: 328). He further argues that some changes have already been made through feminism and gay rights, and that antihomophobia and antisexism are now ideals we deem worth pursuing (p. 328).

## 4.0 Methodology

In this chapter I will first present the processes of recruitment, interviews, data processing and analysis. Secondly, I will discuss this thesis' data quality. Lastly, I will present the informants.

Data has been generated through a qualitative research design with in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are applied to analyze informants' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences (Tjora, 2012: 105). The thesis is inductive, as it is grounded in empirical data. Theory and previous research have helped focus and delimit topics. The thesis has been ethically advised from Norwegian Center for Research Data<sup>1</sup>.

### Recruitment – criteria and process

To recruit informants I contacted organizations that work with victims of sexual violence per e-mail. The e-mails included consent forms<sup>2</sup>. Those who were willing then spoke with potential informants and either set up the interview for me or gave them my contact information. It has been challenging to recruit informants for this thesis. Given this thesis's theme, an apparent reason for this may be precisely the shame that prevents many men from telling their story. Furthermore, we are currently in the middle of a pandemic, and I have received feedback from gatekeepers that this has been a concern for several potential informants. However, I have not received any information that anyone has said no to contributing because of this, although it is a possibility. I have received help from two organizations that have put me in touch with relevant gatekeepers and informants, in addition to helping me in any way they could. Without the contribution of these organizations, this thesis would not have been possible.

I only had two inclusion criteria regarding informants: 1) They must identify as male, and 2) they must have experienced some type of sexual violation. Regarding criteria 2, the men themselves must define what they have been subjected to as a violation, and I had no demands that the violation must be reported or assessed by others in any way. The results are based solely upon the recollections of the informants. One can discuss whether someone remembers an assault they were subjected to when they were a one-year-old as Peter said he was, or if

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 2: Ethical approval from the Norwegian Center for Research data

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 3: Consent form

many members of a congregation really could sell their young children as prostitutes as Jonathan said happened, but I believe that these informants are telling me the truth, and I will treat the results as such. Maybe Peter didn't experience the assault when he was one, but when he was older, he just got the age wrong. Moreover, maybe Jonathan was actually assaulted by only a minor portion of his congregation, but he remembers it as being many of them. Being wrong about details does not mean we can dismiss that the assault factually took place. Their stories are their own, and I have no way of verifying or falsifying them.

## The interviews

The informants were given the consent form from the gatekeeper that recruited them before we met for the interviews. Before the formal interview setting started, we read through the consent form together and I collected consent. However, the advisor who assessed my application form in the NSD concluded that I could not collect written consent. Therefore, oral consent was given on audio recordings, and all informants consented to the use of audio recordings. The audio recordings were deleted after the transcriptions were complete. Before the interviews, I prepared an interview guide<sup>3</sup>.

Before the interviews, in the preinterview phase (Corbin & Morse, 2003) I explained the informant's rights to withdraw from the study at any point, to read what information has been collected about them and to correct or retract this information. In addition, they were informed that they could make an official complaint to The Norwegian Data Protection Authority if they assessed that their rights had been violated. I made sure to go through the consent form and get oral consent, which was recorded. After the preinterview phase we moved on to the tentative phase where we gradually moved on to the interview itself (Corbin & Morse, 2003: 342). The interview guide starts with warm-up questions about the informants' education, occupation, social network, and background. This thesis explores barriers and facilitators to disclosing male sexual assaults, and collecting data on the informants' background may reveal factors that have functioned as vulnerability factors. In retrospect, these questions, particularly about the backgrounds, may have been sensitive for the informants. Most of the informants have had traumatic and turbulent upbringings, and it might have been better to discuss this later in the interview. Some informants told me about

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 4: Interview guide

themselves and only touched on the main focus of the interview – sexual assaults – and said that “we would probably come back to that later”, while others started talking about the consequences said assaults had for them. This led us over to the immersion phase, which is where “both participant and interviewer gradually become immersed in the unfolding drama of the story” (Corbin & Morse, 2003: 343). During this phase the interview may become distressful and emotional for the informants, and the interviewer may have to stop the interview or be a sympathetic ear (ibid.). During this portion of the interview, some informants became emotional, and asked if they wanted to stop or have a break. All said no and, after regaining composure, they continued. After the immersion phase, we move on to the phase of emergence where the emotional level becomes less tense (Corbin & Morse, 2003: 343). In this last phase, I asked how they felt talking to me, what they were doing later today and we talked about how their life were now. After I stopped the recording, I normalized the situation by small talking with the informants, and making sure that they had someone to talk to if they needed to before we said goodbye.

I was offered the use of an organization's offices that work with victims of sexual assaults, including male victims. Therefore, most of the interviews were conducted there. I accepted their offer because the informants are connected to the organization and therefore can feel more comfortable there and because they then have direct access to support staff if there should be a need for this after the interview. One interview was conducted via FaceTime as the pandemic, and the following infection control measures, made a physical meeting impossible. I thoroughly explained the risks with an interview over FaceTime, but the informant chose to do so. In the interest of full disclosure, this is an informant that I have known since childhood as a family friend and who has helped me recruit informants. With permission from the informant, I transcribed the interview simultaneously as I conducted it. I chose to do this because my computer could not record the interview as I was using it to FaceTime with my informant, and recording via FaceTime would have been indefensible, as I do not know where that recording might be stored in Apple's database. Simultaneously transcribing was both beneficial and disadvantageous. It benefitted the interview because it gave the informant some natural pauses, which often led to him elaborating his statements. The obvious disadvantage was that I could not entirely focus on the interview, as I had to write down every word he said. Despite this solution not being optimal, it did result in a very informative interview with rich data.

Two interviews were conducted at the informants' homes, and one was conducted in my home.

In addition, it has been difficult to display the "right" reactions in some situations. Some informants have laughed while telling their stories, but laughing can sometimes be an involuntary defense mechanism when talking about traumatic and taboo topics. In these situations, it has been challenging to know whether to smile back or not. Luckily, in most of these situations, my reaction, smile or no smile, was spontaneous and natural as a response to the informant. I did, however, sometimes have to actively choose my displays, which varied.

Some of the informants seemed uncomfortable talking about their experiences with sexual assaults, while others talked about it openly and explicitly. I have thought about this and have wondered whether the more open and explicit informants "tested" me to see if I could endure their stories and language. Luckily, my advisor, Willy Pedersen, had already prepared me for this during our test interviews before collecting data, and I did not visibly react to neither the language nor stories. Also, I adjusted my language to the informants and used their phrasings and terms during the interviews to make it known that I was not uncomfortable. This idea of them testing me is just that - an unconfirmed notion of mine. It might very well be the language these informants have always used to express themselves.

The interviews varied in length, from forty minutes to two and a half hours. I interviewed one informant in my apartment, where we were alone. Therefore, the informant's confidentiality was seen to, as no one else knew that I was conducting that interview. I had two interviews at the informants' homes, which did create a more distracting environment than the one conducted in my home. One of these informants had kindly set the table for us outside, as the weather was warm. It did, however, create noise on my recording as cars constantly drove on the highway next to his house. The other informant had parental leave and was caring for his infant child during the interview. This did also create noise and distractions on my recordings. However, the noise did not make it so challenging to transcribe that the interviews were in vain, and I am just grateful for the informant making the time for me, even when caring for their child. Five of the interviews were conducted at the offices of an organization over two days. The organization had set up the interviews, cleared an office for us, and was available to me at any time. When one interview took longer than expected, they let us close the offices to not have to stop the interview. These interviews were conducted in a quiet office known to the



informants beforehand. One interview was conducted via FaceTime at the request of the informant. Because of the pandemic and the subsequent infection control measures in place, a face-to-face interview was not possible.

## Data processing

I roughly transcribed the interviews continuously after the interviews and during the period I was still collecting data. This allowed me to think about what I could improve for the following interview, and I found more natural ways to approach the more sensitive topics after I had conducted a few interviews.

Anonymization has been very important because this is such a sensitive and private topic, and many of the informants belong to a particular community. I have therefore anonymized all names of people, cities, places, and events that may reveal the informants' identity and have rather been a little too careful than to risk that the informants' identity may be revealed. Several informants stated the names of third parties, and these are also anonymized. Dialects have also been changed to normalize the transcription, and I have not added any dialects when translating from Norwegian to English (Tjora, 2012: 226).

## Method of analysis

The data has been analyzed using the method of thematic analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006) claim that published research often reports the analysis's process and details insufficiently. They expressly point to the tendency to write about themes «emerging» from data, indicating that the researcher does play an active role in the analysis. However, the researcher identifies patterns or themes, selecting which of these are of interest, and reports them to the readers (p. 80). Considering Braun & Clarke's (2006) claims, I will present this thesis's analytic process. In this thesis, I have chosen to focus on the most relevant data to the research questions I aim to answer, although this may lead to the omission of other interesting yet less relevant data. I have also made an active decision to omit data that might present a risk for the informants' confidentiality, even if that data is highly relevant regarding the research questions. My preliminary analysis process choices are essential to disclose because they might have affected the following process.

The thematic analysis method is applied when identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data is the aim (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis differs from other analytic methods that aim to describe qualitative data patterns because other methods are theoretically bounded (p. 80). In this thesis, the method of thematic analysis will be applied within a contextualist theoretical method (which is placed between essentialism and constructionism) – which acknowledge the ways individuals make meaning of their experience and, in turn, the ways the broader social context influence those meanings while retaining focus on the material and other limits of «reality» (p. 81).

Braun & Clarke (2006) defines a *theme* as something that «captures something important about the data concerning the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set» (p. 82). There is no rule deciding what constitutes a theme regarding prevalence across the data set or «size». The theme's important quality is that it captures something important concerning the research question(s) (p. 82).

Furthermore, I have inductively identified the themes – the themes are strongly linked to the data themselves, not theory (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 5).

Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a step-by-step guide to thematic analysis, which I have, in large part, followed:

1. Generating initial codes:
  2. Searching for themes:
  3. Reviewing themes:
  4. Defining and naming themes:
  5. Producing the report:
- (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 87).

I generated initial codes as a first step, and then searched for and identified themes. This process was done multiple times, as the themes were reviewed. I cut down my headlines in the findings as I saw how some themes were so strongly linked that they should be merged into one theme. The themes were defined and named, but this process was also done multiple times during the production of this thesis, because it was important that the themes were not “their own planets”, but strongly linked to the overall story of the thesis. After I identified the main themes, I divided their contents into sub-themes.

## Quality of the data

### *Reliability*

Tjora (2012) writes that within all social sciences, the researcher will be engaged to the topic being researched, which can be regarded as noise in the project in that it can affect the result (p. 203). Because my commitment to the project may have influenced the result, it is essential to reflect on my research role. I am very engaged in research on violence, especially sexual violence. This commitment and the curiosity that follows may have been both an advantage and a disadvantage in this project. On the positive side, it may have contributed to the informants' perception that I am genuinely interested in listening to what they have to say and daring to talk and write about unpleasant topics that not everyone has the emotional stamina to endure. On the other hand, my need to confirm to the informant that I am not "one of those" who think that they are lesser men or that I do not believe in their story may have taken up much of my focus. This, however, happened after the interviews, never during an interview, and it has therefore not affected the data. It is vital to be aware of one's own involvement and position in the data to be examined precisely to not fall victim to confirmation bias or unvarnished analyzes.

Kvale & Brinkmann (2015) writes that reliability concerns whether the results can be reproduced at another time and by another interviewer, and that this is especially important when the interviewer may have asked leading questions without this being part of the interviewing technique (p. 276). In the follow-up questions, I may have asked leading questions to find out if the informants had experienced the same thing. An example of this is that an informant told me that the perpetrator had tested the informant's boundaries by gradually touching him in more intimate ways. I became curious about this boundary-testing and asked other informants if they had experienced or noticed the same thing. This question seeks a particular answer, and it may be something the informant himself had not thought of before I asked the question. However, it has not been more leading than that it may have triggered a memory or a thought that has not been there before, but that the informant now could see himself.

I use direct quotes from the transcripts of audio recordings, strengthening the thesis's reliability. When translating from Norwegian to English, I have been careful to translate accurately, using the Norwegian words' English equivalent, to the extent this has made sense. I have, however, had to change sentences and words sometimes, as the grammar and phrasings are different in Norwegian and English, and adjusting the translated transcripts will more accurately preserve the context, message, and tone of the informants, than would a direct translation.

I have chosen to omit throat clearing, coughing, and other "noises" in the transcripts but have kept hesitation and laughter. I chose to keep laughter and hesitation (often represented with "ehh" or "uhm") because it represents the atmosphere, tone of voice and to which degree the informant had to think before answering or elaborating, and how sure he was in his answer. Thinking pauses will be presented as "..." in the excerpts from the transcripts, while my comments and combining parts of the excerpts will be presented as (OF) and [...], respectively.

### *Validity*

Validity is concerned with whether we actually answer the questions we ask (Tjora, 2012: 206). More specifically, it concerns whether the method of research we have chosen is the right one to answer our questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015: 276).

To understand disclosure barriers and how the informants pushed past these barriers, we have to explore how they understand themselves and their situation. Their stories, reflections and opinions is important to answering the research questions in this thesis. Therefore, a qualitative method with in-depth interviews was considered as the best method of research. During this process, the research questions have been modified several times and changed a few. The modifications and changes have primarily been reformulations to concretize the research questions, but there have also been changes in focus in the start-up phase. This has mainly been to thoroughly address each research question instead of ending up with too big questions that would only get superficial answers. The validity of the thesis is strengthened by empirical findings and previous research and theory. Nevertheless, the thesis's validity may be

weakened due to few informants and because some questions received very short answers, where the informants themselves sometimes did not know how accurate their answers actually were.

### *Generalizability*

Tjora (2012) writes that within all social research, it is often either an implicit or explicit aim to make some form of generalization (p. 207). Nevertheless, generalizability is not always an aim in research, and the aim may instead be to shed light on a specific problem area than to develop insights that go beyond the particular case (Tjora, 2012: 208). Because this project has a limited scope and few informants, it will be problematic to transfer the findings to all sexually assaulted men in general. Despite not being able, or wanting, to generalize broadly, this thesis does aim to achieve analytical generalization. In analytical generalization the researcher has a responsibility to thoroughly describe the interview process. Secondly, the researcher must offer arguments about the generality of the findings. The reader must further evaluate whether these findings are likely to be generalized to a new situation (Kvale, 2007: 127). The most important thing in this thesis is to shed light on the possible disclosure barriers and facilitators to men who have experienced sexual assaults, and, thus, discuss what measures may be appropriate to introduce to uncover this group earlier and hopefully prevent further assaults. By starting with a few informants and looking at their experiences, one can lay the foundation for a larger project to examine whether the findings in this thesis may be generalized to a new situation, necessarily with a larger sample.

