Western University
Scholarship@Western

Sociology Publications | Sociology

9-1-2009

Access to Justice as a Component of Citizenship: Reconsidering Policing Services for Canada's Homeless

Laura Huey
University of Western Ontario, lhuey@uwo.ca

Marianne Quirouette
University of Toronto, mariannequirouette@sympatico.ca

Follow this and additional works at: http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/sociologypub

Part of the Criminology Commons, and the Urban Studies and Planning Commons

Citation of this paper:
Huey, Laura and Quirouette, Marianne, "Access to Justice as a Component of Citizenship: Reconsidering Policing Services for Canada's Homeless" (2009). *Sociology Publications.* Paper 10.
http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/sociologypub/10

ACCESS TO JUSTICE AS A COMPONENT OF CITIZENSHIP: RECONSIDERING POLICING SERVICES FOR CANADA'S HOMELESS

Laura Huey
Department of Sociology
University of Western Ontario
Room 5316, Social Science Centre
London, Ontario
N6A 5C2
Email: lhuey@uwo.ca

Marianne Quirouette
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Concordia University
1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. W.
Montreal, Quebec
H3G 1M8
Email: mariannequirouette@sympatico.ca

2009

Acknowledgements

This technical report was produced as a result of a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, under their Homelessness and Diversity Initiatives program.

This study would not have been possible without the active participation of the many community groups, who offered their support and resources to expedite the process. As confidentiality prohibits us from naming these organizations, their staff and clients, we will have to offer an anonymous thank-you.

We would also like to thank the Lothian and Borders Police Force, the Vancouver Police Department, the Toronto Police Service, and their respective members, for their participation and their willingness to provide necessary assistance in the research process.

This research programme also benefited from the support of our community partner, the BC Civil Liberties Association (Vancouver). The oldest civil liberties organization in Canada, the BC Civil Liberties Association is a non-profit non-partisan advocacy group. The Association's purpose is to promote, defend, sustain and enhance civil liberties throughout British Columbia and Canada. The BCCLA advocates in favour of those principles that promote rights and freedoms, including freedom of thought, belief, conscience, religion, opinion and expression, equality rights, access to justice, and autonomy rights generally. The BCCLA advocates as a watchdog, educator, lobbyist, and community resource.

Contents

Executive Summary 4

The Study ... …….....6
Introduction ……... 6
Methodology ……..……....9

Take Control …….....13
Background ……...13
Operation ……..……...13

Toronto ….. …….....15
Criminal victimization of Toronto's homeless ….……...15
Reporting victimization . ..……...18
Potential benefits of Remote Reporting …….……...24
Potential limits of Remote Reporting ..…….……...26
Levels of support for Remote Reporting ……..31

Vancouver …….....35
Criminal victimization of Vancouver's homeless ……...35
Reporting victimization . ..……...37
Potential benefits of Remote Reporting …….……...43
Potential limits of Remote Reporting ..…….……...45
Levels of support for Remote Reporting ……..50

Recommendations …….....53
Proposed structure …… ……..55
Further recommendations ..……...59

References …….....64

Executive summary

> "The denial of access to justice can only represent [a] failure to be equal, can only represent a diminishment of how [the homeless] are perceived in terms of their human dignity. It can't be perceived as anything other" - service provider.

Due to their vulnerability on the streets, it has been frequently reported that the homeless experience high rates of harassment and criminal victimization. And yet, reports of such victimization are rarely made to the police. Failure to report crime has often been conceptualized as a problem for law enforcement, policy makers and social scientists (Skogan 1984). We conceptualize the failure to notify authorities as to the experience of criminal victimization by homeless men, women and youth as a problem directly linked to their status as 'lesser citizens', individuals and groups who are more often viewed as the criminal element to be protected from, than as citizens who need the protection of the state and its mechanisms of justice (Huey 2007; Hermer 2007). What we explore within the present study is a possible avenue for reconstituting marginalized crime victims as citizens equally worthy of access to justice.

The research project from which this paper is drawn was designed to investigate the phenomenon of under-reporting of criminal victimization by the homeless and, in particular, to examine the willingness of affected stakeholders in two Canadian cities to consider an alternative model for facilitating victims' access to justice through the use of policing services. The Homelessness Remote Reporting Project was developed in Edinburgh in 2002 as a joint venture of police and local service providers to provide policing services to homeless victims of crime. With this model, access to policing services, and thus access to justice through the state, is said to be facilitated through participating service providers, who take initial reports of victimization, relay these reports to the police on behalf of clients, and otherwise act as advocates for the homeless.

In order to examine the feasibility of implementing similar programs in Canada, we conducted an evaluative study that utilized in-depth qualitative interviews with eighty-five (n=85) stakeholders from two major urban Canadian centres: Toronto and Vancouver. Interview respondents included homeless service users, service providers (shelter, food line and other services), and representatives of local police agencies. Through analysis of interview data from these sources, our study addressed three important sets of research questions:

1) What is the nature and scope of criminal victimization within selected homeless communities?
2) What barriers limit or prevent victims from reporting their victimization to police agencies?
3) Would stakeholders support the operation of a Homeless Reporting Program within their community? What do stakeholders see as the strengths and/or limitations of such a program?

In analyzing responses to these questions, we found that while many respondents had concerns in relation to the operation of a Remote Reporting program (which are identified in further detail in the relevant sections of this report), very few of those interviewed expressed concerns with respect to the underlying objectives and/or potential merits of such a program. Indeed, even those who said that they themselves might not utilize such a program could see potential benefits for others. Given the levels of support for the model program in Edinburgh, and in our target cities of Vancouver and Toronto, we are of the view that implementing similar programs in Canada for the homeless and other marginalized communities would be a worthwhile endeavour. In the pages that follow, we discuss our findings and offer specific recommendations to guide organizations interested in implementing Remote Reporting in their city.

The Study

> "you'd be surprised at how little the people in this area or stage in their life...they have no use for the justice system" - homeless female service user.

Introduction

Research on the homeless has consistently demonstrated a link between time spent on the streets and increased exposure to criminal victimization (Novac, Hermer, Paradis and Kellen 2007; Lee and Schreck 2005; Waccholz 2005; Evans and Forstyth 2004; Whitbeck, Hoyt, Yoder, Cauce and Paradise 2001; Hagan and McCarthy 1997; Fitzpartick, Le Gory and Ritchey 1993). Their victimization occurs both inter-class and intra-class (Huey 2007). Instances of the former may involve, for example, intoxicated individuals or adolescent males who harass, intimidate and/or engage in physical violence against a homeless individual found panhandling or 'sleeping rough' (ibid; Kennedy and Fitzpatrick 2001). In a study of homeless 'squeegees', O'Grady and Bright (2002: 29) quote a youth who describes his experiences with motorists: "I've been flipped the bird [given the finger], I've had oranges and apples thrown at me, uh … unmentionable stuff thrown at me … I've been spat at …". Still another youth interviewed by these researchers states, "People tell you to get a job … to fuck off … or they'll turn on their wipers … run over your foot … call you a piece of shit … give you the finger. You name it, they do it" (ibid: 29). Crimes that occur intra-class range from petty thefts, to harassment and intimidation, to serious physical and sexual assaults and murder (ibid). I note that in a recent survey of homeless adults and youth in Toronto, Novac et al. found (2007) that 72% of respondents reported having been a victim of crime within the previous year. Of those who had experienced victimization, 85% reported an experience of theft, 51% had been physically assaulted, 23% had been sexually assaulted, and 42% had been verbally abused (ibid). Aboriginal and other minority respondents

were most likely to report having been verbally abused and/or threatened with harm, indicating that racism is also a factor (ibid). In Waccholz's (2005) study of homeless youth engaged in panhandling, participants described "multiple incidences in which assailants had combined degrading, hurtful words or expressions with physical assault." These incidents included, among others, "having been hit in the face with a handful of pennies", "been hit in the face with a can of dog food . . . cups of coffee" and various other situations involving verbal and physical harassment.

It is also worth noting that gender plays a significant factor in vulnerability to criminal predation on the streets. For example, some recent scholarship has explored issues related to how gender structures the lives of homeless women, variously increasing or decreasing their vulnerability to criminal victimization (Bourgois, Prince and Moss 2004; Evans and Forsyth 2004; Wechsberg, Lam, Zule, Hall, Middlesteadt and Edwards 200; Wenzel, Leake and Gelberg 2001; Wenzel, Koegel and Gelberg 2000; Nyamathi, Leake and Gelberg 2000; Wardhaugh 1999; Passaro 1996). Researchers have found, for example, relatively high rates of sexual exploitation, harassment and sexual violence experienced by homeless women (Evans and Forsyth 2000; Wenzel, Leake and Gelberg 2000; Maher, Dunlap, Johnson and Hamid 1996; D'Ercole and Struening 1990). Other studies have explored risk factors associated with women's experience of 'major violence' (Wenzel et al. 2001), as well as how experiences of violence impact homeless women's mental health (Goodman, Dutton and Harris 1997; D'Ercole and Struening 1990). However, we continue to know little about homeless women's rates of reporting victimization to police and those reasons underlying failures to report.

Indeed, little is generally known about those factors that influence homeless victims' decisions as to whether to report crimes to authorities or not. The research that has been

conducted in this area suggests that reporting rates to the police are typically lower within homeless communities as a result of negative relations with police, victims fearing arrest for outstanding warrants, and the presence of a normative code that prohibits individuals from reporting to authorities (Huey 2007, Novac et al. 2007; Rosenfeld, Jacobs and Wright 2003; McCarthy, Hagan and Martin 2002; Anderson 1999). Novac et al. (2007: 3) note that a number of respondents in their sample advised that "they could not rely on the police for protection, because they were known to be homeless, had a record of offences, or anticipated being treated badly." In a recent article on the treatment of homeless individuals in those neighbourhoods frequently categorized as 'skid rows', Huey and Kemple (2007: 2310) report that "police afford little protection from abuse, exploitation or humiliation at the hands of either other residents or community outsiders [because] the police are viewed as representing dominant political and economic interests, and as the enforcers of the moral values and cultural standards of the middle classes." As one of their interviewees noted in response to the question, 'would anybody be comfortable reporting to the police if they were a victim of crime?': "Why? It's not like they're going to scour the town because one junkie ripped another junkie off. It's your fault because you're not in the right part of town" (ibid: 2311).

In a symposium on 'Rethinking Access to Justice', Mark Kingwell (2000) stated in bold terms the problem that informs the present study: if access to justice is a core constituent of the just society then, "Canada's record in this regard is not as enviable as some … would have us believe." As with any other social good, access to justice is unevenly distributed across the socio-economic spectrum, with the result that those individuals and groups "with greater financial means consistently enjoy greater access to, and wield more influence within, the machinery of law and the courts" (ibid). Kingwell further contends that "the courts are [thus] a

limit-case of whether a given citizen is being served by the social system to which he or she belongs" (ibid). While this may be the case with respect to any number of issues affecting individuals and groups within the larger society, in the example of criminal victimization, I see the institution of the police as representing Kingwell's 'limit-case' of whether the rights of the individual citizen to be treated as a full citizen of the state are being respected and served. It is this relationship – of the police to the homeless citizen as victim of crime – which we explore within the present study.

Methodology

To reiterate, the study upon which the present paper is based explored three important research questions:

1) What is the nature and scope of criminal victimization within the selected homeless communities?
2) What do stakeholders see as barriers to reporting victimization to police agencies?
3) Would stakeholders support the operation of a Homeless Reporting Program within their community? What are viewed as the strengths and/or limitations of such a program?

To address these questions, we utilized in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews. Our interview guide consisted of four main areas of interest:

a) stakeholders' views as to the nature of victimization within the target community;
b) stakeholders' views as to those barriers that contribute to the low rates of reporting incidents of victimization by homeless individuals to the police (if any), and barriers that might contribute to police reluctance to file complaints made by homeless individuals (if any);
c) stakeholder attitudes and opinions concerning the concept of a Homeless Remote Reporting project, and;
d) stakeholders' potential interest and willingness to participate in such a project, if developed in Toronto or Vancouver.

