



Underreporting sexual violence among 'ethnic' migrant women: perspectives from Aotearoa/New Zealand

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In: Culture, Health & Sexuality, Vol 21, No 2, 2019, pp. 837-852

Sexual violence within minority ethnic communities is endemic in Aotearoa/New Zealand, but grossly underreported. This paper presents the results of two small-scale qualitative studies that explored why. In-depth interviews were undertaken with academics, specialist sexual violence practitioners and community/social workers. Two main factors that led to underreporting were first, internalised barriers as a result of a 'white' and 'male' gaze; and second, the cultural relativism of meanings of violence. The authors discovered that issues of stigma, defensiveness about traditional norms, especially concerning gender roles and the referencing of minority group identity were deterrents to disclosure and reporting. The paper also explored the implications of underreporting for women seeking help and for the collection of robust evidence of sexual violence among minority ethnic women. The paper concludes with recommendations for improved strategic efforts to encourage safe disclosure among women in minority ethnic communities who experience sexual violence.

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