## The sample

In the following section, I will first present an introductory table containing important information about the informants and the recruitment. In the table, I have included sexual orientation, as previous research has found that one rape myth concerning male sexual assault victims is that it's a “gay issue”. The information is based on the informants, and some of the information is uncertain even to them. This is reflected in the table, specifically concerning the age of onset and number of assaults. Secondly, I will present more detailed qualitative descriptions of the sample

### *Presentation of the sample*

Table 1: Introducing the informants

Informant	Age	Education	Occupation	Sexual orientation	Age onset sexual assault	Age sexual assaults ended	Number of sexual assaults <sup>4</sup>	Number of perpetrators / Relationship with perp.	Time between last assault and disclosure / Disclosure to whom
Jim	61	University	Self-employed	Heterosexual	13-14	19-20	Approx. 300	1 <sup>5</sup> / Running coach	41 years / Wife
John	63	High School	Safety guard for summer camps	Heterosexual	7	9-10	Unknown	1 / Uncle	32 years / Wife
Lucas	54	University	Teacher, special ed.	Heterosexual	19	22	3	1 / Running coach	31 years / Police
William	27	University	Teacher	Heterosexual	18	18	1	1 / Running coach	7 years / Police
Robert	29	University	Economics	Heterosexual	7	14	Unknown	1 / Two years older male friend	Approx. 13 years / National support line
Peter	67	University	Bus driver	Heterosexual	1-2	4	Unknown	1 / Mother	61 years / therapist
Jonathan	55	University	Foster father (bought out from company)	Heterosexual	5	Unknown. 14 is last memory	Unknown	Unknown / Mother's friend / Leaders of religious organization and their «clients»	Approx. 38 years / Wife
Christopher	38	University	Accountant and kiosk-employee	Heterosexual	6	14	Unknown	2 / Fathers' male friend / Female babysitter	19 / Partner
Frank	49	Grade school	Artist	Heterosexual	13	17	Unknown	Unknown / Strangers / Foster mothers' friend	3 years / friend

<sup>4</sup> Most informants have an unknown number of sexual assault experiences. This is either because I didn't ask them, or because they themselves are uncertain.

<sup>5</sup> Jim, Lucas and William were all sexually assaulted by the same perpetrator and were members of the same sports-team.

## *Descriptions of the sample*

*Jim* grew up in the small town in which he now resides and works. He grew up with his mother, father, three siblings, grandmother, and grandfather. He described his upbringing as good until he first started experiencing sexual assaults, which was at age 13. He does, however, point out that his mother was mentally ill and very unstable. It came to a point where Jim and other family members had to physically restrain her to her bed and have her committed. He described his mother's instability as being characterized by sudden anger – she could be in a good mood and suddenly get very angry. This anger could lead to physical punishment perpetrated by her on her children. Jim had many friends, particularly in the sports environment. He described the friends he made there as his best friends who, even though the contact with them had declined over the years, were there for him in a heartbeat when he needed them as an adult.

*John* grew up with his mother, father, and four siblings. He had a very good relationship with his family, but he had some trouble with bullying in school. He remembers how the older boys used to set up “bear traps” for him, leading to him being hoisted up in trees. He said that he would never show any emotions surrounding the bullying and hang out with them despite how they treated him. Also, he points out that he has always had low self-esteem.

*Lucas* grew up with his parents and four siblings, of which he is the oldest. He has a sister who is physically disabled, who needed much of their parent's attention and care. Despite this, he described their family unity as strong. Although he grew up in a strict religious household, he described his home as good and safe. Lucas has always had close friends but described himself as a sensitive person who has been subjected to bullying. Their family moved a lot, and the bullying continued in their new town. He said that he has always managed to get through this because he has had close friends on whom he could rely.

*Peter* grew up with his parents and brother. His mother was mentally ill and could be cruel to both Peter and his father. Because of this Peter learned to read his mother's mood and avoid her when she was too unstable. His father was meek and afraid of Peter's mother, and Peter said that his father often had to trick his mother's medicine into her food. Peter doesn't talk about friendships but said that he has struggled a lot with anxiety, and this has led him to feel subordinate in relation to other men, specifically when it comes to work-related achievements.



*Christopher* mainly grew up with his mother. Before their parents split up, his father would beat his mother. Christopher also described his father as a “drunk”. He did visit his father at weekends while he was very young, but as he grew older, he could decide for himself and chose not to do so. He remembers financial struggles in the single-parent home with his mother, and he would sometimes get picked on in school for not living with two parents and not having the coolest clothes and shoes. His life turned around for a while when his mother married a man Christopher described as a good stepfather, who at some point wanted to adopt Christopher. His mother's marriage with this man did not last.

*Frank*, who grew up with his parents and older sister, described his upbringing as «idyllic» until the age of 10 when his father died. After his father died, his mother started a relationship with his father's brother, which Frank did not approve of, mainly because his stepfather was mentally abusive. He eventually gave his mother a choice: him or me. His mother chose the stepfather, and Frank ran away from home at age 13. This led to him being homeless and running from Child Protective Services and police for four years. He got a foster family at age 17, which he described as a safe base.

*Jonathan* grew up with his parents and three siblings. His father was of Romani descendants, and this created a tumultuous upbringing. In addition, his father was violent, and Jonathan was subjected to beatings from his father. Because the neighborhood the family lived in was troubled, his mother wanted him to join a Christian organization to be in a safe environment during the week.

*Robert* grew up in a family consisting of two parents, Robert and his sister, with some “challenges”. Mainly, that his father was a «German-child» [Tyskerbarn – children who, presumably, were conceived during WW2 with one Norwegian and one German parent, O.F.]. Because of his father's ancestry, Robert was bullied. His father struggled with alcoholism and sudden and explosive anger. Robert described a good relationship with his grandparents and said that his happiest memories are with them.

*William* grew up with his parents and his older sister. In school, he had a group of good friends, who remain a group to this day. He achieved athletic success in his teens and does

report having any social difficulties. He described a happy childhood, at least as far as he can remember, with parents who have always been there for him.

## 5.0 Grooming and victimization

This chapter aims to answer the first research question: I will explore the victimization process, focus on who the perpetrators were, what kind of acts were involved and whether grooming was a key element.

### Vulnerability factors

The World Health Organization (2002) concluded that the most critical risk for sexual assault was being married or living with a partner, as intimate partner violence is the most common form of sexual violence. Other risk factors they listed are e.g. much use of alcohol or drugs, having many sex partners and poverty. Vik (2020) found in his doctoral thesis that these risk factors are prevalent in Norwegian sexual assault cases as well.

However, a problem with both The World Health Organization (2002) and Vik's (2002) studies is that, while acknowledging male victimization, male sexual assault victims are omitted when conducting the studies. Therefore, there is no foundation to claim that the risk and vulnerability factors associated with female sexual assaults are transferable to male experiences.

An Australian study conducted by Zilkens, Smith, Mukhtar, Semmens, Phillips & Kelly in 2018 found six vulnerability factors associated with male sexual assault:

- current mental illness;
- intellectual or physical disability;
- alcohol intoxication;
- a history of previous sexual victimization;
- currently living in prison or having no fixed address (i.e., homeless);
- adolescence (p. 149).

Zilkens et al. (2018) show that there are commonalities between vulnerability and risk between male and female victims, with imprisonment and homelessness being particular to male victims.

As described in the previous chapter, Jim, Peter, Christopher, Frank, and Jonathan all grew with abusive parents. Robert, Lucas, and John were subjected to bullying in their childhoods. Bullying and domestic abuse may be vulnerability and risk factors, leading to mental health problems, which is a risk factor. Also, Frank presented with the vulnerability of being homeless for four years. Christopher, Frank, and Jonathan experienced sexual assault perpetrated by different people, independent of each other. William is the only informant who does not display any apparent vulnerability factor.

We do see an overall indication that typical vulnerability factors are present in this sample. Exploring whether these factors were part of their victimization is not entirely possible without talking with their perpetrators. Therefore, this result can only indicate that it's a possibility.

Some informants were aware of their vulnerability when asked whether there are some qualities in males that may lead to sexual assault. As Jim tells it:

If you live in a home with an uncertain, unsafe upbringing... you will probably be the first pick to be assaulted.

Jonathan brought up revictimization when he reflected on vulnerability and said that

If you have experienced sexual abuse before (...) it's like these perpetrators have antennas on this; they see you in a big crowd.

However, the informants who reflected on their own vulnerabilities did so in retrospect. This means that once they were able to reflect and see their own vulnerabilities, it could not be used to prevent their victimization – they could see it now because of their victimization. If we are identifying vulnerability factors so that we can be aware of the most potential victims and deter these crimes, it does not help to see one's own vulnerability after the assault has occurred. In the worst case, being able to see why you may have been targeted after you have been assaulted can even lead to more self-blame in the victim. Therefore, it is important to study possible vulnerability factors in male victims of SA with a larger sample so that professionals who are in contact with this group can be aware and put in measures to assure that these boys are not put in dangerous situations. Of course, this will be more difficult as the boys become men.

## The perpetrators

It's essential to present who the informants' perpetrators were, and the environment the informants met and interacted with the perpetrator because this can be telling concerning the process leading up to the assault(s). There are, of course, not always the case that perpetrator and victim are known to each other, although that is the case in my sample. Additionally, it's important to stress that where a relationship was formed between perpetrator and victim, this should not be interpreted as victim-blaming or victims' being naive. Rather, it can shed light on the way the perpetrator strategized the offense. Again, the presentations of perpetrators are based on the victims' recollections.

The following information and excerpts included are about the environment, life situation, and events in the time leading up to the first assault. Jonathan experienced a sexual assault at age five, perpetrated by a housewife next door. This is not the sexual assault he focused on in the interview, and therefore this perpetrator and the potential grooming is not included in this thesis.

Lucas, Jim, and William were all assaulted by the same running coach and described the running environment as focused, and they all got talented in the club. Jim, William, and Lucas all describe the environment they were in as exciting, and they all experienced success in their field. They adored and respected the coach, who had a good reputation:

(...) That was very exciting, he had a good reputation, took really good care of his athletes. He gave us a lot of attention and positive feedback. – Lucas

The coach had a good reputation which made Lucas excited for the opportunity to work with him. When he started working with him, he was given positive feedback and attention by the coach. The foundation for the coach getting close to the athletes was laid before they had met, as the coach had a stellar reputation in the community and his knowledge and skills were known.

Jim was also very excited to work with the coach:

(...) It was huge to be allowed in, being taken care of and noticed in the sport by what was the guru and the leader in the club.

Describing the coach as “the guru” in his field further points to the good standing this coach had in the community and can explain why he quickly gained the trust of the athletes. Jim was assaulted during the 1970’s, Lucas during the 1980’s and William after 2010. That all of them described the coach as someone with a good reputation in both the local and athletics community shows how the perpetrator was able to sustain his good reputation and hide his actions.

Jonathan experienced sexual assaults for years in a Christian congregation, by leading figures in that environment. He can’t remember how many perpetrators there were. The congregation was very structured and had a lot of families as members who often gathered for social occasions in the church. Jonathan was very concerned with pointing out that sexual assaults can happen anywhere:

This can happen anywhere! Christian congregations, sporting clubs (...), after-school programs for children... and... Just name it (...).

The congregation and its leaders was in a position of trust and authority, both regarding Jonathan and his family. In addition, having families gather in social settings in the congregation can contribute to making this environment feel safe. At the same time, Jonathan stresses that the perpetrators can be clever and choose the environment carefully, and religious environments are the perfect hunting grounds because Christians can be gullible and will not believe that anyone of them can be “like that”. Because of this, Jonathan described Christian environments as “goldmines” to sexual predators. What Jonathan is saying is that the perpetrators take advantage of the social structures in religious environments and the values the members live by. Since the religious guidelines (often) largely dictates how to behave, the members are likely think that the other members also live by the same set of values and rules. This makes them “gullible” and trusting towards others, which can be taken advantage of.

Frank has a complicated history. He has experienced assaults as a homeless child and after he got a foster family. Because all these experiences have been focused on in the interviews and are somewhat linked to each other, I will focus on both the environment Frank was in when he was homeless and the one after finding his safe place in a foster family. Frank ran away

from home when he was 13 after giving his mother the choice him or her boyfriend. The homelessness led Frank into a criminal lifestyle – robbing stores and stealing cars. He also started doing drugs and would sometimes prostitute himself to afford heroin. One summer he met a girl who he fell in love with and on a trip to find her, her best friend’s mother took him in and eventually became his foster mother. After this he settled down and got an education.

Robert was assaulted by a peer who was a member of the same group of friends as himself. the perpetrator lived in the same neighborhood as Robert, but he was two years older. Because the perpetrator got bullied in school by his classmates, he befriended Robert and his group of friends, and quickly took on the role as the group-leader. It may have been easier for the new friend to take the role of leader, as he was older than the others. This put him in a position of authority over the other members of the group.

Peter was assaulted by his mother, with whom he has always had a very strained relationship. As a child, Peter’s mother had been mentally unstable and suffered mood swings, making it difficult for Peter and his father to live with her. As an adult, Peter felt guilty towards his mother and often tried to figure out her mood to keep her happy. Despite his mother assaulting him as a child, Peter was still submissive towards her and tried to keep her happy as an adult.

Christopher talked about a dysfunctional home situation in which his first experiences of sexual assaults took place. His parents were divorced, and he spent weekends with his father – an alcoholic and negligent parent. During these visits, one of his father’s friends assaulted him. This lasted until Christopher was about ten years old. Christopher’s mother struggled to make ends meet and worked a lot to provide for them. When Christopher was around 12 years old, he was assaulted by his adult babysitter who had offered to look after him because his mother worked so much. Christopher had two absent parents, which made him vulnerable at a very young age. Although his parents were absent for very different reasons, someone in their network still took advantage of his being left to himself.

John was assaulted by his uncle when his family was gathered at the family farm to do farm work together:

I guess I must have been around seven when we sometimes traveled to the place my mother was from, and I had this uncle there, who created a lot of trust.

John's uncle took a big risk assaulting him while the whole family was gathered at the farm, but he might not have any other opportunities. He made sure to build the trust with both John and the other members of the family.

Javaid (2015a) claims that previous research suggests that heterosexual male rape victims are more likely to experience stranger rape, while gay male rape victims are more likely to experience date rape (p. 280). My findings contradict previous research claims in that all of the informants in my sample have been assaulted by a perpetrator they knew. Of course, one cannot generalize based on this sample, and a more extensive sample might generate different results. In addition, Javaid (2015a) might only be considering adult male victims, not children. He does not specify this.