Table A1: Interviews

Respondent category	Edinburgh	Toronto	Vancouver	Totals by category
Police personnel	2	12	8	22
Service providers	12	14	14	40
Homeless service users	17	22	12	51
Totals per city	31	48	34	113

Before considering the question of whether implementing Remote Reporting programs for the homeless in Canada would be a worthy exercise, it was first necessary for us to reacquaint ourselves with the current operation of this program in Edinburgh. To this end, we interviewed representatives of the following groups. First, we interviewed representatives of each of the service organizations participating in the program to learn of their experiences with 'Take Control' and to ask for their impressions of its benefits and drawbacks. We also interviewed representatives of homelessness organizations that are not currently in the program in order to learn why they are not participating and to see their views on its potential benefits and disadvantages for their organization and, more importantly, for their service users. We also interviewed police personnel who have direct experience with the program for their thoughts on its operation. And, perhaps, most importantly, we interviewed homeless adults as to their experiences and/or views as to the merits of the 'Take Control'. Access to homeless men and women were facilitated primarily through service providers, who kindly allowed us access to their sites. Although our focus within this document is primarily on the results of our findings in

Toronto and Vancouver, where relevant we include material from the Edinburgh phase of research.

In relation to exploring the possibility of whether similar programs might be implemented in Canada, we selected two sites – Toronto and Vancouver – and developed a non-probability sample consisting of the maximum number of service providers who work with homeless populations in these cities. Toronto and Vancouver were selected as our research sites as they are major urban centres with substantial homeless populations, and sites with which both researchers have professional and personal knowledge of (Huey and Berndt 2008; (Huey 2007; Huey and Kemple 2007; Kemple and Huey 2006; Huey, Huey, Walby and Doyle 2006; Ericson and Haggerty 2005). Community work within both locations, allowed us to rely on an extensive network of contacts among service and advocacy organizations.

Organizations in the cities of Toronto and Vancouver identified as homelessness service providers (including shelters, drop-in centres, and outreach services) were contacted by email and telephone and briefed about the study. Eighteen organizations agreed to participate (eight in Toronto and ten in Vancouver).

The second stakeholder group are homeless service users[1]. Contact with service users was facilitated through participating service providers. As participant organizations include agencies that work with various sub-sections of the homeless population, including men, women and the transgendered, persons of colour, those with addictions, and the un-housed as well as

[1] Problems related to definitions of 'homeless' and 'homelessness' are well discussed within the research literature. With respect to the instant study, we opted to avoid having to operationalize the term 'homeless'. For our purposes, being drawn into a discussion of such semantic as whether 'couch surfing' or renting a 'skid-row' hotel room would make one homeless was seen as unproductive. Instead, we use instead the term 'homeless service user' to indicate those individuals who utilize services that are promoted as being 'for the homeless.' We use the term 'homeless citizen' as an umbrella concept encompassing all those individuals who are without adequate shelter and/or sustenance.

those transitioning to more stable accommodation, we were provided with a robust sample of both service organizations and homeless citizens. We also note that one of the limitations of the study is that to the extent that we interviewed homeless service users exclusively, this paper does not reflect the views of those homeless men and women who are not service users. As several of our respondents pointed out, many individuals fall through the cracks in the 'social safety net' for a variety of reasons, and thus would not be reflected in our sample. We discuss the implications of this in our conclusions and recommendations.

In order to secure police participation, requests were made to the respective Chief Constable's offices of the Vancouver and Toronto Police Services, asking for permission to interview senior command staff in each force's downtown patrol divisions. We requested access to police staff at the command level, as this is where organizational decision-making and allocation of resources typically occurs within the police; thus we interviewed key institutional decision-makers. In turn, senior officers permitted us access to frontline managers within their divisions and, in some cases, to relevant frontline community beat officers.

All interviews were tape recorded with the knowledge and consent of participants, and all interviews and subsequent data-handling were conducted in accordance with Tri-Council guidelines on ethical treatment of research subjects, as well as those set out by Concordia University and the University of Western Ontario.

Take Control: The Edinburgh Remote Reporting Program for the Homeless

Background

In response to the problem of unreported criminal victimization among homeless youth, in 2002, the Ark Trust in Edinburgh[2] commissioned a study of this problem. The resultant report, which was based on an analysis of interviews with fourty-two homeless area youth, found that ninety percent of respondents had been criminally victimized while homeless (Manson 2002). Further, seventy-nine percent of victims had failed to report the crime to police (ibid). Aware of the operation of a Remote Reporting program within Edinburgh for gay and minority communities, the report's author recommended that a similar program be implemented for the City's homeless. Local police officials subsequently endorsed the recommendation, and in 2003 the Homeless Remote Reporting pilot project was established in Edinburgh. Initially, implemented as a six month pilot project between the police and five local social service agencies, it was adopted as a permanent program in 2004.

Operation

Remote Reporting encourages victim reporting of crimes to police through the use of service providers, who serve as third parties in the process.

Upon receiving a client's complaint of experiencing or witnessing criminal victimization, a service provider consults with the client as to whether to bring the complaint forward to the police. Should the client wish to do so, two options are available for proceeding: the victim or witness can 1) report the matter for police investigation or 2) report the information anonymously for police intelligence purposes.

[2] The Ark Trust of Edinburgh is now defunct, having been subsumed by another agency.

The service provider, who will have received a training session from a Lothian and Borders police officer on remote report taking, will complete the designated forms, which are then sent to the community safety branch of the police department. The report will include information regarding the location of the event, type of incident, victim and suspect characteristics, and an overall summary of the incident. All reports are logged upon receipt and then forwarded to the relevant Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Inspector. Where the victim has requested an investigation, the CID Inspector assigns the complaint to an officer, who is required to follow up with the agency from which the complaint was filed. In order to reduce any potential fears the complainant may have in relation to dealing with the police, he or she can elect to have a service provider present throughout the process, including attending meetings with investigating officers. They are also afforded anonymity up to the point at which charges are laid against a suspect.

Toronto

> I've been strangled. I have been punched out. I've been chased down the street with mace … and I think I'm pregnant (homeless female service user).

As a number of commentators have noted, there are numerous methodological problems associated with trying to estimate the number of women, men and children who are among the 'homeless' within a given society (Hutson and Liddiard 1994; Widdowfield 1998; Chamberlain and Johnson 2001). At best, we have mere approximations of the actual number of individuals who are without adequate shelter, nutrition and other basic necessities. Despite the methodological inadequacies associated with various counts, such approximations do at least afford us some rough idea of the extent of this problem. In Toronto, more than thirty thousand individuals use the city's shelters each year (Wellesley Institute 2008). It has been further estimated that "many thousands more sleep on the streets or join the ranks of the 'hidden homeless'" (ibid: 8). A count of homeless persons conducted by the City of Toronto in 2006 identified five thousand and fifty-two (5052) homeless residents, eight hundred and eighteen (818) of whom 'sleep rough' (City of Toronto 2008). Regardless of estimate variances, it is clear to most observers that the number of individuals who are homeless or 'insecurely housed' increased significantly throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. Khandor and Mason (2007: 6) report that "the nightly count of people sleeping in homeless shelters has more than tripled, from about 1,900 in 1990, to about 6,500 in 2006."

Criminal victimization of Toronto's homeless

The most common form of victimization typically cited by homeless respondents was theft of property. Shelters and other service facilities are frequently the sites were thefts occur. As one shelter resident explained to us, "everybody pretty much gets stuff stolen from them." An

elderly resident complained, “I've had my radio stolen out of my walker. My fault. I was fully aware. I left it alone for not even five minutes. .. I should have known. I should have had it on me.”

In relation to the issue of violent victimization, we were told by one homeless service user that “it happens, but I think it’s a smaller percentage then you’d think, the small isolated incident.” However, a number of respondents reported being the victim of a violent crime. Such crimes typically ranged from assaults to robberies. Robberies are particularly common, as a service provider noted: “often we hear consistent stories about one day, they go to the bank, a guy might know their pattern, and they end up getting robbed.” One homeless man advised that he had been “held up by a knife once”, while another reported having been “attacked with a two-by-four” in another robbery attempt. As a service user explained, “There’s a lot of stupidity, people trying to beat each other up for a lousy stinking few cents.” We also note that the service user who stated that violence occurs less frequently than some might suggest, subsequently related a story involving the murder of an elderly homeless man, “There was an old man that got the fuck kicked out of him by those guys across the street, they killed him. Four guys kicked the fuck out of some old man on the bench.”

Not all violent victimization occurs intra-community with victims and offenders who know each other. As has been reported elsewhere (Huey 2007), homeless service users who panhandle or are otherwise visible in and around a city’s night-time entertainment district are especially vulnerable to violence at the hands of intoxicated partiers. This point was notably brought home in the words of a service provider who works with homeless youth. This individual noted of his clientele that “they do suffer a lot of victimization … at the hands of people partying on the street at night.” Adding, “Young adults, sometimes males, that party on

the weekends, get drunk … I've seen cases where they take whatever money [the youth] have, and then punch them and beat them up."

Sexual violence was another recurring theme in discussions of victimization experienced by homeless service users. A service provider who works with both male and female clients advised, "women are particularly vulnerable, and if they are sucked into the sex trades, or...the drugs...it's more and more that they are assaulted. And, very rarely do they report it. And, even men are sexually assaulted...and, they don't report it." However, women are not exclusively victims of sexual violence. A service provider reported a recent case in which a man had been sexually assaulted within a facility: "We had a guy that was raped up here...on the fourth floor...with a knife to his neck." Our findings with respect to sexual violence are congruent with those of other researchers who have similarly noted sexual abuse and assaults within other studies of the homeless (Evans and Forsyth 2004). In examining victimization within Toronto's homeless population, Khandor and Mason (2007: 18) noted that "seven percent (7%) of our total sample said they had been sexually assaulted in the past year … this statistic was higher for women (21%)." Violence against those engaged in sex trade work was also reported to us by both participants and service providers. In one case, a woman was found after a "john slit her throat, and left her to die."

Previous researchers conducting work on violent victimization within Toronto's homeless population have received first-hand accounts of physical abuse and harassment by police officers (Novac, Hermer, Paradis and Kellen 2007; Khandoor and Mason 2007). We did not. One service provider stated that he had "witnessed police brutally beat clients … I've seen clients with handcuffs on, being kicked while they're down on the ground." The only other direct comments we received on the issue of police abuse were second-hand reports. One comment was

from a service provider who opined that, “it’s a well-known fact that in Toronto there is police brutality and abuses of power, particularly with respect to homeless persons.” Another service provider referenced a case involving a client who had been “nearly beaten to death by the police” following an attack on a police officer. A homeless male service user stated that “the cops are well known for taking people from shelters to this place called ‘Charity Beach’ where they beat them. I’ve known people who’ve been taken there.” To be clear: we did not specifically ask about police abuse. Nor did we ask service users specific questions about other forms of abuse (sexual, physical and so on) that they might have experienced. Instead we asked open-ended questions about victimization, thus attempting to create an environment in which respondents would feel less pressure to discuss incidents that may have been traumatizing to them. Further, we did not want our questions to ‘lead’ our interviewees. It may be the case that the nature of the study that we were conducting – an evaluation of a police reporting system – may have led some interviewees to believe that we were working for the police[3] and/or made them otherwise uncomfortable discussing any past negative experiences with the police. Further explanations may rest with the nature of our sample, or that police harassment or abuse occurs less frequently in the districts studied or at the present time.

Reporting victimization

Homeless service users interviewed in Toronto were asked as to whether they had ever reported an experience of criminal victimization to a police officer, or would consider doing so in the future. A number of respondents stated that they had previously reported an experience of

[3] In the interests of further clarity: we note that all interviewees were briefed in advance as to who we were (independent university researchers) and our research purpose. Consent forms signed in advance of an interview also clearly stated the institutional identity of the principal investigator.

victimization to the police. Further, several others said that they might do so in the future. To assist in our understanding of this phenomenon, we also asked service providers and police officers for their knowledge of reporting practises by homeless victims and witnesses. As is the case with the general population (Laub 1997; Wood and Edwards 2005), serious violent offences – including sexual assaults, attempted murder and so on – are much more likely to be reported by the service users in our sample, whereas property thefts and certain forms of assault are not. For instance, one male shelter resident stated that the decision to report would depend, for him, on the "extent of the victimization." As he noted, "just because someone gives me a punch in the face, that probably wouldn't be enough for me to [report]."

