

Justice, at what cost?

Exploring the Experiences of Female Crown Prosecutors Working with Sexual Trauma in New Zealand's Legal System

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01 Introduction

- Previous research has identified **psychological effects from working with potentially traumatic material**¹
- **Crown prosecutors** (CPs) are particularly vulnerable, as they prosecute on behalf of **victimized clients**²
- Previous research, looking at male and female CPs, found that **sexual assault cases involve more traumatizing material** than murder/manslaughter³
- **Female CPs are exposed to gender-based violence** through prosecution of sexual assault cases⁴
- **No current research** on how female CPs experience sexual trauma (ST)

02 Objective

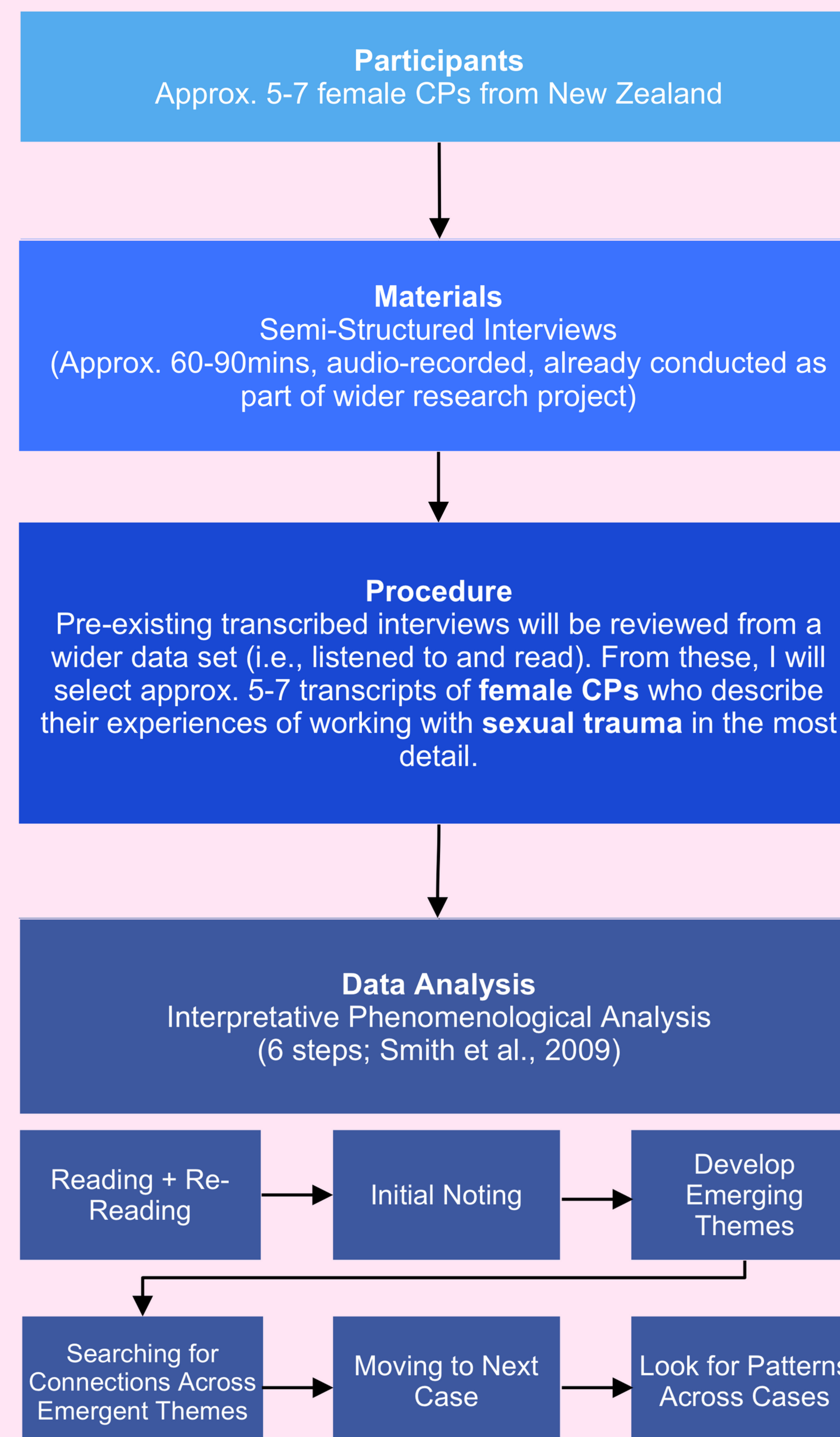
To understand how female CPs experience working with sexual trauma in NZ.

- Does working with ST impact female CP's wellbeing, and in what ways?
- How do female CPs personally deal with working with ST?
- What factors help and hinder female CPs' willingness to seek support for their experiences of working with ST?

03 Ethical Considerations

- ☒ Ethics approved for secondary analysis of qualitative data
- ☒ Participant consent for secondary analysis
- ☒ Confidentiality (i.e., pseudonyms for all data)
- ☒ Secure storage of sensitive data (i.e. on secure university devices)

04 Method & Planned Analysis



05 Key findings

- Findings are consistent with the limited extant literature identifying the negative impacts of occupational exposure to trauma among legal professionals.
- Findings highlighted that female CPs experience a range of occupational stressors that impact their psychological wellbeing, including role overload and repeated exposure to highly emotional and traumatic material.
- Working with sexual trauma was found to have an additive effect, making an already difficult job even more challenging, and was experienced as the most difficult traumatic material that female CPs had to work with.
- The lack of training and preparation for working in the CP role as well as for working with sexual violence cases was found to compound these effects.
- These findings emphasize the critical need for reform of current policy and practice to address the role-specific needs of female CPs and protect them from the occupational risks of burnout and vicarious trauma.

06 QR Code for Research Summary



1. McCann, I. L., & Pearlman, L. A. (1990). Vicarious traumatization: A framework for understanding the psychological effects of working with victims. *Journal of traumatic stress*, 3(1), 131-149.

2. Saakvitne, K. W., & Pearlman, L. A. (1996). *Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization*. WW Norton & Co.

3. Kim, R. (2020). CROWN PROSECUTORS' EXPERIENCES OF WORKING WITH POTENTIALLY TRAUMATIC MATERIAL AND EMOTIONS [Master's thesis, Victoria University of Wellington]. <https://openaccess.wgtn.ac.nz/ndownloader/files/28608885>

4. Okan, C. (2016). Gender-sensitive women lawyers' perceptions and positions in handling cases of violence against women in Ankara [Master's thesis, Middle East Technical University].