## Grooming

As has been presented, some of the informants were assaulted in a situation where they were vulnerable because they should have been safe; John was with his family. Peter was with his parents, whom many children have an inherent trust in; Lucas, Jim, and William were with teammates, friends, and an admired coach. Jonathan was with a neighbor and then an organization his family had tight connections to. Robert was in a tight group of friends. Frank and Christopher also experienced assault in an environment it would be natural that they felt safe, Frank with a friend of his new safe and stable family, Christopher with a kind, helping, and caring babysitter. Frank and Christopher, however, had previously experienced assaults in environments where it was natural that they felt unsafe, uncertain, and scared. Frank was on the streets, homeless. Christopher was in a violent, abusive home with an alcoholic father. No matter what environment the informants were in leading up to and during the assault(s), they all describe grooming to some degree.

There are several definitions of grooming. However, Craven, Brown & Gilchrist (2006) have found the established definitions of grooming as lacking regarding the complexity grooming actually entails. Therefore, this thesis will rest on Craven et al.'s definition:



“A process by which a person prepares a child, significant adults, and the environment for the abuse of this child. Specific goals include gaining access to the child, gaining the child's compliance, and maintaining the child's secrecy to avoid disclosure. This process serves to strengthen the offender's abusive pattern, as it may be used as a means of justifying or denying their actions.” (Craven, Brown & Gilchrist, 2006: 297). However, it may be argued that Craven et al.'s definition may also be incomplete, as it only considers children as possible targets for grooming.

### *Grooming the environment*

Offenders may groom the environment and the potential victims' significant others to gain access to their victims. This strategy may include integrating themselves into society and places where they are likely to meet their victims, often in a position of trust. They groomed the environment aiming to create an opportunity to access and abuse the victim. They may make themselves indispensable, too good to be true, and will freely undertake jobs that others do not want to do. Another goal the offender has is to groom the community so well that if a victim eventually discloses the abuse, the community may support the offender rather than the victim because they see the offender as more believable than the victim (Craven et al., 2006: 293).

John, Peter, Jonathan, and Robert were in situations where grooming the environment was not necessarily required before the first assault. John was assaulted by his uncle, a member of his family. If the uncle behaved “normally” there would not be a need to suspect any abuse. Peter was assaulted by his mother, a person who would need to be groomed by external perpetrators. His father was already submissive to her, and it is likely that he would not intervene since he was also scared of Peter's mother. Jonathan was assaulted in an organization he joined by encouragement from his mother because she wanted him to be safe. This organization is, therefore, a place his mother is comfortable with and trusts. Since a peer assaulted Robert in his group of friends, this friendship likely looked like any other unless someone witnessed the abuse. The environment can be said to be already groomed to some degree, as it is unlikely that anyone would be suspicious of the perpetrators being with the victims.

Frank was assaulted numerous times during the period he was homeless. These assaults were characterized by him being drugged or attacked and no grooming of either him or the environment as part of the perpetrator's strategy. It was, however, not an environment to groom with Frank. He was homeless and had no stable relationships. The assault he was subjected to by his foster mothers' friend, however, had some prior grooming of the foster mother involved:

He sat down at our table, and she [the foster mother, O.F] greeted him, and he seemed like a very nice guy (...) I felt very safe with that friendly calm he had. It was very trustworthy.

The perpetrator sought out Frank and his foster mother at a pub and joined them at their table. This can be seen as simultaneous grooming of both victim and environment: Frank deems him trustworthy because he seems nice and calm, and this may be elevated by him seeing the foster mother interacting with him. He is clearly a friend of hers. On the other hand, the foster mother might have noticed Frank's comfort with him and him being a friend, trusting that the interest in Frank was genuine and kind, not predatory. This shows how the grooming of both victim and environment can enhance the grooming effect.

The environmental grooming can be more comprehensive than it was in Frank's situation. Jim described comprehensive environmental grooming, occurring for an extensive period before he was first assaulted:

Now I see how that person established contact with my parents so that they would feel safe letting me go on trips overnight, on gatherings, and the like (...)

The coach has excuses to let Jim go on trips with him and the team he was part of, and he created trust from Jim's parents, so they feel safe letting him go on these trips. The respect and admiration the coach already had might have helped the trust building. The environmental grooming was a process, where Jim spent more and more time with the coach as the trust from Jim's parents grew:

The training took place at [place, O.F], which is 31 miles from here, so I was offered to join those who were older than me, and I was offered to spend the night at my molester's and his family once a week to be able to participate in training. And by that, the trust was already built, and my parents wouldn't have to drive me. (...). He had to build trust with my mother and father so that I could be there once a week (...) It started as a fixed

agreement in the seventh grade. That fall, I started spending the night regularly. And either the spring or fall after that, the assaults started.

The coach spent a year grooming the environment before he assaulted Jim. The process Jim talked about shows the perpetrators' patience and strategical approach. The assaulter had every opportunity to assault Jim the first time he spent the night but waited. By waiting, he might have created even more trust from the parents: If he assaulted Jim the first night, Jim might have come home visibly shaken, sad, and/or traumatized. The parents' logical conclusion could then have been that something had happened with the coach. Therefore, it seems like patience might be an important part of environmental grooming. Interestingly, neither Lucas nor William talked about parental grooming, although they were assaulted by the same coach as Jim. This may be because they were both older than Jim at the onset of the assaults because the assaults of Jim were longer lasting than those of William and Lucas, or simply because the perpetrator saw no need for environmental grooming.

Christopher was assaulted by his father's friend and, later, his babysitter. He does not describe any form of direct environmental grooming relating to his father's friend. However, he does talk about how he eventually started spending weekends with him when he was supposed to be with his father. This might be all the grooming his father needed – A friend offering to take care of his son, so he would not have to, as he was more interested in drinking and partying. Christopher does, however, remember more comprehensive grooming of his mother, perpetrated by the babysitter. The perpetrator was unknown to the family but had relatives in the same building that Christopher and his mother lived in. She eventually offered Christopher to babysit him, and Christopher in turn asked his mother. His mother was delighted by the offer as she often had to leave Christopher home alone because she worked a lot. It started with her checking on Christopher, but she was eventually given a key to their home:

Mom worked a lot of nights and graveyard shifts at that time. After a while she got keys to the apartment, so she could come check on me. So, she sweet-talked my mother too, regarding that, and I remember that the day she got the keys my mom was off to work the night shift (...).

It's reasonable to assume that Christopher's babysitter saw an opportunity and worked her way in. Her being female might have mitigated the situation, as research presented previously has shown females as being thought of as unlikely sexual predators.

The environmental grooming of Jim and Christopher supports Craven et al. (2006) in that the perpetrator often makes him or her indispensable. To Christopher's mother the babysitter came in as someone who could take care of her son when his mother was unable to. Jim could still train and compete because the coach offered him a place to stay so that Jim wouldn't have to be dependent on his parents having to drive him to meets and training.

### *Grooming the victim*

In addition to a desire for sexual gratification, there also may be a relational aspect to the grooming process, depending on the offender's motivation. Grooming of the victim takes two different forms, physical and psychological. Physical grooming involves gradual sexualization of the relationship between the offender and the victim, and psychological grooming is then used to achieve this increased sexualization. The abuser will build the victim's trust, make him or her feel good, before violating boundaries. The offender will often desensitize the victim to touch by beginning with nonsexual touching, the conversation may also become more sexual, and the victim may have no idea that something inappropriate is happening. Offenders will frequently make the victim feel responsible for the abuse by convincing them that they are to blame for letting the abuse happen and that they should have stopped it. The grooming experience will be different for each victim because offenders adapt their strategies depending on the victim, whose response during the grooming process is important (Craven et al., 2006: 295-296).

Christopher described the initial grooming period as short, relating to the first perpetrator - his father's friend. He described his father's friend being "always really nice" because he was the only one who said hello to Christopher when he came into the room. After a while the perpetrator started assaulting Christopher when he visited for parties.

Christopher does not remember "how far it went" the first, second, or third time he came into his room, but he does remember that he eventually started staying with the perpetrator on some of the weekends he was supposed to spend at his father's. This was when he was groomed further:

I remember I got candy and Cola (...) I remember we rented, it was these video boxes that we rented, I remember we rented Popeye, that we watched a lot. And Tom & Jerry".

Eventually, Christopher associated these “treats”, which he never got from his father, with the following assaults, and he no longer wanted the perks he got:

Christopher: Ehm... In the end, I remember I didn't want either candy or watching movies. It was probably because I didn't want the other stuff.

O.F: Did you think that if you declined the candy and movies, you didn't have to do anything else?

Christopher: Yes, yes. I guess that was it.

The assaults from his father’s friend ended when Christopher and his mother moved away. After the move Christopher’s mother worked a lot to provide for them, and Christopher got a sitter who assaulted him. From the sitter, Christopher experienced more extensive grooming. She was a caring, sweet and helpful adult who took care of Christopher while his mother was at work. Christopher was around 12 years old, the babysitter between 25-30. After a while she was no longer the sweet woman Christopher knew:

O.F: For how long was she the caring adult?

Christopher: When I think about it, I think it was a long time, but it couldn't have been more than three-four months, no more than six months before I broke my arm. Maybe she then saw an opportunity to do something, cause its, it wasn't just an impulse. I can’t see how it could have been; she must have planned on it eventually.

O.F: Do you think those months prior was spent building trust?

Christopher: Yes. And also, I think she got something out of seeing me starting to care for her. And use it. Cause she was very, I've never just gone up to someone and hugged them. So I think she a lot out of that buttering-up phase or what you want to call it, but that period when she wins me over. And she could sort of see that I liked her a lot. When I talk about it now I can feel, I feel that, she was very fond of cuddling and stroking my hair.. Got very cuddly, without anything sexual happening. Which probably made me very compliant or... I don't know. Liable to like it. I don't know.

Christopher experienced less grooming from his father’s friend than from the babysitter. This could indicate that his perpetrators assessed the level of grooming necessary. His father never

really cared about Christopher, and so it was more important to groom the victim than the environment. His mother, on the other hand, agreed to Christopher being looked after by a woman she did not really know, because she thought this was in Christopher's best interest. Therefore, a more extensive grooming period might be necessary of both victim and environment – to increase the chances of Christopher keeping the abuse a secret and decreasing the chances of his mother believing him if he told her about the abuse.

John was assaulted while his family was around, by his uncle. This indicates that not only was the uncle comfortable and calm regarding how he appeared to the rest of the family, but that the grooming could take form of a natural uncle-nephew relationship:

(...) He took us fishing. He had a, sort of workshop, we spent a lot of time there, making things. It was, using a knife, carving things, different activities... We sat and watched for mackerel down by the fjord (...).

By taking John and the other kids on little trips and creating trust with him, he ensured that he could spend time with the children, while later getting John alone without that being questioned, because John was excited to spend time with his fun uncle who always had activities planned. In addition, the adult family members might be happy to have someone watch the kids while they worked, which makes it's more reasonable to assume they didn't question the uncle being so social with the children.

Frank had only met one of the people who assaulted him on more than one occasion, and this contact was brief. Still, he described how perpetrators used the same tactics while he was a homeless child:

I had met him three-four times. He was a trusted person for a while really, through my foster mom, you know? And then he built enough trust for me to feel comfortable visiting him (...) He was a predator, as I call it. And there were lots of them, the molesters I had on the streets as well... Fucking predators, how they circled you and... yeah. And very nice and pleasant in the beginning, right? Offering you lots for free and food and a luxury apartment, right? And then you get to this shabby hotel room and yeah, you're pretty drugged as you enter. They are predators, fuck.

Again, we see how the level of grooming is adjusted by what is strictly necessary. It's likely that the perpetrators Frank met while homeless took advantage of his life situation by offering him food, a place to stay and other necessities. The foster mother's friend, however, needed

another incentive for Frank to come over to his place, as Frank at this point had a safe place to stay, where his needs were seen to. So, when the man heard that Frank was interested in drawing, he lied accordingly:

(...) [He, O.F] was very interesting cause he drew and was an architect and such, he said. But that was not a fact.

Just as with Christopher, we can see that when the informant was vulnerable and in an unsafe environment, the degree of grooming was low. When they were in safer environments and less vulnerable, the degree of grooming was higher concerning both environment and the victim.

For Robert the grooming was subtle and started with sleepovers and playing pretend. After a while their bond got tighter, and the perpetrator talked about how him and Robert were like brothers. It was during their play the assaults occurred:

(...) And he was going to show me something, and then he just started to do things with me and wanted me to do things to him. And then it just progressed.

Robert believed that he was the closest friend the perpetrator had and that they were like brothers. Further, Robert believed that the assaults he was subjected to were typical for such close friends, as the perpetrator was older and knew more than Robert.

Jim, Lucas, and William experienced very similar grooming from the same perpetrator. They all got very positive feedback, were treated to trips both domestic and abroad and got equipment from the coach. They all spent a lot of time at the coach's home, and both Lucas and Jim lived there for some time. Jim was younger than Lucas and William when he was both groomed and assaulted, and the coach made sure to create some distance between Jim and his parents as well:

(...) And another thing I have seen, is that when the abuse started and he had established that connection, I can see how he got me to oppose against my parents, where I wished to spend as much time as possible on training when my parents thought I should be home and help out at home. He would oppose me to my parents, I mean, he didn't do it, but he gave me input to be able to do it. That's something that comes up all the time. I think about this a lot.

Jim, Lucas and William are well aware that their grooming was very similar, and they all describe feeling grateful towards the coach, which made it harder to sort out what had happened to them. In addition, they have done the math and noticed an interesting pattern, namely that they "relieved" each other:

It was sort of like, if we look back at the stories, there are periods with one and one athlete, right? So, from the 70's, of what's known, there is one and then that ends for some reason, either that the athlete moves away or whatever, and then there is another, that he simultaneously has had contact with and built trust with, and then he moves, and he moves on to another. - William

This pattern demonstrates how comprehensive and systematic the grooming period was, and how the coach groomed his next victim while assaulting his current one.

### *Coercion, threats, and violence*

Grooming is one of the ways a perpetrator can approach a victim and make them compliant. Threats, coercion, and violence are other approaches.

Jonathan did not experience grooming prior to the onset of sexual assault, but rather coercion threats and violence. The assaults started when he was taken out of the congregation's obligatory music lessons for "special education". In this special education they were taught to have sex with both the perpetrators and other victims, and resistance was punished severely:

After a while, I didn't want to do this anymore, it hurt, and I'm starting to feel ashamed. So, I start refusing. They then took me to a place outside of [city, O.F], where it previously was an orphanage that the congregation owned. There they put a noose around my neck, and they hoisted me up a tree, and let me down before it went badly (...) So I understood that if I didn't comply, they would kill me. But it came to a point where I didn't care, and I provoked a lot of these experiences... And that's when they threatened to do the same things to my sister. And I just gave up.