The majority of service users interviewed stated that they would not report an offence to police regardless of the situation. Service providers also advised that many of their clients would not report crimes despite the apparent seriousness of the offence. For example, a shelter worker in a facility for female service users advised that many of the women she comes into contact with in her professional capacity have been abused and/or threatened by partners and/or room-mates at other shelters. When asked to estimate how many of these clients contact the police about their victimization, she replied, "I would say about ninety percent of my clients don't report it." Other studies of victimization of the homeless conducted in Toronto have similarly noted an unwillingness on the part of respondents to report to police. Khandor and Mason (2007: 18) state that whereas one of three of their three hundred and sixty-eight (368) survey respondents reported having been assaulted within the past year (sixty-eight percent of whom had been assaulted more than once), "less than 1% reported a physical assault to the police in 2005."

As previously noted, the research literature has identified various reasons inhibiting homeless citizens from reporting victimization to police, such as individual fear or distrust of the

police or the desire to local anti-snitching codes (Huey 2007, Novac et al. 2007; Rosenfeld, Jacobs and Wright 2003; McCarthy, Hagan and Martin 2002; Anderson 1999). In interviews, various respondents cited those factors as reasons why they themselves and/or people known to them would not report incidents to police.

For example, both service providers and homeless service users cited issues related to individual feelings of fear of police, the view that 'nothing will be done', or that police would not take their report seriously because of their social status or past criminal history, as reasons for not reporting. "There is a real fear of the police, and whether it's real or not, it's real to them," a service provider claimed. A senior citizen, who is also a resident of a women's shelter, advised that "I'm a little intimidated by police."

While feelings of intimidation are one factor, the belief that police will not act on those reports and/or that reporting will not generate an outcome is another set of related concerns. One victim discussed her frustration in dealing with officers who appeared to be unwilling to pursue her case. "They're just not helping. I phone them and they ask what's going on and they just tell me, 'oh, we don't know what's going on there' … they gave me the whole run around." A service provider noted of her clients, "a lot of the ladies we serve have been victimized so many times. Probably, at the beginning, they report. Then, nothing is accomplished. Is it something worthwhile to put their time and effort into?" A female service user who had been robbed at knifepoint advised that she would not bother reporting to police in the future because, "[the cops] didn't do nothing. They said, 'it's only 10 dollars, don't worry about it.'" One frustrated male service user related the following story to indicate his skepticism that the police would act on reports of victimization where the victim is homeless:

> There's a person I know, his name is Wizard[4] and he was robbed at my place where they sell drugs. He's walking through there and had his watch. They tried taking his watch, his money, some other things. He's walking through because he lives around that area. Nobody ever hurt Wizard before, and he got the shit kicked out of him. He ended up in the hospital. Fractured neck, fractured head, everything. He called the cops too, the cops showed up and then they didn't do nothing. What happens if you give a call? The guy's in the hospital, he's telling you what happened and you didn't do shit.

The view that police will not see homeless victims as credible was also frequently cited. "Their self-esteem is so low that they believe that no one will believe them," a shelter worker advised. "The police don't treat them with respect, and so they are afraid to disclose anything." Another service provider stated,

> There's a lot of distrust sometimes, in the homeless population and, unfortunately, sometimes the homeless people get stereotyped and the police are no less, I guess, free from biases. So, they themselves stereotype. And, I'm trying to speak carefully because I don't want to blame the police – they have a difficult job, and it's really hard to appreciate their job if you are not on the streets and you see some of the things they see and, see how much they try to help some of the men...and the same people over and over and the frustration. Those aren't excuses. But it is a bit different when you are immersed in it. But, I would say it's a general distrust the homeless have in the police. Sometimes, the police will rough-handle them, here and there, because they are drunk, or walking in between two streetcars. So, for a lot of these reasons, they don't see the police as their friends, and will not report.

In a similar vein, a homeless male service user advised, "Most of the time when you've had contacts with the police, you're in trouble. So, you want to have as little contact with the police as you can."

For other service users, the police practise of checking individuals for outstanding warrants makes them unwilling to come forward for fear of being arrested. "There is that aspect [to not reporting]," a service provider advised of her clients, "they will have bench warrants against them ... for not showing up for some offence." A veteran police officer in one of the

[4] A pseudonym.

City's poorest neighbourhoods similarly noted, "Many of the women down here have warrants and they get sexually assaulted and they're not going to phone it in. That's a huge barrier." Victims who have outstanding warrants worry whether they would be treated as a victim or an offender, as a service provider noted, "if they were to report, they might wonder what would come of this process. Would they be [treated as] a victim?"

Another reason for the decision to not report victimization is awareness of street-based normative codes around 'snitching' and worries that reporting may lead to further violence or social isolation. "A lot of times it's because it's their friends that are stealing from them. And, you don't want to get known as someone who is ratting out their friends. And, usually, if you do, you end up in worse trouble afterwards ... like, repercussions. You get ostracized and victimized by other friends because you ratted on a friend, or an acquaintance." "They hurt each other too", a service provider stated, "it's not reported … they have a street code ... they're not snitches." The desire to 'deal with it yourself' (vigilantism) was also offered as an explanation. One homeless male service user stated, "a lot of people would rather deal with it by themselves - especially if you know who did it." A homeless female service user noted, "A lot of people don't [report victimization], because they want to beat people up instead. They think beating people up is way better than going to the police."

We also received other explanations for failure to report victimization to police. A frequently cited factor was an inability to recall details of the offense, including those related to an attacker. "These guys don't report. They were too drunk to remember sometimes," stated one service provider, while another noted, "sometimes they are not able to identify their assailant." Still other victims have left gangs, and "don't want to be found." In the case of individuals who are victimized while engaged in sex trade work, a service provider noted that some victims see

violence and other offences committed against them as a 'part of the job', and thus as something that "kind of gets accepted." Recent immigrants may lack the knowledge of available resources – including policing – to help them deal with victimization and/or come from countries where police are not viewed as resource that citizens can access.

To the extent that a successful Remote Reporting program is premised on the belief that service users are more likely to report victimization to a trusted service provider, we asked both stakeholder groups for their thoughts on this. "Sometimes they have been assaulted, and they come here … they tell us," said one shelter worker. Another stated, "I would say that there are a significant number of people who report their difficulties to the staff." Still another claimed that victimized clients "are more likely to report to staff than police", but cautioned that "even complaining to staff, let alone involving the police, is challenging. They often don't want to bring it up with staff. You might see a black eye, and you'll have to tease it out of them."

Several of the service users interviewed also stated that, depending on the circumstances, they would report victimization to a trusted staff member at a facility they utilize. For example, a homeless male shelter client advised that "Yeah, I'll bring it up. If it's a situation that can be addressed this way." Not all respondents, however, were willing to trust service providers. One female shelter resident made this point explicitly, "it's difficult sometimes to trust staff." However, this interviewee also felt that if 'checks and balances' were put into place to ensure competent, respectful treatment that a Remote Reporting program for the homeless "might work."

Potential benefits of Remote Reporting

Each of the individuals interviewed for this study was asked for their views as to the potential advantages of implementing a Remote Reporting program for homeless service users in their respective city. We wanted to know not only what advantages they saw with such a program generally, but also in relation to the operation of the model program in Scotland.

As to possible advantages of a Remote Reporting system for homeless service users, both service providers and their clients suggested a number of potential positive outcomes. One service provider stated that they saw Remote Reporting as serving as a deterrent for would-be offenders: "they'll know that even if they beat you up, you are going to report it...so, they might consider the alternative." A feeling of safety or security in knowing that a victimizer is being dealt with by the criminal justice system was another factor. For instance, a homeless female service user pointed out that victims who don't report may have to live in fear of "another knock on the head...another beating down." Service users also cited the possibility of feeling a sense of personal satisfaction that "the person who did it to you was in the wrong ... [and] the law was on your side." Similarly, a male shelter resident advised that "it would help to know that something got done. It'd make you feel a little bit better." Service providers and police officers also both saw the potential for improved relations between clients and police officers. As one service provider suggested, "someone is reporting something and establishing a relationship with the police? Perhaps it may help with self-esteem."

While interviewees revealed a range of views as what they see as the broader social implications of increasing crime reporting by homeless citizens, the overwhelming majority of those interviewed cited the potential for greater social inclusion of the homeless citizen as the program's primary potential benefit. As a female service user explained to us in relation to a

question about accessing justice as a homeless individual, “Everyone should be able to, but to me it doesn’t feel like everyone can. You can access it, but we’ll believe you if we want to, is what it feels like to me.” Thus, a program that provides a conduit through which marginalized citizens can access policing services “would help to affirm their dignity, in some respects. It would show that they really do matter”, as one service provider stated. Another service provider similarly noted, “because marginalized people think that nobody cares about them … this would be a point that they could...well, heighten their self-esteem. They would believe that someone would like to help them.” The question of social value and/or affirming the right of the individual to be treated equally under law without regard for their social position was also noted as an important benefit by a service provider in the following exchange:

> A: Self esteem, or value of self is huge...If a person doesn’t feel valued, and that they’re going to be dismissed...well, in other words, I can go out on the street, and if I get popped on the head...because of who I am right now...I’m not homeless...not to say that I might not be in the future...but now, I’m going to get attention, I’m going to get medical care, I’m going to be taken to hospital, I’m going to have a police officer file a report, take down details and follow-up with me...That’s not going to be the same for...
>
> Q: It’s like living in a different dimension?
>
> A: Yes. Totally...From an equity point of view, our justice system is horrendously skewed against marginalized people, and absolutely has to change.

Respondents also spoke to particular advantages and disadvantages they saw with respect to the mechanics of the program, as implemented and operated in Scotland. An elderly female service user pointed out that a major benefit of the program is the active participation and assistance of service providers, who have established trust relations with the client:

> You know what staff you can trust...If you get a cop come to your door - whether it’s a female or male cop - you don’t know them. They might worry that they’ll say a wrong word, or something. The staff member will have known them for

> awhile, and might be more patient, understanding, and able to draw more out of the person.

The anonymous reporting option was also seen by members of each of the three stakeholder groups as a desirable option. In relation to this option, one service provider stated, “I think there could be benefits” before musing in relation to fear of retaliation as a major obstacle to reporting, “the first thing that came to mind is, what if there isn’t reprisal?” A service user who was also concerned about retaliatory violence offered a view shared by other respondents, “I think that would be a really good way.”

Several of the police officers interviewed saw the program as offering the potential to provide insights into the ‘dark figure’ of unreported crimes within this community. As a senior officer noted of HRR, “it could definitely help…because we do not get the access.” Similarly, another officer advised that “any extra information that you get is a bonus for us…instead of walking in and looking at a wall.” One senior officer also saw the potential of HRR to not only increase crime reporting, but also to potentially increase police staff resources:

> At the end of the year you want to say reported crime is down. I am more concerned with crime period. Reported crime is what we have to base our stuff on. From the unit’s perspective, we are staffed out. There is a formula to determine staffing levels and a small part of it calls for service. So if reported crime goes up, I might get a few extra officers. I do not think it would go up enough to make a huge difference but where it may make a difference is down the road we can lessen the reported crime.

Potential limits of Remote Reporting

As the primary function of this study is to evaluate the potential of Remote Reporting programs for Canada’s urban homeless, it was also important for us to ask respondents to identify any concerns or criticisms they had, and/or advise as to limitations that they believed would imperil the operation of such a program. To that end, we attempted to make it clear that

we were not advocating for Remote Reporting, and thus invited their honest feedback. Several actual and/or potential limitations were identified.

The single largest concern raised by both police and service providers was the issue of time and resources. Both occupational groups cited a lack of available human resources as a potential stumbling block. “Already, we don’t have the resources to do what we are mandated to do,” a shelter worker complained, “so, if we involve reporting, it will definitely take away resources.” Another advised, “The process drains us. Eventually, if we work too much, it’s hard. We take it home with us. I don’t think that with our job - this extra thing - I don’t know if we can handle it.”

