



VICTIMS OF CRIME ISSUE 10
RESEARCH DIGEST 2017

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ISSN 1929-9990

Cat. No. J12-3E-PDF

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Issue 10 of the *Victims of Crime Research Digest*. The theme of Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2017 (May 28th – June 3rd) is “Empowering Resilience.” The four articles in Issue 10 cover a range of topics, once again illustrating the diversity of the research undertaken in the broad area of victims and survivors of crime.

The primary objective of the Federal Victims Strategy is to give victims and survivors a more effective voice in the criminal justice and federal corrections systems. All of the work under the Strategy is to be informed by evidence and performance measurement and that is what the research in this issue describes. Whether it is to better understand unmet needs to improve programming, or to measure the impact of legislation, the role of research is not to be underestimated, although it may not always be obvious.

The first article is by Isabel Grant, Professor at the Peter A. Allard School of Law, University of British Columbia. Professor Grant, who has studied intimate partner violence (IPV) her entire career, examines sentencing decisions in these cases and the use of the aggravating factor of spousal violence found in s. 718.2(a)(ii) of the *Criminal Code*. The second article is by Jo-Anne Wemmers, a Full Professor at the School of Criminology, University of

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Montreal and Researcher at the International Centre for Comparative Criminology. Professor Wemmers examines the use of restorative justice for victims and survivors of sexual violence and the importance of choice for victims. In the third article, Melanie Kowalski from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS), Statistics Canada, describes work currently being done in collaboration with the provinces and territories to gather data to help understand the impact of the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights*. In the final article, Marsha Axford, a researcher with the Research and Statistics Division, Department of Justice Canada, describes the collaboration between researchers from the Department of Justice and CCJS to provide more precision in the Homicide Survey category of relationship between the accused and the victim called, “casual acquaintance.” As always, the *Digest* also includes a list of victim-related conferences scheduled for this year.

We hope this issue of the *Victims of Crime Research Digest* helps all of us who work for and with victims and survivors of crime to better understand the importance and the power of our voices. As always, if you have comments, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

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SENTENCING FOR INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN CANADA: HAS S. 718.2(A)(II) MADE A DIFFERENCE?*

By Isabel Grant

This article is drawn from a larger ongoing study examining the use of s. 718.2(a)(ii) of the *Criminal Code*, enacted in 1996, which directs judges to consider a spousal or common-law relationship between the offender and the victim as an aggravating factor in sentencing.

The article will examine the history of the provision, the methodology of the larger study, the advantages and limitations of a case-law study and some initial findings about the sample of cases. While the study examines cases involving intimate-partner violence (IPV) committed by men and women, it is important to note that the vast majority (97%) of cases in the sample involve male offenders committing violence against female victims. Thus, while the study uses the term IPV, it is important to recognize that it is overwhelmingly about sentencing for male intimate-partner violence against women.

BACKGROUND

Cases involving IPV “come before the courts in Canada with depressing regularity.”¹ Outside of the context of sentencing for homicide offences (see Grant 2010, Dawson 2016, for work on sentencing for intimate-partner violence sexual assault), there is very little recent legal academic work on sentencing for IPV (Crocker 2005, Du Mont et al. 2006, Beaupre 2015). Historically, IPV was seen as less serious than violence against strangers and was characterized as something private, within the family and not a legitimate cause for public concern. Courts were often more focused on keeping the family unit intact than on ending the violence. By the late 1980s, however, some Canadian appellate courts had begun to

recognize that violence against women was even more serious when committed by an intimate partner precisely because it often takes place in the sanctity of the home, away from public scrutiny, and because of the profound breach of trust involved. In 1992, for example, the Alberta Court of Appeal made the following statement about sentencing for intimate-partner violence against women:

This court's experience is that the phenomenon of repeated beatings of a wife by a husband is a serious problem in our society... [W]hen such cases do result in prosecution and conviction, then the courts do have an opportunity, by their sentencing policy, to denounce wife-beating in clear terms and to attempt to deter its recurrence on the part of the accused man and its occurrence on the part of other men... When a man assaults his wife or other female partner, his violence toward her can be accurately characterized as a breach of the position of trust which he occupies. It is an aggravating factor. Men who assault their wives are abusing the power and control which they so often have over the women with whom they live. The vulnerability of many such women is increased by the financial and emotional situation in which they find themselves, which makes it difficult for them to escape.²

The enactment of s. 718.2(a)(ii) in 1996 represented a landmark recognition by Parliament that the existence of an intimate relationship must be considered an aggravating factor in sentencing. The *Criminal Code* made only a few aggravating factors mandatory, thus

* The author would like to acknowledge the work of Oren Adamson, Sarah Hannigan, Alyssa Leung, Ashley Love, Justin Manoryk and Jocelyn Plant for their tireless research assistance on this project.

1 *R v Chirimar*, 2007 ONCJ 385 at para 1.

2 *R v Brown*; *R v Highway*; *R v Umpherville*, 1992 ABCA 132 at paras 19, 21. See also *R v Stone*, [1999] 2 SCR 290.

giving particular significance to a spousal relationship. No mitigating factors had ever been included in any Bill introduced into Parliament, although the 1996 legislation clearly envisioned both aggravating and mitigating factors. When the subsection was introduced, it read:

Other sentencing principles – A court that imposes a sentence shall also take into consideration the following principles:

- a. a sentence should be increased or reduced to account for any relevant aggravating or mitigating circumstances relating to the offence or the offender, and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing,
...
i) evidence that the offender, in committing the offence, abused the offender's spouse or child ...