The perpetrators threatened Jonathan's life, and when that was not enough to get him compliance, they threatened his sister. After they threatened his sister, he gave up and became compliant.



Robert experienced grooming, but his perpetrator would also use intimidation and, what Robert perceives as subtle threats:

He was really violent, and wanted to join the army, talked a lot about... A lot of violent play. He was really big. (...) He wants to be the hero, like Tom Cruise, James Bond, and... He has said a couple of times, I don't think, I know, he has this need to kill someone. It sound insane when I say it, but this was normal for me to listen to before. Not like, I don't think he could kill an innocent person, but he did talk a lot about killing people, and it was always... The only thing I can say in his defense is that it was directed at evil people. (...) in war, or if someone broke in or something. That was something he said, when he was around 16, that he wished someone would break in cause then he could defend himself. (...) It's possible that he said some of these things to scare me (...) but he did sleep with a knife under his pillow (...).

Robert remembers joking around with the perpetrator in a way that made him feel a little embarrassed. Subsequently, the perpetrator got so mad he punched Robert in the nose. Robert was afraid of him, and this contributed to him being more compliant to the perpetrators orders.

One of the definitions of power Hernes presents is that power is not something an actor has; it is something one exercises. An actor will invest his resources where they will have the most effect (Hernes, 1978: 15-16). We see that grooming is an investment the perpetrator makes in order to exercise sexual power over their victim. However, grooming is not the only strategy in this sample as coercion, threats and violence substitutes grooming. Perhaps grooming was seemingly the most effective method to some perpetrators, while violence was most effective to others. Regardless, both are ways the perpetrator invested resources in order to ensure the victim's compliance and secrecy.

### *The assault(s)*

In this section, excerpts from the interviews that describe how the perpetrator initiated the assaults will be presented, and the informants' telling of the assaults they experienced.

Some of the informants experienced that the perpetrator tested their limits before they assaulted them. Lucas was one of those who experienced this while he was getting a massage, which had previously been uneventful:

What happened suddenly was that he finished a massage with a little slap on the dick. My dick. As I was lying there in my underwear. And it was... It came like lightning from clear skies, nothing like that had happened before. We just laughed it away, there and then. This happened now and then, not every time I got a massage. (...).

It seems the perpetrator tested how Lucas would react to being touched inappropriately, and when it was laughed off, he continued doing this every once in a while. However, he waited until later before the more serious assaults started, on a trip abroad where Lucas was drunk alcohol for the first time:

We were drinking and partying, and we got back from a party, me and my friend had been out to a club, and him, me, and the coach were sharing a room or apartment where we lived. My friend and I were going to share the double bed, and the coach would take the single bed. When we got back, the coach was in the double bed. And ehm... I was the one who had to share the bed with him, for some reason (...) I lie down and fall asleep, and I wake up to my coach doing things to my body. I freeze up, which is normal apparently, where you can't do anything. So I don't know how long this goes on, but at one point I'm able to get up... Ehm.. I go to the bathroom and wait until he falls asleep before I go back to bed. And then it happens again. Somehow I'm able to say that I don't want this and he stops.

This was the first assault Lucas experienced, and it's clear how the coach tests the limits before with touching during massage, before he takes it further when he gets an opportunity. Lucas experienced two more assaults after this, very similar to the first one. The next ones also happened on trips, after alcohol had been consumed, and the coach waited until Lucas fell asleep. The second time he masturbated Lucas in his sleep, and the third he tried to penetrate him. Lucas was once again able to make the assaults stop by telling the coach to stop and pushing him away.

William, who was assaulted by the same coach as was Lucas, also spoke of how physical contact increased, and how it seems the coach tested the limits with him as well:

Him massaging the athletes was the most natural thing in the world, and there is already physical contact. And from there the access to more skin is quite easy. So along with trust, trust, trust, the boundaries get shorter and shorter (...).

William talked about how the coach was “a good abuser” since he manages to test the limits along with building trust. William experienced one assault, which happened during a massage:

I have had many sessions with massage before this where it starts at the bottom of the calf, and then thighs, you also turn and then he rubbed the front of the thighs (...) But this time when I then lie on my back, he touches, well my penis. And I do nothing, I just lie there. (...) So it is clear that it is... At least in retrospect, I wonder, why on earth did I not react? While I lie there then, lie there, and he is standing there and masturbating me.

Although this incident is the only clear-cut assault William has experienced, he too remembers how the coach was fond of sharing his bed with the athletes, but because of the trust the coach had built, he never felt unsafe.

Jim was also assaulted by the same coach as William and Lucas, but he experienced these assaults regularly, about once a week, for years. It all started when Jim helped the coach with his work at the coach’s home. The coach asked him to read a book about the normalcy of bisexuality and after Jim had read through, he assaulted him for the first time:

(...) I did not understand why I should read it, but he asked if I was done and then he came and sat down on the couch. Then the first assault happened, and when he was done, he said, “this will stay between you and me” (...) If there were a lot of people close by, there was masturbation [him and the coach and the other way around, O.F] (...) There were also situations with both oral- and analsex.

Jim was only 13-14 years old at the onset of abuse, while William was 18 and Lucas was 19. William and Lucas could then both drink alcohol, which the coach took advantage of when assaulting Lucas. Getting Jim drunk could be dangerous for the coach, as it's reasonable to assume that his parents, and others, would react to this should they find out, considering his age. Instead, he made Jim read a book about bisexuality, giving him the impression that these assaults were «completely normal», presumably because having sex with the same gender was normal. It's possible that in the mind of a 13-year-old homosexual relations were more problematic than being assaulted, especially if he hadn't learned about sexual abuse.

John was assaulted by his uncle while his whole family was at the family-farm to work. The first assault happened while the family was working in the fields, and John’s uncle took him into the forest and assaulted him:

It was very painful, it was disgusting (...) I remember where we, where I had to satisfy his penis and how he touched me (...) Other than that, I was assaulted at nighttime, cause he had a room right by where I slept. And my siblings slept in my mother's room.

It seems his uncle assaulted him when the opportunity presented itself, first in the forest when the whole family was occupied elsewhere, and then at night when everyone else was sleeping and John was alone in his room.

Peter said that he doesn't remember the sexual abuse he was subjected to by his mother, but that he has these films in his head, in which he can see what happened to him:

I don't remember anything, but it's those films in my head, I remember those clearly (...) I was in the bed with my mother, and she taught me what to do so that she would be satisfied sexually. So... The clearest about the sexual stuff is that I'm lying between her legs sort of, satisfying her. A little later, I have faint memories of her, when we were finished, or when she was satisfied, she would masturbate me. That was a little later.

Peter said the abuse started when he was around 1-2 years old, but he doesn't remember it – he only sees films of it in his head. It's likely that the abuse started a little later, as it's uncommon to have memories from such an early age, and that a 1-2 year old is able to sexually satisfy someone. This does not mean that it didn't happen, but that the memories may have gotten distorted regarding his age.

Christopher was assaulted by his father's friend, and later by his babysitter. He first described the assault perpetrated by his father's friend. First the assault happened at his father's home, but eventually Christopher started spending weekends with the perpetrator:

What really was, the worst thing about this guy, was that at two-three occasions I had to visit him, when I was at my father's I had to be with him because my father had other things to do, to party. So, I had to be there from Friday to Sunday. Ehm... Where... Eh, it was a lot of nakedness and oral sex and things like that happening.

Later, when Christopher was around 12, he got a female babysitter who had offered to look after him when his mother was at work. It started out good, Christopher felt like he had a nice, caring, and helpful babysitter. However, she started assaulting him after a few months. It started after Christopher broke his left arm, and the sitter knew he was left-handed. She

offered to masturbate him, because he couldn't do that himself when his arm was broken. After this assault, Christopher no longer saw the sweet, caring woman she had been:

(...) And after a while, I ended up not seeing any of the nice, kind, and charming lady that I had really appreciated, it was just, she only had sex in her head when she came over to visit eventually. And I remember really well... Ehm ... I had this, it was this expression when she wanted me to penetrate her, it was this, it was this... Monster is the closest thing I can come to describe what I see today, or remember.

Christopher's only sexual experience before his babysitter assaulted him, was the assault he endured when he was younger. This was a little different, because Christopher had developed a close bond with the babysitter, and he described having a crush on her. He was heartbroken when she assaulted him. Her change in demeanor underlines how the grooming was a calculated strategy to gain Christopher's trust. She did not continue the grooming after she assaulted him for the first time. This may be because she knew that Christopher had a little crush on her, and in her mind that justified the abuse – which she might not have considered abuse.

Frank experienced multiple sexual assaults while homeless, which often included Frank being drugged and raped. He doesn't want to talk too much about this period of his life, which is understandable. He did however talk about being sexually assaulted by a friend of his foster mother:

[Foster mother] used to take me to this pub, and she would buy me a beer, and it was all very calm, she wasn't a drunk, there was never much drinking in that family. But yeah, there was this guy who I got to know really well, and he invited me home. Ehm... Was really interested 'cause he was a drawer and an architect and stuff, he said. But that wasn't fact. And then I got drugged again.

Frank was interested in drawing, and thought he had found someone nice who could teach and mentor him. So, he agreed to visit with him, but when he arrived to his home he was drugged and assaulted. Frank talked about how he pinned all his post-traumatic stress to this assault, and excluded the assaults he experienced while homeless. This could indicate that it was more difficult to rationalize being assaulted by someone he trusted, while being assaulted by complete strangers was more logical and made more sense to him. Therefore, he might experience that the assaults while homeless affected him less than the assault by someone he knew.

Jonathan has a complicated story in which he and multiple other children, all members of a Christian congregation, were systematically assaulted for years, starting when they had to take music lessons in the congregation. He felt like he was going to a “school” where they were trained to sexually satisfy the perpetrators. Sometimes, Jonathan also had to rape a girl his own age, which was often used against him to make him believe that he was just as guilty as those who made him to that. After a while in “training”, the perpetrators made the children work as prostitutes, following an “initiation ceremony”:

(...) They did sell us kids ... Um ... As prostitutes. And there they were, both men and women. (...) They were sort of teaching us how to take care of their clients. It was sort of an initiation process. An exam of sorts. In the congregation, we have the flag as a symbol, and I remember that we were, this memory has appeared lately, and then there are five of us who are sort of taking an exam. And then we have to stand there completely naked with a flag wrapped around us. And then we have to do different things to each other, on some of the holiest of the holiest in this congregation, which is this penance bench, so this sort of becomes a place of offering. (...) Now you're sort of done with your education, and you have to be able to do these acts upon anyone. And from that day forward there was, more in the basement of the congregation, were you would take in [clients, O.F] and do stuff.

Jonathan experienced these assaults as something ritualistic and described this as systematic and planned out by the leaders in the congregation. He can't remember when it stopped and said that for all he knows it could have continued until the age of 18. He was clearly manipulated into thinking that what he was being forced to do to the other children was something he was guilty of, meaning that if he ever told anyone about what was happening he would be blamed for it just as much as the adults.

Robert was assaulted by a peer, and as previously stated, these assaults would often take place during play. The perpetrator would often incorporate the assaults in play, confusing Robert and after a while Robert got very “well trained” and started initiating:

(...) He used to incorporate the sexual stuff with fantasies, so when we were going to bed , there was this fantasy, like Star Wars, and we were like in the Star Wars universe and had just been out fighting and then we come home, and then it was the girlfriend or something right? The sexual was always incorporated there, so when I think back on it, I kind of feel like a dog who was being trained ... 'cause after a while I started knowing that things were going to happen, and then things happened to my body and after a while I would initiate it and yeah...

Robert felt like a dog being trained, and after a while of this training Robert started recognizing what was expected of him and he initiated the sexual acts.

The informants have different stories and different experiences. One thing is certain, none of them qualifies to be seen as Nils Christies' ideal victims. Jim, John, Robert, Peter and Christopher very all very young (although "very young" is a relative term), they were carrying respectable projects, or at least not carrying out non-respectable projects: training, being with family members and being with age-appropriate friends, and they could not be blamed for being where they were. However, their perpetrators were not close to inhuman or unknown to them. Lucas and William were also carrying out respectable projects (training) and could not be blamed for being there (with coach). They were, however, older. In addition, the perpetrator was not close to inhuman or unknown.

Frank was not carrying out a respectable project (living on the streets) and he could be blamed for being there (he ran away). But the perpetrators were big and bad and unknown to him on the streets, and he was very young. When he was assaulted by the "architect", he was older, the perpetrator was not close to inhuman and unknown. He did carry out a respectable project (pursuing a possible career-path) and he could not be blamed for being there (with a potential mentor).

We can see that the ideal victim is almost impossible to live up to, and perhaps the most disqualifying quality about them is their gender. Even Christie (2018/1986) consistently writes "she" about the ideal victims, and only in parenthesis does he once write "or in rare cases himself" about an ideal victim (Christie, 2018/1986: 13).

The informants cannot be said to be ideal victims, but what these informants are, are real victims. Not being ideal, does not mean their experiences are of any less importance.

Although the theories on power previously presented are most often applied on a macrolevel, it can be useful to view them in light of the microlevel these stories took place in. Due to their young age, the world-making for many of the informants occurred through their closest relations – parents, teachers, friends etc. Since the perpetrator was someone trusted, they had a significant amount of symbolic power over the informants. This is very well exemplified in Jim's account of having to read a book about bisexuality. It seems the perpetrator worked to shape Jim's reality, concentrating on same-sex relations and constructing a reality in which the assaults he would subject Jim to were completely normal.

## 6.0 Stigma and secrecy

Here, I will focus on the second research question - the possible consequences of the assaults, in terms of secrecy, selfblame, shame and stigma, met by suppressing, repressing and trivializing, perceived threats to masculinity, and in some cases institutional blocking.

### Secrecy and loyalty

A known and prevalent disclosure barrier for victims of sexual assaults, especially children, is that the perpetrator tells them that what has happened is their secret (Plummer, 2018: 41).

Some informants talk about not only loyalty to the perpetrator, but also to the people around them who would be affected should the assault become known about.

John talked about how his uncle told him that he could not say anything to anyone, that what happened was their secret. Partly because of this John felt like he couldn't tell his family, but he also didn't want to destroy the relationships within his family:

I guess I was really there that I felt that they would have a difficult relationship with my mother's family, really.

John felt such loyalty to his family, that he would not risk their relationships with his disclosing. This in addition to him trying to keep his uncles secret became a barrier for him.

A similar barrier was also created for Jim, whose perpetrator also told him that what happened was their secret, in that he thought about what would happen to the club if he told and was believed. He could see the many relationships and friendships ending, because of him:

(...) If I had told anyone and they believed me, what would have happened to the club and the members there?