In relation to human resource issues from members of the three police divisions studied, a number of officers in two of the divisions stated that they were short-staffed. “We have to get more and more work done with fewer and fewer people”, one officer stated. This view was not, however, universally held. One senior officer in an equally busy division advised, “we have a lot of personnel” and then went on to state that the personnel in his division are “actively working … out in the community, not doing traditional police work.” While he acknowledged that “yes, I’d love to have twice the number of officers” involved in community policing, he was equally aware of the fact that policing is a finite resource. Thus, he noted that conscious decisions have to be made about deployment of those resources, but that he was reasonably confident that his division could easily accommodate a pilot Remote Reporting project within the structure of their existing Community Policing programs.

Problems in relations between service providers and police were also cited as potential barriers to implementing Remote Reporting. A few of the service providers that we spoke with characterized relations with the police as “very negative.” A shelter worker at one facility stated,

“there’s quite a lot of intimidation going on amongst the police and staff.” He then went on to add, “in my years of being here, there has never been a time when the police have come here to offer services to clients.” Conversely, police cited examples of what they took to be intransigent and/or obstructionist service providers, who are seen as interfering with their police duties:

> We’ve had a love hate relationship with [organization name deleted] for years, to the point where years ago they would phone us because clients were beating the shit out of each other. They’d make a 9-1-1 call, an emergency call, we’d show up and start tearing them apart, they’d start swinging at us so we’d use force to separate us and the shelter workers … would jump on our back and assault us because we’re breaking up a fight that they called us about.

It is of little surprise that a worker at this same facility complained about slow police responses to fights at their site.

Some officers felt that service organizations dealing with the homeless and other marginalized groups create and exacerbate tense relations between police and their client groups. This attitude can be seen in the following remarks offered by a police officer with respect to allegations of police abuse and/or misconduct with homeless citizens:

> That was before a lot of agencies came around like OCAP that stated feeding them propaganda, if you deal with the police they’ll beat you up and steal money and all that kind of stuff which has never happened. Has never happened. I don’t know anybody in all the years I’ve been down here that has done that to the homeless. If you talk to them they say it happens all the time. If you talk to the people on the street they’ve been beaten up by the police 100 times. It’s never happened. I’m not just saying that to make it sound like we’re guardian angels. You know how it works.

Both police and service workers also cited difficulties surrounding the sharing of client personal information as an issue that exacerbates tensions. Under Ontario privacy legislation, service organizations are circumscribed in what information they can share with other agencies. As a service provider explained the situation to us, “We’re also controlled by a privacy act. So,

we can't give information to the police. On the one hand, we need help. On the other, we don't give it to them. It's frustrating."

Service providers were also concerned about the possibility that involvement in a HRR program could jeopardize impact trust relations with clients. Indeed, the possibility that client trust might be damaged if service users began to see workers as police informants was raised by several interviewees. This view was neatly summarized by a respondent as follows:

> There are a number of factors to think about. The first thing is – with agencies like ours – how do you want to ask to be portrayed, or looked at, by our client population? Do we want to be looked at as another arm of the law? This is something to think about very carefully. It could destroy the relationship of the helper and helped. If anyone knows, for example, that I am reporting crime, or that I am a "chain of reporting," it could have very serious implications.

This particular individual wondered whether through encouraging reporting, service workers might be seen as 'snitches' and thus inadvertently placing themselves in danger.

Several of the officers interviewed in Toronto raised specific concerns with respect to the idea that they could or should suspend the process of checking victims for warrants and/or exercise discretion with respect to executing outstanding warrants for victims. It is worth noting, however, that several interviewees also made it clear that in some cases police officers do exercise discretion with respect to outstanding warrants. This practise is evident in the words of a service provider who was discussing working with police in cases where clients who are sex trade workers had been victimized:

> People don't want to report to the police because they have outstanding warrants. With the "Bad Date List", I have had clients that are willing to go through with it, and I've gone every step of the way, in terms of advocating and supporting them. I have to say, the police – at that point – have been very helpful. And, even though their outstanding charges are documented, they are not arrested immediately. They work around them and court dates are set.

Police officers interviewed advised that there are means at their disposal to assist victims who have outstanding warrants. One senior veteran officer with experience in the investigation division of the TPS suggested that victims could be treated in comparable fashion to police informants: "If a guy is wanted we can say, 'listen, you know what? Come in and we will do your paper work that morning.' We arrest them that morning. 'We will do it up so you go to court in the afternoon and that way you do not spend the night in jail.' Or if you are doing up the paperwork, you can say, 'look I am going to recommend you for release'. Others noted the existence of a TPS policy which suspends the warrant execution process in cases where a victim is wanted by Immigration Services, thus they felt that a similar policy could be implemented in support of a Homelessness Remote Reporting program.

Another concern raised by police was the possibility of false reports. As one veteran officer advised, "a fair amount of times [you get] a tip [that] was false and it was just to get back at a fellow drug dealer or a disgruntled spouse, you know. That is what I am concerned with, as well, with this, [that] they doing it for vindictive purposes." However, this officer also noted that the false tips were not uncommon generally, and that police officers are periodically cautioned that such tips are "information only … and not evidence" and thus merely a "starting point for an investigation."

Several respondents raised the problem of how to contact victims who report an offense for investigation. As one police officer stated, "how do you get a hold of them? It is easy to come in and report something to a shelter, but okay now are you a member of the shelter … Is this permanent residence right now, or are you just a woman off the street?" We recognize that this is a limitation of both the model program and a problem faced by the homeless with respect to

regular criminal justice reporting routes. Linking the individual to one or more service organizations may, however, alleviate this problem in some instances.

As for the homeless service users we interviewed, none raised specific problems with the program and/or its operation in Edinburgh, other than stating that they would not be inclined to use it and/or suggesting that it might be more suitable for other groups, primarily women, senior-citizens, and children.

Levels of support for Remote Reporting

Table C.1 Support for a pilot Remote Reporting program

Respondent category	Support	Not supported	Unsure/maybe	Did not answer	Totals by category
Police personnel	7	2	3	0	12
Service providers	10	0	4	0	14
Homeless service users	15	4	2	1	22
Totals	32	6	9	1	48

The table above displays respondent answers per stakeholder category as to whether they supported the idea of a Homelessness Remote Reporting program in their local community. We interviewed fourty-eight participants in Toronto, of whom 32 (67%)[5] expressed the belief that a HRR program in Toronto would be worth endorsing. For various reasons, 9 interviewees (19%) thought the goal of the program was laudatory but expressed doubts and/or skepticism as to whether such a program would work within their community. 6 respondents (13**%**) did not support the program. One respondent did not answer. The reasons as to why some participants

[5] Percentages have been rounded up.

did not support the idea of a HRR program, as well as those offered for other positions advanced by respondents, are discussed below.

Of the six individuals who expressed opposition to the idea of a HRR program and/or outright skepticism as to the ability of such a program to achieve its goals, four were homeless service users. When asked why they did not support the idea of a similar program in their community, we received responses ranging from the belief that one should deal with victimizations themselves to the view that it is better to report directly to the police. For instance, one shelter resident exemplified the former view in stating that such a program "would not change anything" and that if victimizations "happens to me, it's up to me to deal with it. Not staff or police." Conversely, we were told by another respondent that he didn't see the need for an alternative reporting system because he would report directly to the police. In his words, "I don't see why I should have to go to a middle man." Of the twelve police officers interviewed, two did not support the idea of a HRR program. One senior officer did not think such a program was needed and took exception to the idea of suspending warrant checks or exercising discretion for outstanding warrants when dealing with homeless crime victims. A frontline supervisor was of the view that it would be preferable – for both victims and the police – if victims were encouraged to report directly to the police. Among her stated concerns were the quality of report taking, trauma to victims who would need to be re-interviewed by police and the need to preserve evidence, particularly in cases involving sexual assaults.

Nine interviewees stated that they were unsure or undecided as to whether a HRR program could work in their community. Four of these respondents were service providers. Although service providers raised several different issues with respect to the operation of the program, a primary stumbling block to supporting HRR were concerns with respect to their

workload. Others felt that while the goal the program – to facilitate wider access to justice for homeless crime victims – was a laudatory one, effecting any type of individual difference or social change through HRR was overly idealistic and would do little to address underlying issues affecting their client groups. For example, a service provider bluntly stated of HRR, “It sounds good, but it’s not realistic. If I’m a social worker and I make a difference in one person’s life...like...that’s bullshit.” In a similar vein we were told by another service worker that the larger social issues faced by the homeless “won’t be solved by having a few people report more.” She then queried of HRR, “Will there be a widespread impact? I don’t think so” before concluding, “I would give it a shot. I have nothing to lose. I just don’t see it making a big difference.” Two homeless service users were also unsure as to whether HRR would work, particularly in light of the operation of the ‘anti-snitching code’ that prohibits informing to the police. Discussing this code, one male shelter resident felt that HRR could work, but only for female service users, who are deemed as being in greater need of police protection. “Well, it would definitely work better in a woman’s shelter. You would never get it going in a men’s shelter.” Three police respondents also expressed uncertainty, although their concerns were more typically related to doubts as to whether HRR could work within the current political and social environment. Institutional, legal and other limitations in relation to liaising with service organizations were cited as potentially inhibiting factors, in particular legislative and/or institutional guidelines around the sharing of client information that officers saw as a roadblock to better relations with service providers.

Overall, the majority of individuals interviewed expressed support for the idea of a Homelessness Remote Reporting program in their city. Service users saw the program as offering a less intimidating way of reporting crimes. As one shelter resident explained to us,

“Actually, I think it’s a very good idea. And, I think it’s something I would be inclined to make use of, if it was available … the fact that you would sit down with an interested third party - it would make it less intimidating.” Police officers also saw various benefits to the program. Among the benefits cited include improved relations with the community and increased access to information about crime. Indeed, we heard from several officers comments along the following lines, “You know what? The idea has merit. It really does” and “anything that is positive and brings them forward so we can bring those who victimize them to justice is a good thing. So I would certainly support it.” A senior officer offered the following comments, “I think [HRR] is a good idea because it will give us a more accurate picture of what is going on…it will in the end I think deter crime. It is certainly something that I would invite.” Service providers also had positive things to say about the idea of a HRR program. Among other comments, we received the following endorsements from individuals who work with homeless service users: “This sounds excellent” “I think it would be a good idea” and “I like it! Wow...They should start this as a pilot program. A lot of times, women don’t want to go through and bother to report it...That’s really great! If they introduced it as a pilot program, I would support it.”

Vancouver

> I've seen a lot of people victimized. Like the mentally ill. Adults with mental illness sometimes get tossed over here … and sometimes kids. With the kids, that's a shame. This is not the place for them. Not here on skid row (homeless male service user).

The majority of available sources agree that homelessness is a growing issue within the City of Vancouver. The City of Vancouver's own 'homeless counts', conducted in 2002, 2005 and 2008, suggest that the number of homeless people in the City of Vancouver more than doubled (from an estimated 600 to 1,300 individuals) from the 1990s to 2005 (Garrison 2008). That number increased again by approximately twenty percent between 2005 and 2008 (ibid). And, likely, these estimates are low; organizers of the most recent count have acknowledged that while the count accurately reflects the fact that the numbers of individuals without shelter have increased, that their estimates were on the conservative side (Sundberg 2008).

Criminal victimization of Vancouver's homeless

The most frequently occurring form of victimization noted by respondents in our Vancouver sample was theft of property. Indeed, when we asked a service provider how his clients are most commonly victimized he simply replied, "their stuff's taken." Shelter residents cited thefts from shelters as a particular concern. For example, a homeless male service user noted, "I see a lot of theft, even in this area here. People come in with stuff and they make friends, and then they're looking around for their stuff the next day."

Physical assaults are also common and in many cases the assailant is known to the victim. Among female interviewees who spoke of having been assaulted, we heard several stories

concerning incidents of domestic abuse. For example, one woman described the following attack by an ex-partner, “I was victimized just last week. My ex tried to break my neck … he grabbed me by the jaw, crushed it in here.” In other instances, the offender is a friend or acquaintance. A woman we interviewed in a shelter described having been held hostage by an acquaintance who wanted her boyfriend to buy drugs for him: “He sucker punched Joe[6] in the face... I’m scared of this guy. He tells Joe to leave...and don’t come back without twenty dollars for crack/cocaine...He held me hostage. He said, “If Joe calls the police, I know where you work.’” A male service user reported the following story to us, “A friend came to me and tried to muscle me for some money for some drugs … I didn’t respond to him, so he sent somebody down to try to burn me out of my place. I came out of my place and I got piped down with two foot pipes and the compound fracture in my arm in two places because I wouldn’t, basically, give them what they wanted.” Unpaid drug debts to local dealers are also a source of much violence. One woman reported to us that because of drug debts within the community, “I see people beating on other people all the time and threatening them and stabbing them.”

Although many respondents stated that they knew their victimizer, others cited experiences of random violence by unknown individuals. In some instances the assailant appeared to be another homeless person. For example, a female service user informed us that she had had several altercations with other females from the local community, including a recent experience in which she “was beaten up on the street”. A male shelter resident related a story in which another homeless male took an object and struck him from behind: “[he] smashed my head. Cut my head open.” As was also reported by respondents in Toronto, some of these random assaults are committed by party-goers, who come from the suburbs to sample the City’s

[6] A pseudonym.

nightlife. Once the bars and nightclubs begin to close, intoxicated individuals pick fights with each other, verbally harass and/or harangue the city's population of street youth who congregate in the downtown core, and look for other ways to satisfy violent impulses (Haggerty, Huey and Ericson 2008). A police officer advised that it was not uncommon for homeless men and women to become a target: "street people get shit kicked at 3:00 in the morning because they're sleeping in a lane. Some drunk who lives in Abbotsford walking down there after partying, lays the boots to him." Homeless people sleeping outside are also targets of other types of vicious attacks. A service provider noted, "when they're sleeping outside, somebody will come along and spray them with bear spray or some toxic spray or something."

In relation to sexual violence, we received no direct reports of victimization from any of our service user respondents. However, service users, service providers and police officers interviewed did relate specific incidents of sexual violence known to them. Victims of sexual violence in the stories told, included both males and females. Women involved with Vancouver's sex trade were cited as being particularly vulnerable to sexual violence.

Again, we did not specifically ask homeless service users about experiences of police abuse. However, we received one allegation of police abuse from a homeless male service user in Vancouver who stated, "My head was stomped, my nose was broken. I got two teeth kicked out by the Vancouver police."

Reporting victimization

We also asked respondents a series of questions concerning whether they had in the past, or would consider in the future, reporting an experience of criminal victimization to the police. In a similar vein, we asked service providers and police interviewees for their knowledge of reporting practises by homeless victims and witnesses. As is also the case more generally

(Skogan 1976; Singer 1988), when homeless service users in Vancouver do report an offence to police it is usually because they view the situation as being of a serious nature. For example, one man advised that he had reported an incident involving a forcible entry at a place where he had been staying. More commonly, though, among those respondents who said they would only do so if a serious injury was involved. Some respondents, both male and female, felt that physical assaults should never be reported because of street norms concerning 'ratting', but that it was acceptable for females to report sexual violence.

The overwhelming majority of service users interviewed were of the view that, excepting a rare circumstance involving significant trauma, they would not report victimization to the police. Indeed, several respondents answered our queries by saying, as one female service user did, "I never say anything to anyone." We were also frequently told, "we take care of our own problems." With respect to failures to report victimization by homeless service users, again various respondents cited three of the principal factors identified within the literature.

A number of respondents from each of the three stakeholder groups (police, service providers and service users) stated that negative attitudes or beliefs about the police are a significant barrier to reporting. For example, a homeless female service user stated, "I'm less willing to go and approach police officers. I could get that cop who is going to turn on me." A frontline police officer offered the following comments: "Crime out here, like for the homeless, is difficult for them to report. They have a natural distrust of the police because we hassle them all the time, move them on."

Another factor cited in relation to police-service user relations and their impact on reporting rates was the belief among service users that reporting will not fundamentally alter a

situation and/or lead to a positive outcome. This perception can be seen in an exchange with a homeless female service user:

> Q: Can you talk about reasons why someone wouldn't report a crime?
> A: Cuz nothing gets done.
> Q: Okay.
> A: You get a report number and nothing gets done.

The respondent then added the following illuminating comments: "if you feel somebody's just like, 'oh yeah I've heard this a hundred times a day and you're crazy and you're just too much more paperwork than I need', that sort of cold, callousness that you get from seeing the same thing day after day, then there's no point. [It's] easier to move on with our lives."

The existence of outstanding warrants for the victim was also cited as an inhibiting factor. "If they have a warrant, they don't want to be picked up", one service provider noted. An individual who works with female homeless service users similarly stated, "Many of the women down here have warrants and they get sexually assaulted and they're not going to phone it in. That's a huge barrier."

Not wanting to violate street-based norms concerning 'snitching' was also raised by several respondents. In response to why he might not report victimization to the police, one male service user baldly stated, "I think it's being a snitch." Being labeled a 'snitch' or a 'narc' is both socially isolating and dangerous within the homeless community. "They they don't want any other hassle because they live out there" a police officer explains, "A lot of the people that are abusing them are other street people." A service provider similarly notes of his clients, "Sometimes, there is a fear of reporting … they have to go out there and live with that person [the alleged perpetrator]." As a police officer noted, people living within street communities are concerned "about getting somebody else upset who's going to come back and beat them up in a

lane way or shank them because they've ratted." The possibility of retaliation for reporting prompted one female service user to say, "I think quite a few people, if they think that this person's going to know it's them, they won't do it." Similarly, victims of domestic violence spoke about fears concerning antagonizing their victimizer. "In the past, I didn't report to the police," a homeless female service user states, "because I thought if I did, [he] would come after me."

Another recurring theme in interviews with both service users and service providers was the view that criminal victimization is smaller or less significant in the face of challenges related to daily survival. For example, this point was iterated by a service provider who works with homeless female service users: "There are lots of women, walking around with information that will never come out because they can't do it … they are fighting for their lives every day."

Social stigma attached to the status as a homeless person and/or past criminal involvement can also be an inhibiting factor: "sometimes homeless people are afraid that they won't be represented properly", a service provider suggests, "because they are homeless and they may have had a criminal record, or they may have done heavy crimes, or something like that. So I think they're very hesitant to ask for help when they might need it."

As we noted in relation to the research conducted in Toronto, in order for a Remote Reporting program to be successful in Vancouver, it was imperative that we assess the extent to which service providers and their clients here perceive the existence of active trust relations between these two stakeholder groups. Active trust, for the purposes of Remote Reporting, entails the willingness of service users to report victimization to those staff members they trust within organizations they utilize. Again, the majority of service providers interviewed were of the view that between themselves and their clients there is, in the words of one shelter worker, a

“really strong connection.” Such connections, they reported, lead victims to come forward to relate their experiences. Indeed, when we asked one service provider if clients would feel comfortable approaching her to talk about victimization, she stated, “They’re already doing that.” A counselor who works with street populations advised in relation to questions about receiving reports of victimization, “that happens a lot. So you try to get them in touch with the police, if it’s happened recently.” Similarly, a shelter worker explained, “It’s not uncommon for clients to come to us if they’re scared, and then, because they have the community police officers, we can call them and they can meet us somewhere other than where it’s happened. So, in essence, [remote reporting is] starting to happen that way, aside from the paperwork.” Another noted that “they’ll tell us they’re being victimized,”, but added that frequently victims won’t want to report to police or have the staff member take direct action – in other words, they sought the opportunity to unburden themselves and/or to make someone in an authority position aware of a situation for future monitoring, without necessarily desiring direct intervention.

While many of the homeless service users we interviewed advised that they would prefer to deal with their victimization on their own, others stated that if they had a trusted service worker to go to, they would report their situation to that person. For example, a female shelter resident advised, “There’s a couple staff members here that I feel more than comfortable going and telling them anything.” Another stated that she had, indeed, just reported a domestic violence incident to workers within the facility in which she is currently residing. “I’ve talked to some of them, yeah. I told them today what happened.” However, such trust relations are not universal. “For the most part, I like the staff here,” a female shelter resident stated, “[but] there are some people that think they’re better than you, or don’t understand your predicament, giving you less respect than you deserve. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect, and when you don’t

receive it from these people...if you can't have a provider of all of those things...it makes the process of getting help harder." A female shelter resident expressed comparable views of staff members in the facility she stays in, "Yeah, a lot of people won't go to them … there's certain workers here that are very rude."

During interviews with an organization that serves homeless women, a respondent noted the operation of a Third Party reporting program for sex trade workers that is operated by a local group with the active support of a member of the Vancouver Police Department. We sought and received interviews with both a representative of the organization that operates the program and with the police officer who initiated it. As is also the case with the Scottish model, both interviewees independently stated that they view Remote Reporting as a valuable program for addressing victimization of a marginalized group; however, each also noted that the program generates few reports (an estimated ten to fifteen reports a year). The service provider explained the low volume of reports in the following terms: "Lots of women do not want to give that information. Even if it's to the people they trust, and see daily." The police officer offered another explanation for low reporting rates through their program: "we don't encourage it as our first option. We'd rather the victim comes in. We can offer them so much more in terms of what we can do about their complaint. However, if that's not what's going to work for them we still want that information." In discussing the mechanics of the Vancouver version of Remote Reporting for sex trade workers, the service provider noted an important limitation that has been raised elsewhere: sometimes victims are unable to identify the alleged offender or provide many details about him/her. "I know we've had two reports that don't have the person's actual name on it. And, so that makes it not quite as useful."

Potential benefits of Remote Reporting

We also solicited participants for their views on the potential benefits of Remote Reporting, both in general terms and in relation to the operation of the Scottish model.

For homeless service users, a number of potentially positive outcomes from a HRR program were cited. For example, a homeless female service user expressed the view that reporting could encourage feelings of ontological security that could help individuals make better life choices. She expressed this belief in the following terms: “any human being, no matter where you are in life has to feel safe in order to make good decisions for the rest of your life. As long as you’re in a position of feeling like you’ve got to defend yourself you can never move forward. You can never get out of this circle of homelessness. You can only get out of it, if you feel safe.” Another female interviewee suggested that “When you see justice done and done right ... I’ve never had it and needed it, but I can picture it and that would be a relief, a burden lifted, you’d get closure.”

The majority of respondents also addressed what they saw as the larger social benefits that Remote Reporting could provide marginalized groups. One shelter resident was of the view that such a program would permit a “a way to kind of reintroduce the justice system and society to [those who often feel excluded]”. Several other interviewees stated that they saw Remote Reporting as potentially offering an avenue through which homeless citizens could access justice, address larger issues related to racism and other forms of systemic discrimination, and/or achieve a fuller measure of citizenship. Frequently these goals were phrased in terms of providing homeless citizens with ‘a voice.’ “It’s important that somebody be heard,” a male homeless service user told us, “If a true wrong has been done to you, it should be made right.”

Speaking of the racism that aboriginal homeless persons face, a service provider identified a potential benefit of Remote Reporting as "trying to give them a voice."

A number of respondents also identified advantages in relation to the particulars of the operation of the model program in Scotland. For instance, several police interviewees noted practical advantages to Remote Reporting for their organization. When queried as to whether both reporting options available to victims – to report anonymously or to participate in an investigation – would be useful to police, the majority saw benefits to both. For example, a senior officer saw the utility of both options, which he cast in the following terms, "when they report then the police get more intelligence on what's happening and we can put that in our database and we can draw trends from it. We can look and see. The more data and intelligence we have coming in, the easier it is for us to solve crimes, the easier it is for us to make things better for the people on the streets." Referencing Vancouver's 'Missing Women's' serial murder case, a police officer noted that with the anonymous reporting option, "that's good intel regardless. If you've got a Willy Pickton out there, maybe that would have surfaced sooner." Similarly, another office noted, "In a major case such as Pickton results and early detection can be the result of just one small piece of information. If Third Party reporting generated that, then it would be beneficial." Another policing advantage of Remote Reporting cited is the potential ability of police to tap into the 'dark figure of crime', which a senior officer noted "may help police management argue for more resources".

A police officer interviewed spoke for a number of other interviewees upon noting that the presence of trusted service workers could provide needed support for victims who might otherwise be uncomfortable speaking to police officers:

> an area where I would see a great potential for the use of the Third Party reporting or the Remote Reporting scenario is where the person is going to have a fundamental difficulty speaking for themselves … the police can come in and re-interview 'cuz they'll have to re-interview her and probably a video-taped statement, but they can do it with her where she's comfortable with the advocate or whoever she wants.