(...) And that feeling, that the club would be destroyed and gone, then all of those amazing friends and that network would have been gone.

Because the coach was the leader of the club and the one who kept the club in business, Jim thought that the whole club would be destroyed by him disclosing.



Robert did not feel the external loyalty, but he had a lot of loyalty towards his perpetrator. The perpetrator had made Robert believe that they had a very close bond and were like brothers. If this was a calculated manipulation from the perpetrator, it was successful:

I felt like I betrayed the loyalty to [perpetrator], 'cause you know he had said "were brothers" and all of this.

Robert was manipulated to secrecy and loyalty by the perpetrator, by him constantly telling Robert that they were like brothers and that Robert was the closest friend he had. This was difficult for Robert because disclosing what their relationship was really like would be a betrayal.

The grooming processes the informants had gone through was successful in making them compliant, and we can see how this process secured loyalty. In addition, thinking about what would happen to the people around them if they disclosed, indicates that the informants felt like they shared some of the blame for the assaults – *they* would ruin other people's relationships, not the perpetrator. The self-blame, shame and guilt are evident and contributes further to disclosure delays. The stigma has been created when the assaults has happened, and in addition to loyalty and shame, keeping the secret may have been stigma management on the part of the informants. Although many likely were too young to understand why this had to be secret, the secrecy itself may have made them think they had been subjected to something shameful.

Perhaps because of the trust and loyalty the informants felt towards their perpetrator, many felt unsure about what had actually happened to them.

Even after disclosing to a therapist, and getting confirmation from a professional that she believed him, Jonathan still had doubts. However, from the way he tells it, it seems more like he is *hoping* that it isn't true, than that he actually doubts it:

There's a little part of me who's still clamoring on to this not being true. But my whole body is reacting. Just last night, I had so many problems that I'm not in doubt. But still, I'm doubting.

In addition, this also highlights the shame and internal conflict many of the informants has struggled with. Jonathan remembers the assaults and has physical reactions to it, but he is still doubting that it actually happened, indicating that it's too overwhelming to fully comprehend.

Many of the informants described feeling confused and not completely knowing what had happened, or even *that* it happened. For Christopher, what he felt and what he thought he should be feeling were completely different:

I didn't know what this was. He had a nice time. I was scared that I was supposed to think that this was fun, that I should like it. That it was OK sort of. But it wasn't, I could feel that.

When being assaulted by his father's friend, Christopher was assaulted by an adult and, to him, an authority figure. Because of this he thinks that what is happening to him is OK, and that he should also think it's fun. However, he knows it's wrong because he could feel that it was.

For Frank, the uncertainty led him down a dangerous path, where he sought out situations in which assaults could occur:

I think I did it three times in total, sought out men in different situations, and... It just highlighted my own shame and delusions on what these thoughts really were. So, I really just reinforced this by, but it was like I just needed a confirmation on something, I mean what is this?

Frank seeking out these situations was a way to get experiences that made him less uncertain about what had previously happened to him, to get the answers he needed. Maybe the experience of a new assault would clarify the thoughts he had that he couldn't make sense of. However, this just made everything worse for him afterwards.

This uncertainty can clearly cause disclosure delays – how do you tell someone something you're not sure of? Pedersen (2005) writes that the language surrounding sexual violence is often formal and alienating to those who have experienced it – the terms doesn't create order and meaning for their experiences (p. 274). It seems possible, given the age and the lack of awareness concerning male victimization, that the informants did not have a language for what had happened to them. Therefore, loyalty and trust towards the perpetrator is not the only factor in making the informants confused. If they don't have a language for their victimization, how can this make sense to them?

## Will anyone believe me?

Being afraid that you won't be believed when disclosing SA is common for victims, and not an unfounded fear, because the responses to disclosure can be negative (Orchowski, Untied & Gidycz, 2013: 2005). In this sub-theme, the fear of not being believed will be presented.

Christopher was the only informant who tried to tell his parents at the time the assaults occurred. His father, who was never much a caretaker scolded him after he told him that his father's friend wasn't "very nice". Christopher was sent to his room without dinner the night he tried to tell his father. He also tried to tell his mother about his father's friend, but she was so scared of his father that she couldn't handle what Christopher was trying to tell her:

I figure that she was really scared and insecure and she didn't want him to come and get her. It could have been a fear that he was going to come and get her, 'cause he has done that hundreds of times.

When Christopher was assaulted a few years later by his babysitter, he again tried to tell his mother:

But that was quickly dismissed, with the reason that it was good for my mom that she could work and know that I had, that someone was feeding me and making sure I did my homework. So, it was just dismissed.

Christopher tried to tell his parents a total of three times but was either scolded or dismissed. He said that he learned that "there really wasn't any point in saying anything".

Fleming & Muscari (2021) writes that negative responses can often cause difficulty in coping with the experience, and is associated with more health problems. Therefore, it is important that the person one discloses to can be trusted to believe and support the victim, not dismiss him (p. 208). Christopher trusted his parents, which one is to do, but it was the wrong people, causing Christopher to believe that there was no point in trying to disclose further.

Eventually, Jim also wanted to tell someone what the coach had done to him, but he "didn't know who I would tell it to, I didn't know how". He thought about telling a teacher he trusted, someone who saw that he was struggling and helped him through his schoolwork when Jim was close to failing out of school. Jim never told him what had happened, but years later he wanted to thank him for helping him in school. Then, Jim found out that the teacher

had assaulted multiple young girls, and he said that “This shows, the trust, how are you supposed to trust people?”.

Both Jim and Christopher learned, at different points in the process, that disclosing was pointless and even risky. Jim thought he had a grown-up he could trust, who turned out to be assaulting young girls. Christopher tried to tell both his mother and father but was met with scolding or dismissal. This shows that the phrase “tell an adult you trust” is not always as easy as it seems.

A few informants said that they eventually wanted to speak up about what had happened to them, but they just didn't know how, or thought they had but never did.

John thought he had told his physician and was frustrated that nothing happened about it.

After a year he once again told the physician and asked why nothing had happened, and the physician answered that John never said anything. It had all been in his head. John also thought a lot about telling his family, but he stopped every time because “I didn't know how”.

Even though the informants wanted to tell someone, they didn't know how. Most of the informants talked about being uncertain about what had happened to them, and by disclosing they could have gotten those answers they needed. However, just as not having a language can hinder a victim from making sense of their experiences, it can also create a barrier to disclosure - by not having the language to sort out their own experience, they also could not tell anyone. For example, Christopher telling his parents that the perpetrator “isn't very nice” is not really disclosing sexual abuse. Skilbrei & Stefansen (2018) said that establishing terms gives the keys to interpreting our own and other's experiences. The terms established has the power to create distance or recognition to a phenomenon. Instead of using the terms “rape” or “sexual assault”, one can say “groping” or “touching”. The danger of using more popular terms is that it may contribute to trivializing the experience – the benefit is that more victims can recognize their own experience in the language (p. 25).

Even if they did know who they could tell and how, some informants spoke about the fear of not being believed as one of the barriers to disclosure.

John was afraid that by the time he could have been ready to tell someone about the sexual assaults he was subjected to by his uncle, he was too old and no one would believe him after all this time. He was afraid people would think he said it to get attention:

I thought they wouldn't believe me because I was so old, so that's the thing about me not saying anything before (...) would anyone believe me? Is this something he's saying just to get attention or something? So I walked around with these thoughts for a really long time.

John clearly has a lack of knowledge regarding how common disclosure delays are, and this has caused him to feel ashamed and afraid of disclosing so long after. The longer he waited to tell someone, the more he thought the disclosure delay would be questioned.

Jonathan is very aware that his experiences are extreme, and that for many it would seem unlikely:

(...) this is a story that's not known. 'Cause they have been incredibly skilled. And this is a part of being a man and saying "hello, I was sold as a prostitute at a congregation." Does that sound likely? (...) and I think that no one will believe me when I speak up.

The combination of the reputation Jonathan perceives the congregation to have and his own extreme experiences there makes Jonathan doubt that anyone will believe him - despite international media coverage of several congregations world-wide, including Norway, having systematically assaulted children (BBC News, 2009; Reuters, 2010; Pew Research Center, 2010; Winfield, 2020). This indicates that the shame and self-blame make Jonathan think that others are more believable than him.

The man who assaulted Jim was held in such high regards in their community, that it was difficult for Jim to think that anyone would believe him if he disclosed:

And I don't know who I would have told who would have believed me, and I don't know... 'cause the perpetrator was the great one for, yeah in absolutely everything, he was so highly acclaimed.

Craven et al. (2006) supports Jim's logic in that grooming the environment can ensure support for the perpetrator rather than the victim, because they see the offender as more believable than the victim (p. 293). The same man, their coach, assaulted Lucas. But he also blamed himself to some extent for the assaults, and said that he needed to take responsibility for what he "was a part of":

I can't do anything about it, 'cause I feel like I have such bad cards. I feel that, yeah, will anyone believe me? Is there any point in saying this to anyone? And then it's the whole thing about me really being an adult when this happened, I was 17 when he approached me, above the legal age. You got to stand for what you are a part of.

Lucas' rationale that he was an adult, and therefore a part of it, is interesting and raises some questions: are you an adult at 17? And does this mean that adults who are sexually assaulted are partly responsible? Rather than this being a general victim-blaming on Lucas' part, it's more likely that this is his self-blame showing and may be part of how he has trivialized the experience.

Although they were afraid that no one would believe them, all of the informants found someone who did. However, some needed to tell multiple people before they did.

When discussing power, one should also discuss powerlessness. According to Hernes (1978) you are powerless when you have no clear interests or you don't know that, or how, you are being influenced (p. 134). Further, the individualization of being a male sexual assault victim will lead to the search for resolve being directed inward (Hernes, 1978: 138). Fearing not believed if they disclosed indicates that the informants regarded their victimization as rare, and that they were alone in having this experience. In other words, the experience was individualized. According to Hernes (1978), this makes disclosing more difficult, because the informants will view their assaults as a personal matter, and they will look for solutions within themselves.

## Repressing and trivializing

Since the 1990's there has been much debate among clinicians, doctors, and neuroscientists about whether repression after trauma is real or not, and why this only happens to some (Epstein & Bottom, 1998; Crews, 2006; Patihis, Ho, Tingen, Lilienfeld, & Loftus, 2014). Williams (1994) does not dismiss the existence of false memories, where the patient falsely believes he or she has been subjected to abuse. She does, however, argue that this does not mean that all repressed memories since recovered are false (p. 1167). Williams (1994) further writes that children are believed to be more likely to repress traumatic events, because they have fewer defense mechanisms (p. 1168). Included in her study were 100 women with

documented childhood sexual abuse experiences. She found that 38% of the women did not recall the abuse they experienced in their childhood (Williams, 1994: 1173).

Seven of the informants in my sample either forgot or trivialized what had happened to them for years after the fact. Disclosing something you don't remember or don't think is actually worthy of disclosing is a major barrier, and forgetting or trivializing may have felt like the only possibility to those who had tried to tell, but were not listened to or those who could not tell because of loyalty to their surroundings or the perpetrator, being afraid or not having the language for it.

Peter talked about repressing not only the assaults he endured, but his entire childhood:

It was only two years ago that the memories about the assaults came, so it was really late. And it was a shock, but it was also very [much a, O.F] relief (...) I can't remember anything of my childhood (...).

This points to his childhood being so traumatic, his defenses blocked it out. However, at other points in the interview he talked about his childhood and his upbringing, exemplifying it with incidents he remembers happening. Clearly, his entire childhood is not forgotten, and its most likely a figure of speech, an exaggeration to illustrate how traumatic his childhood was.

Repression then seems to be a relative term to Peter – does it mean not remembering anything? Not remembering some parts? Or simply remembering but trying not to think about it? Although Peter most likely did repress the memories of the assaults, as he only began seeing the “films” two years ago, other memories from his childhood were not repressed, but *suppressed*, as they were readily available when talking to me. He *wants* to forget, but it's not a subconscious process. It's deliberate and a process he must take control over to push away.

Robert explained his suppression:

It's kind of interesting 'cause I didn't repress it in that there were no memories there, but they were just locked inside this huge, huge locks, and basically impossible to reach.

Robert had memories of the assaults, but he consciously buried them, or locked them up, because the memories were not wanted.

Repression and suppression are two defenses when experiencing trauma. Trivializing is another. Lucas said that he “got good” at doing all, but that the experience could have lurked in his conscience, and that other also questioned why he was stuck around in the environment where he was abused:

I've always been really good at repressing and trivializing it. And yeah, I don't know, there have been some athletes that I've been training, who has asked if I started coaching as a way to protect new generations against this coach. I know I haven't done that consciously, but maybe it has been there lurking.

Goffman (1963) writes that once a stigma is known to others the stigmatized may feel as if the smallest of accomplishments are viewed by others as remarkable (p. 26). That Lucas, and others, speculated whether Lucas started coaching to protect new generations of athletes exemplifies Goffman's assessment.

While some repress or suppress, some trivialize, and some do a combination, what is clear is that the trauma of sexual assault can cause delays in disclosure by hindering the victim in coming to terms with what happened to them. Although the informants use the term repression, when they in reality suppressed, it still points to them not having the capacity to fully take in their experiences, as they were uncertain about what had happened and how to tell anyone. Most of the informants in my sample experienced repression, suppression or trivializing to varying degrees.

## Masculinity

Till now, we have dealt with internal disclosure barriers created because of the grooming process, shame and uncertainty. There are, however, also external barriers created in society that hinders disclosure by stigmatizing the sample further.

One of the rape myths prevalent in society is that sexual assaults cannot happen to men, and if they do, men are “like women” (Smith, Pine & Hawley 1988; Mezey & King 1992; Donnelly & Kenyon 1996; Chapleau, Oswald & Russell 2008; Javid 2015a). This is supported in my findings, as the informants talked about how their masculinity had been violated.



Jim thought that having been sexually assaulted made him weak and he felt a lot of shame. It was also “the thing about homophobia”. As a result, Jim wanted to show his potency with girls, to strengthen his masculinity. Jim’s use of girls to boost his own masculinity is an example of Goffman’s (1963) passing. He is passing as someone who is not weak, less of a man, gay. He is passing as a strong masculine man, desired by women. If people knew that he had been assaulted by another man, he could experience a double stigma: a male victim of sexual assault and gay. This also shows Jim’s level of self-blame, or his assumption that others will blame him. Why would homophobia be a concern unless *he* had engaged in same-sex relations?

John felt like he needed to prove something to someone else. His father’s compliments about his “manliness” made him aware of his ability to disappoint his parents, should he ever tell the truth:

(...) My dad said multiple times, he said “you're good, John, you're very good, no matter what happens you must be really strong 'cause you don't show emotions.