Speaking from previous experience assisting a victimized client with reporting to police, a service provider agreed that clients would likely feel more comfortable 'telling their story' if supported. This position was echoed by a female service user who advised that, "as far as comfort zone goes, I would talk to any one of these workers here before I ever go down to the police station." Thus, in her view Remote Reporting is "absolutely, hands down, definitely, the way to go" to encourage victims to come forward.

Potential limits of Remote Reporting

Respondents were also canvassed for their views as to potential problems and/or limits with Remote Reporting programs, both generally and more specifically in relation to the Scottish model. A number of issues were raised, including several previously identified by interviewees in Toronto. In the paragraphs that follow, we discuss these potential limits in further detail.

As was also the case in Toronto, both service providers and police cited lack of available resources as a major potential stumbling block to implementing Remote Reporting. This was particularly the case with VPD members. We were repeatedly told "we don't have the manpower" to tackle extra work projects. In essence, frontline personnel were concerned that responsibility for Remote Reporting duties would fall on patrol officers. This concern was based on awareness of the fact that the Lothian and Borders Police in Edinburgh deploy Community Beat Officers who, among other duties, are tasked with maintaining positive relations with service providers and their clients. Such relations may entail friendly site visits and so on. In

response to hearing this, a frontline supervisor worried that a comparable program in Vancouver could not work because of a lack of resources within his Department:

> With the call load being what it is, and for them just being proactive in trying to combat crime, to then find that other percent to just kind of go in and chit chat and have coffee...if while they're in their chit chatting and having coffee, although you see it, and while I see it as being proactive, with the call load that's waiting, their peers are going to start putting pressure on them saying, "What are you doing? I've got calls holding. We've got citizens waiting hours on end for somebody to come and deal with their issue, and you're having coffee."

In response to staffing concerns, we note that the model proposed requires the full-time services of only one dedicated staff member. Thus, there is no need for significant reallocation of resources. When the model was explained to a senior police officer with significant expertise in staffing issues, his response was that "In an agency our size, to come up with one person to do something like that wouldn't be a big deal. We could do it." He then went on to elaborate methods by which the VPD could acquire an extra staff member to fulfill a police liaison role before adding, "A lot of people will just say we can't do that, that's the way we've always done it … if it's worth doing it, you can break down the barriers and do it."

Service providers also worried as to whether Remote Reporting might tax their limited resources. Particular concerns were raised as to the extent of involvement required by service workers to support clients through the process. Indeed, a service provider stated that while she would be willing to take a report of victimization, she could not "walk with the person through the legal process." For this reason, she advised that she would rather not participate at all because the victim might have the expectation that the worker could support him or her through to a trial. Another worker stated, "going through actually sitting into courts is where we would have barriers because, as an agency we can't go ... we don't have the manpower. There is no staff that can go and sit with this woman, go through the whole process with them." A solution to this

potential problem was proposed by this individual's colleague, who noted that Victim Services personnel could provide that level of assistance to victims. We have included this suggestion as one of our recommendations.

One of the most significant limitations identified with respect to the Scottish model is that it requires homeless citizens to be service users at participating organizations, thus it does not reach those individuals who do not access services. As one service user noted, "we can live here undetected by anybody or anything for 365 days of the year." To provide a service that would meet the needs of the local homeless as a whole, would entail creating a network of relations with not only a variety of service providers, but also having police officers out on the street promoting the program to those individuals who do not typically access services. This point was brought home by a police officer in the following terms:

> One of the dangers in looking at homeless people is to paint them with the same brush. There are homeless people who are drug addicts, who spend every cent on drugs. There are homeless who are anti-social who bin for bottles and sleep in urban areas where they can guard their buggies so they are not stolen by others. There are homeless sex trade workers, and also illegal immigrants. There are first nations who do not mix with other street people. There are homeless who are youth, middle age and elderly, and the mentally ill, who are not treated. There are people on the street who are embarrassed by their predicament and do not want to be found. And there are others who have warrants out or suspect that there are warrants out. To reach out to them and obtain crime information it would require multiple points of contact, as each group has different movement patterns and norms.

Trust relationships and/or lack of trust were also cited as potential barriers to implementing an effective Remote Reporting program. As was also the case in Toronto, some service providers worried that participation in a reporting program would impair relations with clients, who might see service providers as 'snitches'. A few service providers and police officers interviewed expressed concerns as to whether previous negative relations between service agencies and the police would undermine or limit participation. While it is not the case

that police have negative relations with all such groups, hostilities between the VPD and PIVOT, a legal clinic that serves the City's poor and marginalized communities, have clearly tainted perceptions on both sides[7] . "It's a trust issue," a police officer explained, "They don't trust us, their past track record tells me not to trust them. So I'm going to send in a couple of young constables to all of a sudden work with these people that have just stuck it to us in the press in every way they could in the past? Absolutely not. You want me to work with Pivot? Absolutely not." Indeed, some officers were openly skeptical as to why organizations working with the homeless would desire to work cooperatively with the police: "We get very little of that from the service providers. They don't trust us. Why? For those that are helping the homeless, I really don't understand. But they don't. I don't, frankly, trust them either."

It is worth noting that not all respondents in either category – service providers or police – held negative views towards the other stakeholder group. Police officers did note cooperative relations with key homeless organizations in the City and responded that they would be prepared to work with such agencies. Similarly, several respondents representing service agencies stated that their organizations currently benefit from actively friendly relations with police. One singled out the efforts of one of her neighbourhood's former community police officer and his successor in fostering positive relations. In response to a question as to informal relations between police and service providers, another shelter worker advised that local beat officers maintain a cooperative relationship between themselves and the shelter. She stated that police are helpful in passing along information deemed valuable and so on. "Whatever shit happens - they'll always

[7] In 2002, PIVOT undertook an affidavit campaign to collect allegations of police abuse within marginalized communities. The resulting publication, *To Serve and Protect* (2002), which generated calls for a public inquiry by PIVOT (2005) and other community groups, infuriated the police and added to already tense relations between the police and a number of community organizations.

come in and talk with us. It's not a matter of them coming in - we can talk about the matter beforehand. They always relay information to us, so we know what's happening."

Another concern raised by respondents was the usefulness of information contained in the initial reports taken by service providers. Although a couple of police officers brought this potential issue to our attention, it was a service provider who made the point most forcefully:

> I'm not saying the program probably wouldn't end up being very good, but the biggest problem is, number one, never underestimate the stupidity of people in this place. If you're a police officer, you know how to report things. Even if you have been trained here, people who are hired here do not have great education or lots of them don't have great educations. We're thrilled to have them here, but if you're a shelter worker or counselor here doing this, it doesn't necessarily mean you're able to fill it out as well as a police officer.

In Edinburgh, service providers receive appropriate training by police on taking a report. The report employed is a simple form that is easy to fill out. Further, there is no expectation that reports would be utilized as evidence on their own; rather, they are intended to provide information to police organizations which will conduct their own follow-up investigations. These reports are not intended to replace any existing policing functions.

Levels of support for Remote Reporting

Table D.1 Support for a pilot Remote Reporting program

Respondent category	Support	Not supported	Unsure/maybe	Did not answer	Totals by category
Police personnel	6	2	0	0	8
Service providers	7	0	7	0	14
Homeless service users	9	1	1	1	12
Totals	22	3	8	1	34

The table above shows respondent answers as to whether they supported the idea of a Homelessness Remote Reporting program in their local community. Of the thirty-four individuals interviewed in Vancouver, twenty-two (65%[8]) were of the view that such a program would have significant merits and would therefore be a worthwhile undertaking. Eight interviewees (24%) stated that they while they supported the goal of the program, for various reasons they were unsure of whether it would actually work. Three respondents (9%) did not support the program. One respondent, when repeatedly asked for his views, offered non-responses and/or directed the conversation elsewhere. In the paragraphs below, we discuss these findings in further detail.

We begin with the views of those who stated that they were opposed to HRR. Of the three respondents who did not support the idea of such a program, we note that two of these individuals were police officers. One of the officers, a frontline supervisor in a very busy district, expressed the view that while the goal of the program was admirable, he could not offer support

[8] Percentages have been rounded up.

for it because of what he perceived to be the potential for increased workload on his patrol officers. His concerns were raised in response to discussion of the model in Edinburgh, which relies in part on active positive relations between Community Beat Officers (CBOs) and service providers. A similar model in Vancouver could not work, we were told, because the VPD lack comparable staffing levels. The second police officer did not support the program on the ground that the underlying premise of the program – that homeless men and women are not being adequately served by existing reporting mechanisms – was objectionable because it seems to suggest a lack of trust in police. Ironically, the third respondent in this category was a homeless male service user with a profound lack of trust in the police. It was for this reason that he stated that he would not participate in or support any program involving the police, preferring vigilantism to the criminal justice system.

Eight interviewees were unsure or undecided as to whether a Homelessness Remote Reporting program was something they could support. Seven of these respondents were service providers who raised a number of concerns, such as the potential for increased workload, an inability to support clients through to trial, or worried over potential negative impacts to trust relations with clients. One service provider offered another rationale: this individual had serious concerns as to their organization's ability to work with the police because of perceived problems with the police complaint process. This respondent was of the view that Remote Reporting would be a "good system", but only if the complaint system was improved to ensure that clients with complaints against the police were also being adequately served. The one service user who stated that she was unsure did so because of skepticism as to whether there would be adequate support for victims through the process.

With the exception of service providers, who were evenly split between supporting Remote Reporting and being unsure, the majority of individuals within each of the three stakeholder groups expressed support for the idea of having such a program implemented in their community. Police officers who supported the program did so because of what they perceived to be its utility in reaching a community that is often treated as being outside of mainstream society and therefore not worthy of access to justice and other resources when victimized. Several officers expressed empathy and/or frustration over this situation. To quote one frustrated police officer, HRR is "worth trying." This individual's colleague stated, "I'm all for supporting anything that's going to offer them something more than they have right now." Service providers are also among those who deal with marginalized victims who often feel that they have few places to turn to. This program was seen by half of the service workers in our Vancouver sample as offering a possibility to provide new avenues to justice for their clients. "I think it's an excellent idea," one worker told us. Another offered the view that the program was worth supporting because "you'd definitely give a little more hope to some of the people." Although the majority of service users we interviewed stated that they themselves might not choose to utilize Remote Reporting, those who offered support frequently did so because of the existence of vulnerable individuals and groups who they saw as potentially benefiting from such a program. As one homeless female service user explained to us, "Any program, I find, if it helps one person, it's worth it. If it helps one person succeed, the program was worth it. If it's changed one person's life, a program's worth it. Doesn't matter what the program is."

Recommendations

> "I believe [HRR] can work. You'd have to do it on a trial basis and start off on a small scale and see how it works and see how the trust space works. It could work. You would just have to fine tune it at some point because there is going to be a lot of bumps coming down the road that people did not foresee or expect and there is always going to be a twist" – Toronto police officer

> "[Speaking of Remote Reporting] I like that 'I matter' factor in it – Vancouver homeless female service user.

Based on our evaluation of the existing 'Take Control' program in Scotland, and our review of the feedback provided by members of key stakeholder groups in Toronto and Vancouver, we are of the view that Remote or Third Party Reporting systems have significant merit and thus represent a potentially worthwhile endeavor. They offer potential means by which:

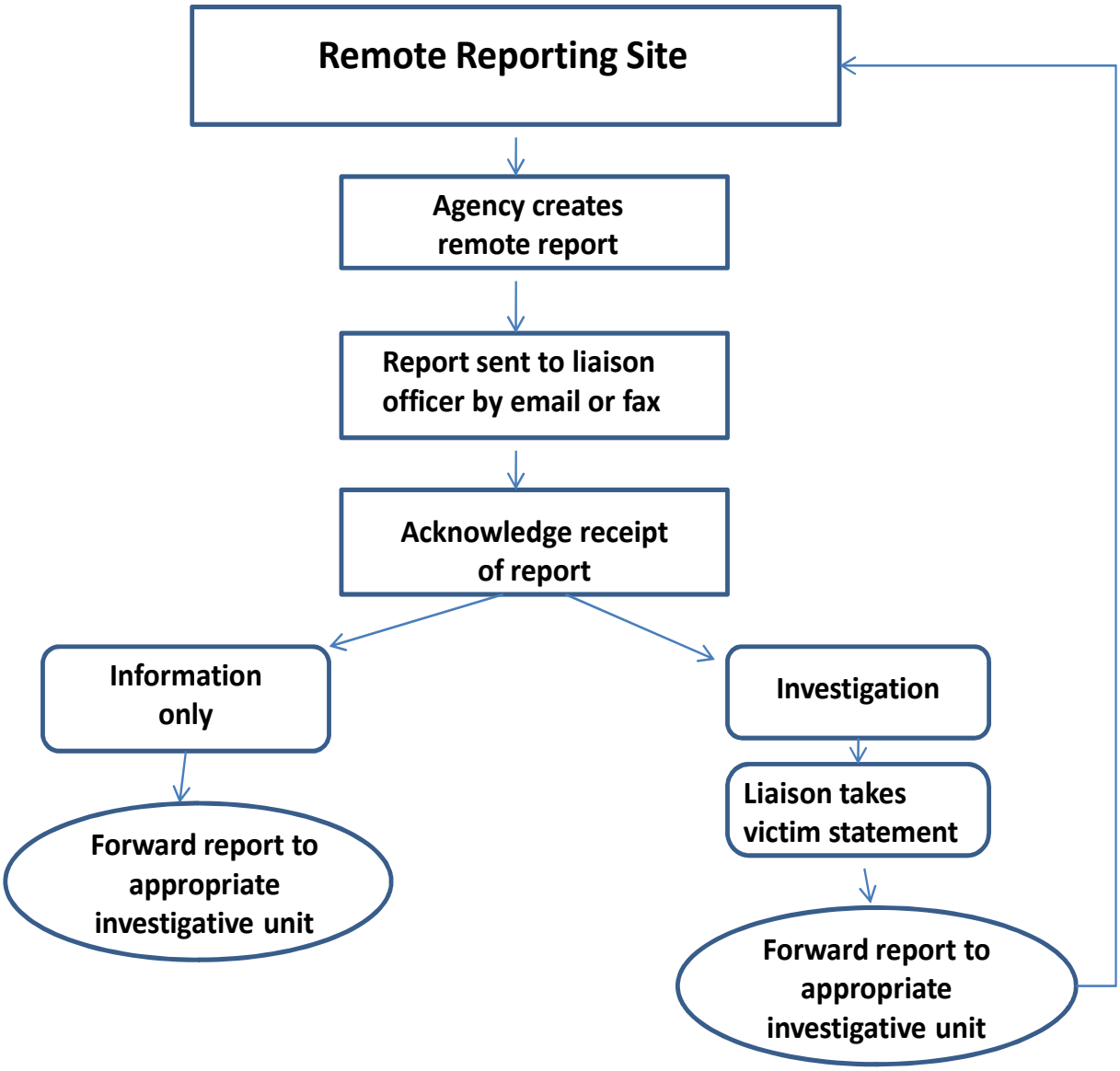
1. homeless victims of crime can be heard by the criminal justice system;
2. issues related to criminal victimization can be addressed by social agencies;
3. societal awareness of the victimization of the homeless can be increased;
4. relations between homeless communities and police organizations can be improved;
5. relations between service providers for the homeless and policing agencies can be strengthened;
6. police can receive information concerning crimes that they may not be aware of and/or receive critical information to further existing investigations.

Although our focus was limited to the value of such reporting programs for the homeless, their use with other marginalized communities, both in Canada and abroad, suggests that police departments might be well advised to consider the recommendations below for supporting similar programs for other community groups.

In this section, we first propose a fairly flexible structure for a Homelessness Remote Reporting program and offer suggestions as to how such a program might be funded internally and/or with external support. Having outlined a basic structure, we then offer specific

recommendations – based on our evaluation of the Scottish model and comments provided from Canadian respondents – in order to assist in the implementation and effective running of such a program.

Proposed structure



Reporting protocol and criteria

- Individuals who wish to report a crime have the following options for reporting:
    1) Filing an 'information only' report. Information will be recorded and passed on to police anonymously. Victims and witnesses who select this option will not need to meet with police.
    2) Filing a report 'for investigation.' Individuals who choose this option will have to meet with police in order that a statement be taken. Depending on the disposition of the case, victims who select this option may require further contact with police and attend court.
- Crimes that should be considered suitable for reporting include: harassment/stalking, vandalism, theft and robbery, serious violent offences (both physical and sexual), abduction.
- Remote Reporting should not be used as a first resort, but only in those circumstances where a victim is unable or unwilling to file a report directly to the police. Victims should be encouraged to use regular police reporting channels where appropriate.
- Remote Reporting is not appropriate in emergency situations where a threat of harm is imminent; 9-1-1 should be contacted instead.

Structure and layout of a Remote Reporting incident report

- Should be clear and easy to follow
- Should lay out the particulars of the specific incident (time, location, type of incident)
- Should provide the victim/witness reporting options
- Should provide a voluntary section where victims may provide police with their personal information (name, address, other contact information, whether a victim may require an interpreter or other assistance and/or gender/ethnicity (for certain types of offences).
- Should provide a voluntary section where witnesses may provide police with their contact information
- Should contain a section in which the victim/witness can describe in as much detail as possible the particulars of the incident
- Should include a section in which the suspect particulars may be recorded
- Should include a section as to whether there were other possible witnesses to the incident
- Should have a section for the reporting agency which includes the name of the staff member who took the report, their contact information and the date the report was taken.
- Should include a section for the police agency that includes a summary of the investigation, any internal reference numbers, and a final disposition.

Police resources

We recommend that a Remote Reporting program implemented should be staffed by ONE dedicated community police officer, who would be responsible for:

- developing the program
- gaining partner agencies
- training staff at partner agencies
- promoting the program within the homeless community and at partner sites
- receiving reports filed through the program
- conducting interviews in cases where the victim wishes a full investigation
- passing on information to appropriate units where the victim wishes to remain anonymous
- serving as a liaison between investigative staff and partner agencies (where necessary)

Where the community police officer is away for annual leave or due to medical reasons, the participating police agency should have a trained staff officer available to provide continuing service to partner agencies

One of the arguments advanced against developing Remote Reporting programs is lack of available police resources and/or funds for additional programs. The model that we propose requires funds for one police officer salary, desk space and office equipment, and production of promotional materials. While it is the case that police departments across Canada are differentially resourced, and thus some organizations may have more than adequate ability to fund such a program, it is clearly not the case universally. We believe that interested police agencies could prepare and present a case study to their respective Police Boards and City Halls to receive additional funding to support the program. This approach – seeking funding for additional police resources to support special community-based projects – has been very successful elsewhere (Huey 2007).

Community service agency resources

As service providers frequently told us, many of them are already informally receiving reports of victimization by their client groups. Further, several also advised that they currently do encourage victims to report to the police. What we are proposing is a process whereby the informal functions already being performed by some staff members would be structured and streamlined through policy and established practises. Indeed, under this program existing staff at partner agencies would be required to:

- receive training in report taking
- promote the program among clients
- ensure that potential users are made fully aware of what will happen to any information they provide, as well as what reporting options are available to them
- take the victim's report and fax it to the police liaison
- where a client wishes to have their report investigated but is afraid or unwilling to meet with police on their own, staff may be present to facilitate the encounter.
- offer continued support and assistance to the victim (as required)
- provide any follow-up information to the liaison or investigating officer.

Several service providers in both Toronto and Vancouver cited concerns about the need for additional staff and/or burdens placed on existing resources. It is worth noting again that our recommendations are structured around the use of existing staff resources and, indeed, we are of the view that program participation should be limited to two or three key staff members at most. As trust relations between service providers and clients are critical to the success of remote reporting, we are of the view that staff members, who already work in areas that involve such activities as client advocacy, counseling and so on, should be considered for potential inclusion in the program.

Agencies that simply lack sufficient staff to participate, may also choose simply to promote the program at their facility by offering promotional materials to clients and/or directing clients to appropriate community partner agencies.

Further recommendations

Stakeholders in each of the three cities provided a number of suggestions that we feel would be beneficial to the operation of a successful Remote Reporting program. We identify these suggestions below, and offer further recommendations that we feel would provide beneficial assistance.

1. Involvement of the Victim Services unit of the Police Department in cases where the victim wishes to proceed with an investigation and has experienced a serious violent offence.

A key concern of service providers in both Toronto and Vancouver was that they often lack the resources to support clients – who are among the most marginalized of groups and often have complex personal issues – through a process that may lead to a trial. Further, clients who have experienced a serious physical or sexual assault, for example, may have resulting physical or psychological needs that the service provider may feel ill-equipped to provide support for and/or direct assistance with. To address these issues, a service provider suggested that the involvement of a victim services worker from the local police department would be able to support both the HRR liaison officer and the service provider in offering individual victims knowledge and guidance in relation to legal processes, as well as working with the victim to find other appropriate resources.

2. Development of community partnerships with a wide variety of organizations, including those that provide outreach services.

As a police officer in Vancouver noted, 'the homeless' are not a stable population exhibiting little change over time, but rather clusters of individuals and groups with differential characteristics, movement patterns and norms. To reach out to the widest number of people

within this population requires multiple points of contact. Thus, community partners should be drawn from the widest range of service organizations possible. Where appropriate, such as in the case of drop-in centres, community partners should be encouraged to accept reports from non-clients or 'non-regulars'.

A number of respondents across each of the stakeholder groups also noted that a significant limitation of the Scottish model was that, at present, there was no active outreach component. Thus, homeless individuals who do not access services (shelters, meal services) would potentially be excluded from participation. In order to reach these individuals, the HRR liaison officer should produce informational material about the program that can be passed on through organizations that perform outreach. This material should contain the names and addresses of those places that will accept reports from non-clients.

3. Police should attend meetings/interviews in plain clothes

A recurring theme in a number of interviews with homeless service users was the view that police officers are intimidating, particularly when dressed in uniform. Indeed, several police officers interviewed were also sensitive to the fact that sometimes citizens can find their uniforms 'scary', as one interviewee noted. As the comfort of the victim and their willingness to trust are critical components of a successful Remote Reporting system, we are recommending that all police officers who contact victims and/or witnesses in relation to a HRR report attend in plain clothes.

Given the entrenched view within street communities that people who report victimization are 'rats' and thus may be subject to retaliation, any steps which serve to preserve the anonymity of victims and/or witnesses can be seen as necessary. Having police officers attend meetings and/or

interviews both within and outside of the facilities offered by partner organizations can also play a critical role in protecting complainant identities.

4. Participant organizations should have discreet private spaces available for taking reports, victim-police interviews.

Concerns for protecting the identity of complaints are also the primary factor behind recommending that report-taking and other activities related a HRR complaint (including interviews and follow-up meetings) should be conducted in spaces that offer maximum privacy in order to avoid 'outing' complainants. Where possible, spaces should be used that serve multiple functions so that a victim or witnesses presence there will not garner suspicions. For example, a resident of a shelter that also functions as a half-way house for paroled offenders noted that "this building is a third convicts and you get seen writing any reports...convicts don't like rats." Her solution was to have report-taking occur in spaces such as a "counselor's office where it's like you'd be having one of the meetings."

5. Establish a training manual and seminar/workshop for service providers

The production of quality reports is vital for the successful operation of a HRR program. Police rely on these reports when conducting assessments of the utility of information contained, determining appropriate responses, interviewing individuals, and so on. Therefore, it is critical that they be well-crafted and not contain extraneous and/or misleading information. Creating an easy-to-use training manual with appropriate policies will assist in this endeavour, as will the creation of training workshops, during which staff of partner organizations can ask questions, receive feedback and gain confidence in the HRR program as a whole.

6. Annual training sessions should be scheduled for participating organizations.

In Edinburgh, service providers noted that a major impediment to promoting and using HRR was the issue of staff turnover. Staffers who had received training in year 1 were frequently gone by year 2. With continual turnover, some organizations had only one staff person who had any direct knowledge of HRR policies and procedures. Indeed, we visited the head of one site that is listed as a participant in the Scottish program, who had no knowledge of the program and was unaware that her organization had agreed to participate. Further, not all organizations will generate sufficient numbers of reports to keep staff well versed in the procedures to be employed. For these reasons, the HRR liaison officer should hold annual training workshops for community partners. These workshops will also provide another mechanism by which relevant new and/or old issues can be addressed.