John felt like if his parents knew about the assaults, they would no longer view him as a strong man. This created a barrier for John, as he did not want to disappoint his parents.

Frank also points out the need to be strong a vital masculine attribute:

O.F: Do you feel that your masculinity has been violated?

Frank: From? As a consequence?

O.F: Yes.

Frank: Yeah, definitely! Oh my God, when I have had my worst periods it's definitely, you become so tiny. I mean... Then that disappears, a lot of that, masculine, so brutal, clear, establishing your space taking charge and... (...) I do understand that a lot of men struggle to blow the whistle or speak up, I can see that. One thing is that it's a stigma and taboo and... Man's fear of losing their standing in life, I think that prevails over the will to speak up or go into or acknowledging.

O.F: Do you think men are scared of seeming weak?

Frank: Yeah, absolutely. A lot of men are scared of that. Absolutely. Most I would think. That are masculine hetero. Luckily, men are different there as well.

Frank talked about masculinity as being brutal, clear and taking charge. These attributes do not match with being a victim, especially not a victim of sexual assault. Further, should men disclose their victimization, they could “lose their standing in life” indicating that their position is dependent on being viewed as a “real” man, and since there are so few men who speak up about being sexually assaulted, this standing in life is more important than receiving help.

Peter said that he didn’t just feel like his masculinity was gone, but also him as a capable adult:

It has done a lot to me as a man. That has been my biggest problem as an adult, that the adult man has not been present. He has showed up in some situations, practical things work very well (...) it's been difficult, so I think it has, the assault is what I feel has taken away the man, at least in relation to other people, especially women. But men too, sort of, you feel submissive.

Peter did not just feel like his masculinity was violated, but also his ability to be an adult. He felt submissive to others, and that he was “less than”.

For several informants, it seems that “masculinity” is synonymous with “heterosexual”:

O.F: Do you feel, or have you felt, that your masculinity has been violated?

Christopher: No not really. I've been insecure, but that has been towards people in general.

O.F: So, you have felt certain in your identity as a man?

Christopher: Yeah, apart from some homo-erotic fantasies, I have yeah.

O.F: so, does that mean you think you're less of a man if you're gay?

Christopher: Yes. Yeah, to put it bluntly... In relation to masculinity, that's not something I relate to... I know that's really wrong to say, but (...) It's just, I don't know, maybe I would have had those fantasies anyways, I don't know. I haven't told anyone, obviously. But it never bothered me.

Christopher said that homosexuality and masculinity are mutual exclusive. However, he can’t explain why he thinks this, he just “doesn’t relate” homosexuality to masculinity. This indicates that the stereotype of homosexuals has become representative to Christopher, and that’s why he brings up the topic when discussing masculinity.

Frank said that he does think a lot of male sexual assault victims worry about others thinking they are gay. He explains this with the whole sexual integrity being destroyed when you are assaulted. He is, however, clear that he himself is not worried about people thinking that he might be gay, but that he does see how it can correlate with masculinity for some men.

For Robert, masculinity ideals were part of why he looked up to his perpetrator - he had what Robert lacked in order to stand up for himself:

O.F: Have you ever felt that your masculinity has been violated?

Robert: That's probably one of the reasons I looked up to him, because I viewed him as masculine, I mean I have looked up to him for 29 years. And I've even started at the same martial arts place as him, probably to feel like I can stand up against him. And it's not that when we talk about this now, I don't feel that my masculinity is under attack, but if I were to say it in another context, like a party or a girl I'm interested in then yeah. Most of my life the identity as a man has not been the issue, but rather the identity as a human where I have struggled to feel like a human being (...) but yeah maybe a little bit if I meet someone who I feel is very masculine, that can make me feel small.

The degree to which Robert feels his masculinity is under attack depends on which context he is in. Talking to professionals about the assaults does not make him feel less of a man.

However, if he were to tell a girl he was interested in, he would feel less masculine. This means that when it is important to him to display himself as masculine, he struggles.

There exist masculinity ideals among the informants and being a sexual assault victim in no way coincides with hegemonic masculinity, according to them. “Emotional”, “small”, “weak”, “gay”, and “submissive” are all mentioned examples of qualities in men that are feminine, and that breaks with the ideal masculinity. This finding is consistent with previous research (see Donne, DeLuca, Pleskach, Bromson, Mosley, Perez, Mathews, Stephenson & Frye, 2018) which shows that gender and masculinity norms creates a barrier to disclosure for male victims of sexual assault because the victimization breaks with these norms.

It seems that by not disclosing their victimization, the informants have held on to their, in Goffman's words, virtual social identity, by passing as what they perceive as “real men”.

Thus, they have managed their stigma through their perceived masculinity.

Jonathan described being masculine in physical appearance, but somewhat feminine in hobbies and interests. This has caused him to wonder how much of a man he really is:

(...) I liked being in the kitchen, I can bake [laughs]. Do a lot of the feminine things, I'm the one in the relationship who wants to talk about feelings (...) Am I man enough? All the emotions around that. A man, he's not supposed to cry, he's supposed to show himself as strong... And there I am 1.95 centimeters tall and 130 kilos heavy, you know?

Jonathan's views on masculinity is strongly linked to traditional gender-roles, and when he engages in activities he associates with femininity, he wonders how much of a man he really is. Furthermore, Jonathan reflects on the male sexual assault victims' role, how others perceive them, and how a masculine appearance can be helpful:

(...) And it's easier in quotation marks if you're a girl, right? They are made to be screwed, to put it like that. Who does that hurt? If you are a boy... (...) I'm in the fortunate situation, that I'm quite large. I have a deep voice, I sort of gorge in the landscape you could say. Right? So, I could probably defend my masculinity if I feel I need to.

What Jonathan is saying is that it's easier to sexually assault women, both because they are biologically "made for being screwed" and because they are typically physically weaker than are men. So, when men are sexually assaulted this must mean that they are not "real" men. Jonathan is in the position in which he is, because of his physical appearance, easily perceived as masculine. Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) writes that men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when they want to, but also strategically distance themselves from it (p. 841). Jonathan has distanced himself from hegemonic masculinity strategically, to educate others of male sexual victimization:

I haven't felt the need to [defend my masculinity, O.F], quite the opposite, I have chosen to show myself as vulnerable in some situations simply to modulate others; it's been very conscious. So, I have chosen to be open, and in that... OK, I can imagine there are people sitting around in my circle of friends, my acquaintances, attacking my masculinity (...) maybe because they look down at me. Maybe I'm excluded from the good company because I have the experience that I have.

This is what Orne (2013) metaphorically calls "taking the bullet". Jonathan feels it's more important to educate others than defending his masculinity. He wants to set an example and show that even big, strong men like him can be survivors of sexual assault.

## Institutional blocking

Male sexual assault was first seen as a problem in prison populations in the 1970s. However, male SA was considered a minority issue that required neither research nor public interest. In British society, the misconception that male SA happens only in prison is still prevailing, and male SA in the community is ignored (Javaid, 2015a: 275). In addition to ignoring the problem in community settings, male SA in the military is actively concealed because they fear it could diminish the military's reputation if it were known that men who are tough, masculine, and trained could become victims (Javaid, 2015a: 277-278).

What Javaid (2015a) described is an example of stigma being used as political power as Tyler & Slater (2018) states. By covering up male sexual victimization in the military they can reinforce the impression that only tough, strong and masculine men work in the front-lines. However, it is not only at a government-level males have been denied victim status: Some informants in my sample talked about how once they have gotten past the barriers of guilt, shame, masculinity, loyalty, previous attempts at disclosure and repression, suppression and/or trivializing, they reached out for professional help. For some of them, this created a new barrier.

John told his therapist about being assaulted, only to be met with the solution of putting “it in a drawer and put it away and if I needed to look at it again I could open that drawer”.

Disclosing sexual assault can be very sensitive, and the one who discloses puts themselves in a vulnerable position. By not being taken seriously by his therapist, John contemplated suicide as his last resort. This shows how important a supportive network is for the victims. Luckily, John was committed to a psychiatric facility and got a new therapist who listened, believed him, and took him seriously.

Peter had a very similar experience with a therapist as John:

(...) one of the first things he told me was that he didn't think the sexual abuse had scarred me so much he said. It was more about living with a mentally ill mother. I remember I was very hurt. 'Cause it was just like he didn't believe me (...).

Peter went to therapy after he started seeing the “films” about the assaults. However, for him the therapy made everything worse as he felt he was not believed, and that his problems were belittled.

Peter and John both felt like their therapists didn't take them seriously, which supports Orne's (2013) claims that not all spaces that claim to be safe are truly safe (248). They were simply told to push it away, like they had already done for so many years. Despite these experiences, they both continued reaching out for help and disclosing, but because of the emotional strain of not being believed by professionals, it is reasonable to assume that some will not continue seeking help after such experience.

Jonathan thinks the biggest institutional blocking is that there is a lack of service for male sexual assault victims. He has bounced around multiple service providers, but has found that few has the knowledge and capacity to help male SA victims:

And that was a wound for me as a man (...) There's no service... There's no service for people like me.

Not finding service providers for "people like him" can cause alienation of those excluded from the provisions. It can contribute to further stigmatize and marginalize those who are excluded, which means that disclosing will be more difficult, as less will do so.

Robert was also dismissed by the psychologist he told but, just as Jonathan pointed out, he went to see the school psychologist because there were no other services available when he needed it:

(...) I don't think he handled it so well when I told him. and he said that kids can experiment and stuff, and I was so uncertain about it.

Robert exemplifies how a lack of service provisions forces those who are seeking help to get less competent assistance. This can have serious consequences, as the service provided to victims of sexual assaults must know how to handle sensitive situations.

It is clear that the healthcare system has failed the informants who experienced being disbelieved or meeting with therapists who were not competent to meet their needs.

According to Javaid (2015b) this is an issue in the UK as well, as Rape Crisis centers in the UK don't have any systematic services for male victims in place, even though the Ministry of Justice provides public funding so that such centers can give support to all victims of sexual violence. Male rape victims seeking help have experienced being turned away from these centers within the UK (p. 285).

Tyler & Slater (2018) points out that stigma can be used as political power, to “nudge people into desired patterns of behavior” (Tyler & Slater, 2018: 731-732).

Seen in light of research that has found that service providers sometimes deny service to men because they don't want the male population to co-opt sexual assaults, this could be a subtle indication that it's worth exploring further why there are so few service provisions for male sexual assault victims.

## 7.0 The process of disclosure

Here I will try to answer the final research question: What can facilitate disclosure?

Despite there being several barriers that contributed to delays in disclosure, all the informants in my sample have spoken up about their experiences. This is partly due to the facilitators which will be presented next. The facilitators presented below does not exclude others, for many deciding to disclose was dependent on a combination of factors, and there may be more facilitators not discussed in this thesis. However, the facilitators discussed below are what facilitated disclosure for the informants in my sample.

### The uncertainty becoming too much

After trying to push their experiences away for years, a few informants couldn't live with the uncertainty of what they had experienced any longer and reached out to get help. For some it was essential that they didn't struggle with it alone.

Peter talked with an alternative medicinal therapist he had, who he trusted. This opened the door for him to get in touch with the support group who helped him come to terms with his experiences:

(...) And that was like coming home, coming in the door, being greeted with open arms and no demands. It was amazing, experiencing that. And everyone believed it (...) I have noticed that I had a huge need to talk about it after I had accepted that it had happened.

Peter needed to tell someone, because he was uncertain and needed help sorting out what he remembered. He told his therapist who recommended the support organization he is now a part of. He described coming there, as *coming home*. Wadsworth, Krahe & Searing (2019) writes that disclosing to a source without the competence to help further can still lead to a referral to providers with competence. By disclosing to someone he trusted, Peter opened the door to more support.



Jonathan said that he didn't remember the assaults he endured, but that flashbacks sometimes would get triggered, and that he eventually remembered. The first time he started to remember was when his wife, a therapist, wondered if he had a story, he himself was unaware of. Later, Jonathan attended a seminar about sexual abuse which made him cry, but he didn't know why. On his home from the seminar, he gets so many tiny flashbacks that he needs to pull the car over. He still didn't completely remember what had happened until the night he went to a play:

(...) I'm in the theater, a play called «Etterlyst Jesus» [Wanted: Jesus, my translation]. In one scene in the play, the lights are focused on Sven Tindberg, who is standing against a wall saying, «hush, you can't tell anyone, cause then things can go badly for this person in the congregation». And then it explodes once again in my head, and I can see the first images. So... Then I told my wife. And she had already understood what was going on.

Jonathan said that he had repressed the memories of what had happened to him, but he still sought out seminars on sexual assaults and worked to combat the occurrence of SA. He was very engaged in the topic, and particularly concerning the church. This indicates that his experiences, like other informants, was more present in his consciousness than he realized. In addition, once he started having physical reactions and he fully remembered, he was so uncertain about what was wrong, that he disclosed to his wife. She had understood it before he disclosed to her.

Robert had been very uncertain of what he had experienced for a long time, and he often thought about reaching out for help. He talked about needing to confront it, because he was afraid he would repress it if he didn't. One night, Robert was having a party and having had a few drinks he got the courage to call a national help line:

The only thing I can remember is "hi my name is" and then I remember "well goodbye". 15 minutes had passed, I don't remember anything of the conversation, but I remember the rest of the night so it's just during that call that I have blacked out (...) but I could see that I had spoken with them for 15 minutes. And ehm... I then realized that they hadn't said, "you're an idiot, this is completely normal, go to bed," like I had thought they might say.

Although Robert can't remember the phone call, he felt that since it had lasted for fifteen minutes, that must mean that his experiences were validated. After this, he got the help he needed from a support organization.

The combination of starting to remember and being uncertain of what had happened to them seemed to be too much for both Jonathan and Robert to bear alone, and they eventually disclosed what they had endured.

## Becoming a parent

For John and Christopher, what finally made them disclose to those closest to them was having children. For both, becoming parents made their mental health worse and they felt like they had no other choice than to disclose.

Christopher had a mental breakdown after his son was born, and he attempted suicide. The trigger for him was that he was now responsible for his son, and he “needed his son to be OK”. After he had been committed to a psychiatric facility for his attempted suicide, he wrote a letter to his girlfriend and mother to his child explaining everything. The fear for his son and the overwhelming responsibility caused him to attempt suicide. Once he received psychiatric help, he was able to disclose to his girlfriend. This shows how difficult disclosing can be, as suicide was a more reasonable solution to him than disclosure.