7. Cultivating professional-personal ties across groups

One of the primary factors behind the implementation and subsequent operation of the Edinburgh HRR model was that police and service providers had cultivated extensive positive relations with members of the other group. In both Vancouver and Toronto, police and service providers interviewed stated that they had some positive relations with the other group, but felt that more positive, direct communication needed to be fostered. In response to the question what would be needed in order for a HRR program to be successfully implemented in Toronto, one police officer stated, “I think there would have to be a lot of information passed, a lot of general discussion on what our goals are and what their goals are.” Similarly, a service provider in Vancouver noted, “That’s how we’re gonna get the whole Third Party reporting thing to make sense. If personal relationships with the police are encouraged and supported.” A liaison officer specifically for the homeless community would go some distance to fostering such contacts and

communication. However, where possible, community and/or regular beat officers should actively be encouraged to visit homeless service organizations and sit down with staff and clients in order to build relations.

8. Policy guidelines must be implemented with respect to warrant checking and/or execution of outstanding warrants

Several of the police officers we interviewed, most notably in Toronto, were concerned about the question of whether they could or should be asked to use their discretion to not exercise an outstanding warrant for a victim. As was stated earlier, the police practise of checking victims for warrants is a significant barrier for many people when considering reporting as an option. As we also noted, to counter this concern, we had been advised that there is an 'informal' policy in relation to the HRR program in Edinburgh whereby officers exercise their discretion for minor offences. When discussed, this practise caused some officers in Toronto, and to a lesser extent Vancouver, noticeable consternation. However, a senior police commander in Toronto advised that the TPS had already established a similar policy for victims of domestic violence in the immigrant community. In interviews with other senior officers, it was also felt that an internal policy in relation to warrant checking could and should be developed. Such a policy should provide designated officers (such as the HRR Liaison officer) with the scope to exercise some discretion with respect to when and where a warrant can be exercised.

References

Anderson, E. (1999) *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Bourgois, P., B. Prince and A. Moss (2004) 'The Everyday Violence of Hepatitis C Among Young Women Who Inject Drugs in San Francisco.' *Human Organization*, 63(3); 253-265.

Chamberlain, C. and G. Johnson (2001) "The Debate About Homelessness." *The Australian Journal of Social Issues*, February 2001.

City of Toronto (2008) "Cold Weather Alert 2009." <http://www.toronto.ca>. Last accessed December 17, 2008.

D'Ercole A. and E. Struening (1990) 'Victimization Among Homeless Women: Implications for Service Delivery.' *Journal of Community Psychology*, 18(2): 141-152.

Evans, R. and C. Forsyth (2004) 'Risk Factors, Endurance of Victimization and Survival Strategies: The Impact of the Structural Location of Men and Women on the Experiences within Homeless Milieus.' *Sociological Spectrum*, 24: 79-505.

Feldman, L. 2004. *Citizens Without Shelter: Homelessness, Democracy and Political Exclusion*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Fitzpatrick, K., M. La Gory and F. Ritchey (1993) 'Criminal Victimization Among the Homeless.' *Justice Quarterly***,** 10(3): 353-368.

Goodman, L., M. Dutton and M. Harris (1997) 'The Relationship Between Violence Dimensions and Symptom Severity Among Homeless, Mentally Ill Women.' *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 10(1): 51-70.

Hagan, J. and B. McCarthy (1997) *Mean Streets: Youth Crime and Homelessness*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hermer, J. (2007) *Policing Compassion: Begging Law and Power in Public Spaces*. Hart Publishing

Huey, L. (2008)"'When it Comes to Violence in My Place, I am the Police!' Exploring the Policing Functions of Community Service Providers in Edinburgh's Cowgate and Grassmarket." *Policing & Society*, 18(3): 1-18.

Huey, L. (2007) *The Politics of Skid Row Policing in Edinburgh, San Francisco and Vancouver*. Vancouver: University of Vancouver Press.

Huey, L. and E. Berndt (2008) "'You've Gotta Learn How to Play the Game': Homeless Women's Use of Gender Performance as a Tool for Preventing Victimization." *Sociological Review*, 56(2): 177-194.

Huey, L. and T. Kemple (2007) "'Let the Streets Take Care of Themselves': Making Historical, Sociological and Common Sense of 'Skid Row.' *Urban Studies*, 44(11): 2305-2319.

Huey, L., R. Ericson and K. Haggerty. (2005) "Policing Fantasy City", in D. Cooley (ed.) *Re-imagining Policing in Canada*. Vancouver: University of Vancouver Press. Pp. 140-208.

Huey, L., K. Walby and A. Doyle (2006) "Cop Watching in the Downtown Eastside: Exploring the Use of (Counter) Surveillance as a Tool of Resistance," in T. Monahan (ed.) *Surveillance and Security: Technological Politics and Power in Everyday Life.* New York: Routledge. Pp. 149-165.

Hutson, S. and M. Liddiard (1994) *Youth Homelessness: The Construction of a Social Issue*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Kennedy, C. and S. Fitzpatrick (2001) 'Begging, Rough Sleeping and Social Exclusion: Implications for Social Policy.' *Urban Studies*, 38(11): 2001-2016.

Khandor, E. and K. Mason (2007) The Street Health Report 2007. <www.streethealth.ca>. Last accessed December 14, 2008.

Kingwell, M. (2000)'"Citizen Access to Justice: Issues and Trends for 2000 and After.' Paper presented at the Symposium: Expanding Horizons: Rethinking Access to Justice. Department of Justice website, Government of Canada. <http://section15.gc.ca/en/ps/rs/rep/2000/rr00-op2/b1a.html.> Last accessed December 11, 2007.

Laub, H. (1997) 'Patterns of Criminal Victimization in the United States,' in E. Davis, A. Lurigio and W. Skogan (eds). *Victims of Crime*, 2nd ed. London: Sage Publ. Pp. 9-26.

Lee, B. and C. Schreck (2005) 'Danger on the Streets: Marginality and Victimization Among Homeless People.' *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48(8): 1055-1081.

Lothian and Borders Police Force (L & B). (2006). 'Materials on Homeless Remote Reporting released under Freedom of Information Request FOI/E/314'.

McCarthy, B., J. Hagan and M. Martin (2002) 'In and Out Of Harm's Way: Violent Victimization and The Social Capital of Fictive Street Families' *Criminology*, 40(4): 831-865.

Maher, L., E. Dunlap, B. Johnson and A. Hamid. (1996) 'Gender, Power, and Alternative Living Arrangements in the Inner-city Crack Culture.' *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 33(2): 181-205.

Manson, H. (2003). 'Catch 22.' *A Report of the Ark Trust* (Edinburgh).

Marshall, T. H. (1996 [1950]) 'Citizenship and Social Class,' in T. H. Marshall and T. Bottomore (eds)*Citizenship and Social Class*. Chicago: Pluto Press. 1-24.

Novac, S., J. Hermer, E. Paradis and A. Kellen. (2007) 'More Sinned Against than Sinning? Homeless People as Victims of Crime and Harassment.' *Centre for Urban and Community Studies Research Bulletin* #37.

Novac, S., J. Hermer, E. Paradis and A. Kellen. (2006) 'A Revolving Door: Homeless People and the Justice System in Vancouver.' *Centre for Urban and Community Studies Research Bulletin* #36.

Nyamathi, A., B. Leake and L. Gelberg (200) 'Sheltered Versus Non-sheltered Homeless Women: Differences in Health, Behavior, Victimization, and Utilization of Care.' *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 15(8): 563-572.

O'Grady, B. and R. Bright (2002) 'Squeezed to the Point of Exclusion: The Case of Vancouver Squeegee Cleaners' in Joe Hermer and Janet Mosher (eds) *DisorderlyPeople: Law and the Politics of Exclusion in Ontario*. Halifax, N.S.: Fernwood.

Passaro, J. (1996) *The Unequal Homeless: Men in the Streets, Women in their Place*. London: Routledge.

Pivot Legal Society (2002) *To Serve and Protect*. <http://www.pivotlegal.org>. Accessed May 23, 2003.

Pivot Legal Society (2005) "PIVOT Calls for Public Review." *PIVOT Post*, 1. Newsletter. April 2005.

Quirouette, M. (2009) *Homelessness Remote Reporting: Creating a Link*. MA thesis. Concordia University.

Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge: Polity.

Rosenfeld, R., B. Jacobs, and R. Wright. (2003). 'Snitching and the Code of the Street.' *British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 43(2): 291-309.

Rubenstein K (2000) 'Citizenship and the Centenary — Inclusion and Exclusion In 20th Century Australia.' *Melbourne University Law Review*, 24. Pp 576–608.

Shinn, M. (2007) 'International Homelessness: Policy, Socio-Cultural, and Individual Perspectives.' *Journal of Social Issues* 63 (3), 657–677.

Shearing, C. (2000) 'A New Beginning' For Policing' *Journal of Law & Society*, 27/3: 383-342.

Singer, S. (1988). 'The Fear of Reprisal and the Failure of Victims to Report a Personal Crime.' *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 4(3): 289-302.

Skogan, W. (1976) 'Citizens Reporting of Crime: Some National Panel Data.' *Criminology*, 13(4): 535-549.

Skogan, W. (1984). 'Reporting Crimes to the Police: The Status of World Research.' *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 21(1): 113-137.

Sommerlad, H. (2004).' Some Reflections on the Relationship between Citizenship, Access to Justice, and the Reform of Legal Aid.' *Journal of Law and Society*, 31(3): 345-368.

Street Health (2008) Homelessness and Crack Use. The Street Health Report Research Bulletin No. 3. . Last accessed December 14, 2008.

Sundberg, A. (2008) "Homeless Count a Conservative Estimate." *The Vancouver Sun*, March 11, 2008: A20.

Waccholz, S. (2005) 'Hate Crimes Against the Homeless: Warning-Out New England Style.' *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 32(4): 141-163.

Walsh, T. and C. Klease. (2003). 'Down And Out? Homelessness and Citizenship.' *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 5. <http://www.austlii.edu.au>. Last accessed December 11, 2007.

Wardhaugh, J. (2000) *Sub City: Young People, Homelessness and Crim*e, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Wardhaugh, J. (1999) 'The Unaccommodated Woman: Home, Homelessness and Identity.' *The Sociological Review*, 47(1): 91-109.

Wardhaugh, J. (1996) 'Homeless in Chinatown: Deviance and Social Control in Cardboard City.' *Sociology*, 30(4): 701-716.

Wechsberg, W., W. Lam, W. Zule, G. Hall, R. Middlesteadt and J. Edwards. (2003) 'Violence, Homelessness, and HIV Risk Among Crack-Using African-American Women.' *Substance Use & Misuse*, 38(3): 669–700.

Wellesley Institute. (2008) The Blueprint To End Homelessness In Toronto: A Two-part Action Plan. <www.wellesleyinstitute.com>. Last accessed December 14, 2008.

Wenzel, S., B. Leake and L. Gelberg (2001) 'Risk Factors for Major Violence Among Homeless Women.' *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 16(8): 739-752.

Wenzel, S., P. Koegel and L. Gelberg (2000) 'Antecedents of Physical and Sexual Victimization Among Homeless Women: A Comparison to Homeless Men.' *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 28(3): 367-390.

Wenzel, S., B. Leake and L. Gelberg (2000) 'Health of Homeless Women with Recent Experience of Rape.' *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 15(2): 265-268.

Whitbeck, Les B., Dan R. Hoyt, Kevin A. Yoder, Ana Mari Cauce and Matt Paradise (2001) 'Deviant Behavior and Victimization Among Homeless and Runaway Adolescents.' *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 16(11): 1175-1204.

Widdowfield, R. (1998) 'Quantifying Homelessness: The Limitations of Official and Unofficial Statistics.' *Radical Statistics*, 67(1): 17-28.

Wood, J. and K. Edwards (2005) 'Victimization of Mentally Ill Patients Living in the Community: Is it a Lifestyle Issue?' *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 10(2): 279-290.