John and his wife adopted children, and this caused John to become afraid to “show himself”. Because of this he disclosed to his wife, but neither knew what to do about it. This caused problems with John’s relation to his children:

Everytime I was in the bathroom or toilet, I would hang a towel over the keyhole, cause I was very afraid that they would see. I always did that. I often looked through the keyhole to see if I could see an eye or if anyone was standing there (...) I was really scared that they would say like, «I have seen daddy’s penis» cause that I don't think I could stand. (...) So every time they were in the bathtub or on the toilet or whatever, I would keep my distance, she had to handle that. Cause I felt, I knew it was something, ok it shouldn't be difficult, but it was for me. It was problematic.

John was very afraid to subject his children to something inappropriate, or of being accused of doing so. This was problematic, because it caused him to withdraw from everyday activities with his children, and him not being able to be as present a father as he wanted to be.

Chapleau, Oswald & Russell (2008) claims that there is correlational evidence that male

victims sexually coerce others as well, and further claims that sexual coercion against men has serious consequences for the victims as well as for others (p. 601). However, Chapleau et.al fails to point out that correlation is not causation. By not exploring the correlation in-depth, they may in fact be reinforcing a stigma concerning male sexual assault, which claims that men that have been sexually assaulted will become perpetrators themselves. Even though some informants in my sample reported having violent thoughts, none said that they had ever assaulted someone. In fact, they described these thoughts as disturbing and unwanted. They may have assaulted someone, without disclosing this during our interview, but one should not assume that this is the case.

Eventually, John was able to acknowledge that this was problematic for him and that he needed help, and he joined a support organization. He also traveled to visit his siblings and told them. They believed him instantly, and condemned their uncle.

## Judicial interest

Three of the informants, who also were victims in the same case, disclosed as a direct result of judicial interest. Before the police called them and asked directly whether they had experienced sexual abuse in the club they were members of, none of them had told anyone.

They all remember the decision to disclose was somewhat spontaneous:

It was when the police called me the first time (...) He then told me that someone in the club had been reported for sexual assaults. Did I know something about that? So, I had to ask who it was, and when he said his name, or I asked whether it was him, and yes, he confirmed that and asked if I had something to tell the police. And "yes I have" I said, without hesitation. It was amazing, in that second, letting out something that been there for, I guess it was 33 years - Lucas

When the police asked Lucas directly if he had been assaulted by the coach, he answered yes "without hesitation". Lucas took the opportunity to disclose when it presented itself and he might have been wanting to do this for a long time, without knowing how and to who.

William had thought about what he was going to tell the police during their interview, and he had decided he was going to tell them what had happened.

I sort of decided that I was going to tell everything when he called and asked me to come to his office. 'Cause this was an ongoing investigation and I knew what it was about. And once I've told my story, he asks me if I want to report him. And I'm sitting there thinking that's kind of a lot, so I think that that's not a big deal to me, but I'm guessing the police is going to open up a case anyway. And then it's "yeah we're gonna file a report, 'cause this is assault.

William said that what happened was not a “big deal” to him, but he still decided to tell the police when they asked. This indicates that while not a big deal to him, William still knew that what had happened was wrong, and serious enough that the police should know about it.

This case got some local media attention, and even though the police had not been in contact with Jim, he knew that his wife would have some questions when she read the story in the newspaper because they lived in a small community, where she could figure out that he was likely a victim. He decided that he needed to tell her before she read about it herself:

(...) And when the story broke in the media, I knew she would find out, and I was so grateful that [name] spoke up first so that I could be completely honest about everything I had experienced and not hide, it felt incredible to tell. It was really good, like a giant dam exploding.

It was important to Jim that he told his wife – that she didn't “find out”. As previously stated, disclosing can be sensitive and by telling his wife himself he could control the narrative and how they talked about it, rather than being questioned by her.

Both Jim and William said that they would never have told anyone if the police hadn't started an investigation. It can seem like judicial interest creates the sympathetic other and the safe space the informants needed to disclose what had happened to them. In addition, knowing it was already a case decreased the chances of not being believed. Being given the opportunity to disclose by the police asking them directly is consistent with the findings of Wadsworth et al. (2019) in that victims often want formal resources to ask them directly. Further, they found that many victims did not disclose unless given the opportunity by being asked (p. 801).

## Narrative resources

Most of the informants in my sample participate in "man-groups" where they all are men and have experienced sexual assault. Andersen (2012) writes that a group of people with similar experiences may be an arena for creating openness and liberation (p. 84). Those who are not part of these groups have created their own. Goffman (1963) calls these groups "sympathetic others". These "others" may be those who share the same stigma, or those without a stigma who doesn't think the discreditable attribute is a big deal (p. 31).

Plummer (1995) writes that survival stories bring with them positive identities, and that pertaining to sexual violence, other groups of victim identity, those who had no voice twenty years ago, has begun to get recognition (p. 77).

Stories are powerful because, though not identical to your story, others stories contribute to making sense of our own (Plummer, 1995; 79).

For some of the informants, one of the barriers to disclosure was that they had never heard about men being subjected to sexual assaults. Therefore, narrative resources were important to facilitate disclosure. Both Jim and Lucas felt like they were not alone when a famous male athlete disclosed being sexually assaulted:

Then I fully realized that others have gone through the same. – Jim.

Although there are stories about male victimization, these stories can be too general and not be recognizable to everyone. When the famous athlete disclosed, Jim could see himself in more ways than one: 1) they were both male, 2) they were both sexually assaulted by their coach, and 3) they were both athletes.

This same recognition is described by Lucas:

(...) Eh.. Yeah, and then it comes... It comes up in the media, this about the athlete, [famous athlete] (...) in [year, O.F] there comes the documentary about him, and how he has processed the assaults he was subjected to, and in addition to getting treatment, it makes me finally realize what I have experienced myself. Completely.

By having so many similarities with the famous athlete who publically disclosed being sexually assaulted, Lucas knew what had happened to him *completely*. This shows that the diversity within the group "male sexual assault victims" is important in creating narrative resources. Lucas and Jim talk about this in very similar ways, and it's clear that having a

narrative resource not only facilitated disclosure, but also made them realize *what* they had experienced, which was still uncertain to them after all these years.

Peter is glad that male sexual victimization has become more known and talked about, and this helped him realize that he was not alone:

I thought about other men that have gone through it. And ehh... in a way it's starting to become normal, before it was, a man couldn't be subjected to sexual assaults, but now more and more or speaking up and that's really OK.

For Peter it's important that more men speak up, because this helps move the victims from invisible deviants to normal, which creates more knowledge and understanding.

It's important to note that even though there are female rape myths that create barriers for disclosure, female sexual assaults are known and publicly discussed, particularly with the #MeToo- and TimesUp movements. This has created narrative resources for women, where men have in large part been excluded or, if mentioned at all, been cast as the perpetrators.

Although narrative resources can be a great facilitator, Tyler & Slater (2018) argues that personal stories as stigma-shattering can increase stigma for some who disclose. There is a big difference between celebrities sharing their stories, and the single mother or the poor (p. 723). Furthermore, thinking that stigma can be eradicated by personal stories ignores the meso- and macro levels stigma exists on (Tyler & Slater, 2018: 729).

## Being the narrative resource

For the informants, it is important to create the narrative resources so that others may speak up. When asked why they chose to participate in this project, this is what they answered:

That's a good question. The thing that's strange is that I have come here for talked for, three years maybe (...) and all this time I have understood that, based on what I've heard here, and I have seen that its mostly women who come forward. Eh... And by participating in activities and such I have come to understand that it's very difficult to get men to open up and talk about this topic. So it was really to be nice, so that someone would get some data, that I could contribute to you having something to study (...) At least you get one voice saying something about their situation. - Christopher

Christopher agreed to talk with me to be nice to me, but in doing so, he does contribute to creating a narrative resource for others who have had experiences like his, and he does acknowledge the importance of this.

Why I chose to participate? To be allowed to contribute to shedding light on this topic, I'm really glad you are discussing this. It's time we get this topic on the agenda. It's good to be able to be a part of that. – Jim

For Jim being a part of something he thinks is essential is important to him. Being able to contribute to more knowledge on the subject can be a way for the victims to feel empowered.

Yeah... Its... when you have this story and have experienced assault... And carried that for so long, I know it has impacted my life, what I have experienced. Negatively, and... When I... I have experienced how good it was to be able to talk about it. Then I would like to contribute and be a part of increased knowledge of the situation and be a part of making the situation easier for others. So everything that contributes to getting the message out there, that its good to come out with your story, that I feel I want to support. – Lucas

Lucas is hoping that by contributing in this thesis, he may be part of reducing the disclosure delays for other. He wants other victims to know how good it feels to disclose.

Well, I think... I think it important that this topic is lifted. - Peter

Peter wanted to contribute because it's an important topic. Peter is the oldest informant, and the one with the longest disclosure delay. For him, it was essential that others disclosed and shed light on the topic, because when he was young male victims of sexual assault was not acknowledged in society.

(...) I wanted to blow the whistle. That this exists in that place (...) I would like to contribute to quality ensurance so that churches and congregations are safe. - Jonathan

Jonathan considers himself a whistleblower, because he was assaulted in an environment where he said people generally doesn't think that can happen. He thinks we are too naïve when trusting the church, and that we don't have enough quality ensurance. He hopes he can contribute to changing that.

(...) as long as its anonymous, I think that then we can focus on something not so good, and it doesn't cost me too much to talk about it (...) and its important, and I think it's alright to help others. So, for them and for those who are struggling with this. - William

William said that he contributed mainly for other victims, and that he doesn't see why he shouldn't, because it doesn't cost him anything to talk about it.

For Frank, being a narrative resource was both the reason he first disclosed the assaults he had endured, as well as being the reason he spoke with me:

(...) It was in connection with a friend of ours having been raped, and she and I was talking. And it first came out to her, but my friend was there, so I told them both at the same time. It was kind of to confirm to her that I understood. - Frank, on when he first disclosed

I think the experience can help others; it has almost become my life's mission to create good spaces for others. But also to create spaces where I feel I belong. Cause that's difficult in today's society, I think. - Frank, on why he chose to speak with me



## 8.0 Conclusion

In this thesis I have shed light on male sexual assault victims and their disclosure process. The research questions have been answered through nine in-depth interviews with male SA victims. I have explored the topic in light of research on sexual violence and disclosure and sociological theories.

### Key findings

The sample in this thesis is made up of nine men who has experienced sexual assaults. All the informants have disclosed to someone prior to our interview. The mean disclosure delay in this sample was approximately 27,2 years, which contrasts with the findings by Steine et al. (2016), although the results are not directly comparable because of differences in research design and sample size, it still points to disclosure delay studies varying in results.

All of the informants in the sample knew their perpetrator who was in a position of trust and authority. The perpetrator consistently groomed both victim and environment, creating strong feelings of loyalty and trust between victim and perpetrator – creating disclosure barriers before the onset of assault. For the informants where grooming was not part of the victimization process, this was substituted by coercion, threats and violence. This is consistent with Hernes' (1978) definitions of power, as the perpetrators exercised their power through reward or punishment. In addition, we see that the perpetrators exercised symbolic power over some informants, exemplified by Christopher thinking that he should be enjoying what was happening and by Jim being taught that bisexuality is normal. It was likely possible for the perpetrators to exercise this symbolic power over the informants due to their young age. The perpetrators also exercised their power when making the informants compliant and loyal to them, to the degree in which they kept the assaults a secret. Keeping this secret at the behest of the perpetrator may have further contributed to shame and self-blame, because the informants may have felt complicit by keeping the secret.

Only one informant reports attempting to disclose to his parents while the assaults occurred, but he was scolded and dismissed. However, this informant never actually disclosed as he did not tell them what was happening, just that someone wasn't "nice" to him. The informants

may not have disclosed while the assaults occurred because they lacked the language necessary to do so. As Pedersen (2005) points out, language creates meaning to us, and when you don't have the language for your experiences, how do you tell anyone? Language seems to also play a crucial role in the uncertainty the informants felt about what had happened to them, because they didn't have the linguistic frame of reference for what they had been subjected to.

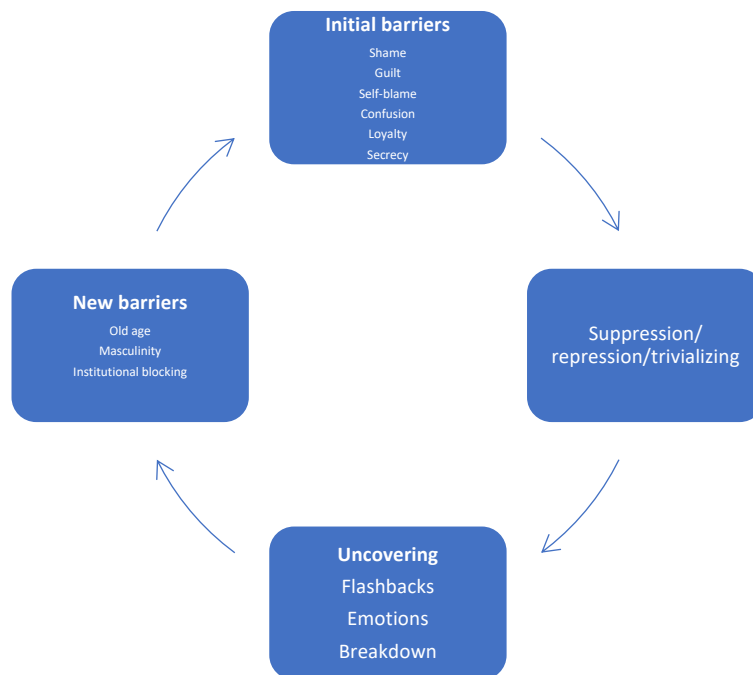
Furthermore, it seems that the rape myths described by Chapleau et al. (2008) are very much ingrained in the sample, as they too talked about loss of masculinity, fear of being gay, expectations of being strong (implying that they should be able to defend themselves), and that they felt, or feared that others would think, that men can't be sexually assaulted. These rape myths contribute to the barriers of feeling uncertain and fearing that no one will believe them. At this point, it seems clear to the informants that disclosure is not an option, and they therefore must put their experiences behind them. Most of the informants reports of suppressing, repressing or trivializing the assaults as a way to move on. The length, and degree, of suppression or trivializing varies in the sample, but it was a strategy implemented by most of the informants. The informants in this thesis are, according to Goffman (1963), discreditable, not discredited, as their stigma is not readily visible. Therefore, the question of whether they repressed, suppressed and/or trivialized their trauma as a strategy for managing stigma should be raised. Like Javaid (2015b), I too propose this as a possibility, worthy of further exploration, as they seem to have a hard time finding allies, groups and sympathetic others. Coupled with heteronormative expectations and masculine ideals, sharing in a group of likeminded might be difficult, as Orne (2013) points out – safe spaces are not always safe. In psychology, repression and suppression is often viewed as a defense mechanism because the mind cannot handle the trauma. In sociological terms however, if we accept repression/suppression as stigma management, the defense is equally a defense mechanism for social survival – if we ourselves cannot remember our discrediting attributes, then we can't present them to others either.

However, as time passed, they often had difficulties in their everyday lives as consequences from being victimized, and not disclosing and getting help sooner. Some could have reactions, emotions, and thoughts they didn't understand, and this could in turn have a negative impact on their jobs, families and friends. Once they could remember, or stopped trivializing, their experiences they faced the same barriers as before, but now they also had new barriers: would

anyone believe them after this long? Would someone think they weak, gay and complicit? And where could they get help? How would they be treated as men if this became known to others? Masculinity was a crucial barrier to disclosure as the informants aged and remembered what had happened to them. It is clear that the informants in this sample has a normative view on masculinity, they are concerned with how “men ought to be” (Connell, 2005: 70). To them, heterosexuality, strength, unemotional and brutal are the attributes of a real man. This view does not match being a victim of sexual assault, and it certainly does not match being Nils Christie’s (2018/1986) ideal victim. This can create a struggle for the informants when they disclose as they will try to be credible members of two contradictory groups: victims and men. To be taken serious as a victim of sexual assault, they must appear less masculine, but to be a “real” man, they cannot be victims. The solution in my sample was to redefine what it meant to be a man and being able to unite being male and a victim through knowledge, support organizations and narrative resources. This was, however, not an easy process for the informants as masculinity ideals were one of their main concerns. By being able to look beyond these ideals and redefining how they “do gender”, they may contribute to Yang’s (2020) taking over the construct of hegemonic masculinity. By not disclosing male sexual victimization and “taking the bullet” (Orne, 2013) one contributes to the status quo of hegemonic masculinity. Of course, as has been pointed out by Tyler & Slater (2018), we can’t expect everyone to disclose their stigmas, as this can have serious social, professional, and personal consequences.

The process of barriers coupled with coping strategies can be illustrated this way:

Figure 1: Process of barriers



This process shows that disclosure barriers often “stacks up” if not dealt with, and it becomes a circle of invisibility. To get the help they need, they need to break this circle and begin the process of disclosure.

The disclosure process has been described differently in the sample, concerning length of disclosure delay, who they disclosed to first, and why they eventually disclosed. For Jim, Lucas and William it all came down to being directly asked by the police, who had already started investigating the perpetrator. This means that they didn’t have to worry about being believed, as the police knew from other victims that there were more victims out there. However, this direct confrontation was crucial to their disclosure, as they all said that they would have never told anyone if they were not asked. Previous research has found that victims of sexual assault experience not being believed, prejudice and professionals being skeptical towards them (Donnelly & Kenyon, 1995; The Ministry of Health and Care Services, 2007). None of the informants in my sample reported being met negatively by the police or the courts. However, no one reported the assaults to the police. Several informants did experience negative responses from health providers, which does support previous research that victims of sexual assault, particularly male victims, are met with disbelief, skepticism, and prejudice. Jim, Lucas and William were the only informants who had contact with the police in connection with the assaults, and as stated they were believed because the police already had

evidence. In addition, Jim and Lucas talked about getting the courage to disclose in large part from a narrative resource: a Swedish athlete had talked publicly about his own victimization and showed Jim and Lucas that this had happened to someone they viewed as a role model. They recognized themselves in him, and felt that if he could talk about it, they could too. For Peter, the uncertainty of what had happened and how to deal with it became too much for him, and he disclosed to a friend and therapist, despite his experience with an earlier therapist telling him that the assaults he endured had not affected him. This shows that the need for social support can be so strong, that even after they have been dismissed some keep disclosing until they are taken seriously. For Peter this worked out, and he became part of a support group. Robert and Jonathan also disclosed because they were uncertain and couldn't handle this themselves. Luckily, they were both believed and taken seriously the first time they disclosed.

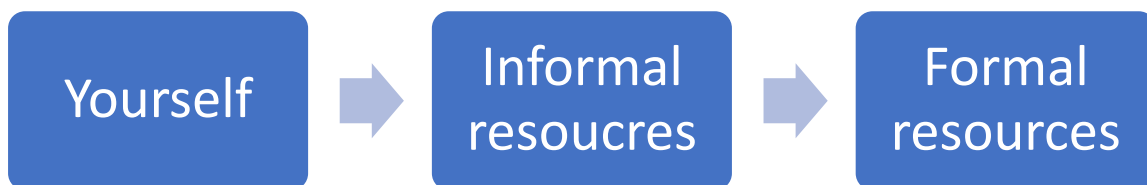
Becoming responsible for someone else seems to be another powerful disclosure facilitator. John and Christopher both disclosed once they became parents, because the responsibility for their children was overwhelming, for two different reasons. For John, becoming a parent was uncomfortable and scary because he was afraid that he would cross the line with his children, unintentionally. This eventually became exhaustive, and he told his wife why he was so afraid. Christopher was so overwhelmed by the responsibility – making sure that his son was OK, that he had a mental breakdown and was committed to a mental health facility. He then disclosed to his then girlfriend.

Frank disclosed for the first time to be supportive towards his friend who had been raped. To comfort her and to show her that she was not alone, he told her that he understood because he had been raped too. He then became the narrative resource someone else needed, and he is still giving lectures about this today.

It seems the process of disclosure is a continuous process, where the first step is to disclose to oneself that you have experiences you need help sorting out and possibly get therapy for. To get this help they must disclose to someone. Most of the informants disclosed to an informal resource, such as their partner or friend. For some the process stopped there. This can have different reasons: the support in their immediate network was sufficient, they saw no point in disclosing further, or the process is not over for them yet. For others, the process led to further

disclosure to formal resources such as police and health care providers. The process of disclosure can be illustrated like this:

Figure 2: Process of disclosure



None of the informants in my sample received negative responses when disclosing to informal resources. Some received negative responses from formal resources, but continued disclosing until they got positive reactions and the help they needed.

## Implications

From my study it is clear that there are many barriers to disclosure to male victims of sexual assault. These barriers are often created in the stigma victimization leads to, regardless of gender. However, some barriers are specific to males and need to be addressed at meso and macro levels. The barriers of rape myths, masculinity ideals and institutional blocking points to attitudes, beliefs and values in our society that create these barriers. By disclosing male victimization the victims themselves has the power to educate, but as I pointed out previously this can have serious consequences for the victim. Therefore, the public and the institutions serving the public must become knowledgeable about sexual assaults and how they are perpetrated against all groups, including males. Including male victims more actively in the media, action plans, and education of mental health professionals and school personnel can contribute to believing men when they disclose and them receiving an accurate response to disclosure. To achieve this, more extensive research on service providers to sexual assault victims must be done in the field to get an overview of the attitude, beliefs and values in our society so that we can implement measures most efficient. In addition, since masculinity and masculinity ideals have a key role in creating disclosure barriers fort the male victims of sexual assault in my sample. In order to explore the possible changes in what defines

hegemonic masculinity today, as Yang (2020) described, a study on the construction and categories of masculinities in Norway should be conducted, particularly in relation to men being defined as victims.

The fact that my sample is almost exclusively compiled of CSA victims is interesting. This may point to the fact that there are fewer adult male victims of sexual assault or that the disclosure barriers are higher for adult victimization. This may represent a gap in research, and further research, which includes males victimized as adults, should be conducted.

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Words in this thesis: 32 464

## Appendix 1: Relevant laws from the Norwegian Penal Code

### "Section 291. Sexual assault

A penalty of imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years shall be applied to any person who

- a) obtains sexual activity through violence or threatening conduct,
- b) engages in sexual activity with a person who is unconscious or for other reasons incapable of resisting the act, or
- c) through violence or threatening conduct makes a person engage in sexual activity with another person, or perform acts corresponding to sexual activity on himself/herself.

### Section 295. Abuse of unequal power relationship, etc.

A penalty of imprisonment for a term not exceeding six years shall be applied to any person who obtains sexual activity for himself/herself or another person, or makes a person perform acts corresponding to sexual activity on himself/herself by

- a) abusing a position, dependent relationship or relationship of trust, or
- b) exploiting a person's mental illness or mental disability provided the conduct does not fall within the scope of section 291, or
- c) exploiting a person under 18 years of age in a particularly vulnerable life situation.

The same penalty shall be applied to any person who through circumstances specified in the first paragraph, a) to c) makes two or more persons engage in sexual activity with each other.

### Section 297. Sexual act performed without consent

A penalty of a fine or imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year shall be applied to any person who performs a sexual act with a person who has not consented thereto.

### Section 299. Sexual assault on a child under 14 years of age

A penalty of imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years shall be applied to any person who

- a) engages in sexual activity with a child under 14 years of age,
- b) makes a child under 14 years of age perform acts corresponding to sexual activity on himself/herself, or

- c) performs an aggravated sexual act with a child under 14 years of age.

Section 302. Sexual activity with a child between 14 and 16 years of age

Any person who engages in sexual activity with a child between 14 and 16 years of age shall be subject to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six years, unless the conduct also falls within the scope of other provisions. The same penalty shall be applied to any person who makes a child between 14 and 16 years of age perform acts corresponding to sexual activity on himself/herself.

Section 304. Sexual act with a child under 16 years of age

Any person who performs a sexual act with a child under 16 years of age shall be subject to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years, unless the conduct falls within the scope of section 299.

Section 312. Incest

A penalty of imprisonment for a term not exceeding six years shall be applied to any person who engages in sexual activity with a relative in the descending line or makes that person perform acts corresponding to sexual activity on himself/herself. Biological and adopted descendants are considered relatives in the descending line." (Straffeloven, 2005, §291, §295, §297, §299, §302, §304, §312).



## Appendix 2: Ethical approval from the Norwegian Center for Research Data

# NSD sin vurdering

 Skriv ut

### Prosjektittel

Seksuelle overgrep mot gutter/menn og hvorfor det tar så lang tid før de forteller sin historie

### Referansenummer

260817

### Registrert

25.06.2020 av Oda Sophie Gullvik Frafjord -  
osgullvi@uio.no

### Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Universitetet i Oslo / Det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultet / Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi

### Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Willy Pedersen, willy.pedersen@sosgeo.uio.no, tlf:  
4790268644

### Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

### Kontaktinformasjon, student

Oda Sophie Myhre Gullvik ,  
osgullvi@student.sv.uio.no, tlf: 98851982

### Prosjektperiode

01.08.2020 - 15.09.2021

### Status

04.06.2021 - Vurdert

## Appendix 3: Consent form

### **Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet «Seksuelle overgrep mot gutter/menn»?**

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å avdekke årsakene til at det ofte tar lang tid før menn forteller at de er utsatt for seksuelle overgrep. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

#### **Formål**

Min masteroppgave vil handle om gutter/menn som har blitt utsatt for seksuelle overgrep, og fokuset mitt er å avdekke samfunnsmessige og individuelle mekanismer som hindrer åpenhet rundt dette temaet. Jeg ønsker å finne ut av hvorfor noen velger å være varslere i slike saker, og hvorfor andre ikke forteller om det før det er gått mange år/noen andre har varslet. Håpet mitt er at denne oppgaven kan bidra til tiltak for å fange opp overgrep tidligere, slik at det kan stanses på et tidligere stadium.

#### **Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**

Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi ved Universitetet i Oslo er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

#### **Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**

Du får spørsmål om å delta i prosjektet som informant fordi er tilknyttet en organisasjon som jobber med menn som er utsatt for seksuelle overgrep. Dette informasjonskrivet er sendt til organisasjonen som deler det videre med deg. Jeg har ikke fått informasjon om hvem du er.

#### **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

Jeg vil gjerne snakke med menn som har blitt utsatt for seksuelle overgrep, og informanten må være over 18 år. Å melde seg som informant innebærer at du signerer et samtykkeskjema hvor du bekrefter at du har fått informasjon om hvordan jeg vil oppbevare dataene jeg innhenter, at du er informert om prosjektet, at du er fortalt om dine rettigheter og at jeg kan benytte dataen til min masteroppgave. Jeg vil ikke gi informasjon om deg eller dataen til noen andre enn min veileder i forbindelse med masteroppgaven. Alle informanter vil bli anonymisert og intervjuene vil bli slettet når de er transkribert.

Jeg vil i perioden august-oktober 2020 gjennomføre intervjuer med mine informanter. Vi møtes der du ønsker og føler seg komfortabel. Selve intervjuet vil ta ca. en time, men kan vare lenger dersom vi trenger det. De som ønsker det kan ha med seg en nærpersion som støtte. Dette kan være terapeut, partner, kontaktperson i organisasjon o.l. Denne personen kan være med i intervjuet dersom det er ønskelig, men det er helt opp til informanten. Intervjuene tas opp på båndopptaker.

### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

### **Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- *Jeg og min veileder ved Universitetet i Oslo, Willy Pedersen, er de eneste som vil ha tilgang til rådataen. Båndopptakeren som benyttes under intervjuene vil være låst inne fra intervjuet er gjennomført til jeg har overført det til en ekstern harddisk som deretter låses inne. Opptaket på båndopptakeren vil da slettes.*

### **Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?**

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er ca. 15.05.2021. Harddisken med personopplysninger og opptak vil da renses og alle personlige data slettes.

### **Dine rettigheter**

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

### **Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Oslo har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

### **Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?**

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

Universitetet i Oslo ved Willy Pedersen. Tlf: 90268644, e-post:

Willy.Pedersen@sosgeo.uio.no

Vårt personvernombud: Roger Markgraf-Bye. Tlf: 90822826, e-post:

personvernombud@uio.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost ([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

*Prosjektansvarlig*

Oda Sophie Myhre Gullvik og Willy Pedersen

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### **Samtykkeerklæring**

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *seksuelle overgrep mot gutter/menn* og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

å delta i *intervju*

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

## Appendix 4: Interview Guide

### Oppvarming

1. Fortell om deg selv
2. Hvor gammel er du?
3. Hvorfor valgte du å delta i dette prosjektet?

### Hoveddel

4. Kan du fortelle din historie?
5. Hvor lang tid tok det før du fortalte noen om det du har blitt utsatt for?
6. Hvorfor valgte du å fortelle om det?
7. Hva hindret deg i å fortelle det tidligere?
8. Har du noen tanker om hva som kunne gjort det enklere for deg å fortelle om dine opplevelser tidligere?
9. Har det hatt noen konsekvenser, negative og positive, for deg å fortelle din historie?
10. Visste du om andre som ble utsatt for det samme som deg?
11. Hvordan tenker du at andre ser på mannlige overgrepsofre?

### Avslutning

12. Er det noe du ønsker å tilføye?
13. Tusen takk for at du deltok.