This provision was one component of a suite of legislation, which was introduced following public consultation with women's organizations on issues related to violence against women.

In 2000, Parliament amended s. 718.2(a)(ii) of the *Criminal Code*; the word "spouse" was changed to "spouse or common law partner" and s. 2 defined a common-law partner as "a person who is cohabiting with the individual in a conjugal relationship, having so cohabited for a period of at least one year." This amendment was part of wider omnibus legislation designed to end discrimination against same-sex partners. The provision was most recently modified in 2005, when the word "child" was removed and a distinct subsection (s. 718.2(a)(ii.1)) was added to address the abuse of a person under the age of 18 years. This change separated spousal abuse from abuse of a child, and created two separate, statutory aggravating factors.

The current Minister of Justice has been mandated to conduct a review of the principles of sentencing as part of a broader review of the criminal justice

system. The present study seeks to inform this review. Part of the Minister's mandate letter reads:

You should conduct a review of the changes in our criminal justice system and sentencing reforms over the past decade with a mandate to assess the changes, ensure that we are increasing the safety of our communities, getting value for money, addressing gaps and ensuring that current provisions are aligned with the objectives of the criminal justice system.

METHODOLOGY

This article reports on the progress of a larger study, which reviews the use of the aggravating factor in s. 718.2(a)(ii) since its enactment in 1996 with a view to determining its impact on sentencing for IPV. Sentencing is a complex and individualized process, and is difficult to analyze quantitatively. In many respects, sentencing is more of an art than a science.³ While sentencing outcomes can be studied, it is particularly challenging to determine the influence that aggravating and mitigating factors have on sentences. The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics' Integrated Criminal Court Survey does not collect data on aggravating and mitigating factors. There is wide variation both in judicial approaches to sentencing and in sentencing outcomes. Thus, to study the impact of s. 718.2(a)(ii), a qualitative case-law review offers a better way to identify patterns and problems over a period of time. It is hoped that a review of the case law will reveal the extent to which judges have considered the aggravating factor defined in s. 718.2(a)(ii), whether the factor has had a meaningful impact on actual sentencing outcomes and whether it has led courts to take a more nuanced and gendered approach to sentencing for IPV.

A case-law study has inevitable limitations. Not all sentencing decisions result in written reasons, for instance, and not all written reasons are published. Furthermore, judges do not consistently cite s. 718.2(a)(ii). Some cases specifically cite the section's aggravating factor and use it to conclude that, in the context of IPV, deterrence

3 See e.g. *R v Miller*, 2015 BCSC 1052 at para 19, citing *R v Carillo*, 2015 BCCA 192 at para 31.

and denunciation must be the dominating objectives in sentencing. Other cases reach the same conclusion about deterrence and denunciation in the context of IPV, but do not mention the aggravating factor set out in the *Criminal Code*. It is also very difficult to determine exactly how much weight a judge gives to any particular aggravating factor, because judges weigh aggravating factors in a holistic way rather than factor by factor. Judges rarely indicate in their reasons, for example, what the sentence would have been had the crime taken place outside of the intimate-partner context.⁴ Rather, sentencing brings together a wide range of circumstances of the offence and the offender, which makes each case unique.

This study examines only one part of the criminal justice system: sentencing after an offender has pleaded guilty or been convicted at trial. The study does not purport to shed light on other processes, such as charging or prosecutions, and does not purport to present new data on IPV as a phenomenon.

The study relies on a sample of cases drawn from Westlaw, QuickLaw and CanLII. The sample includes:

- i) All of the 82 published appellate decisions between 1996-2016 that mention s. 718.2(a)(ii). These include cases that mention a statutory aggravating factor in the *Criminal Code* but do not specifically cite s. 718.2(a)(ii).
- ii) All 71 published trial decisions from 1998, 2007 and 2015 that mention s. 718.2(a)(ii). These include cases that mention a statutory aggravating factor in the *Criminal Code* but do not specifically cite s. 718.2(a)(ii).

- iii) Several additional trial-level decisions from other years that shed light on particular interpretive issues.

- iv) As a point of comparison, 122 additional appellate sentencing cases that deal with IPV, but do not reference s. 718.2(a)(ii), will be briefly discussed.

The focus of the study is the 153 cases described in (i) and (ii), and the tables presented below focus on these cases. The sample includes decisions written in either official language and from all provinces and territories. The crime of murder was excluded because the only discretion a trial judge has in sentencing is to set the period of parole ineligibility period for second-degree murder, and because other work has examined s. 718.2(a)(ii) in sentencing for intimate partner murder (Grant 2010). There is no overlap in the appellate and trial decisions, and the total number of cases and offenders is 153; the total number of victims is 158 because in four cases, the offender was convicted of offences against more than one intimate partner.

OFFENCE AND OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS

While this is not a quantitative study, a number of observations about the sample can be made. Cases citing the section included those involving legally married spouses, common-law spouses and dating relationships, as well as couples formerly involved in one of these relationships. There were also a number of cases involving married spouses who had separated but were still legally married. The following table illustrates the relationships found in the sample.

⁴ The Alberta Court of Appeal has suggested that the first step in sentencing for IPV is to ask which sentence would have been given if the complainant were not an intimate partner, although courts do not appear to be following this rigorously. See *Brown, supra* note 3 at para 20. The Alberta Court of Appeal has subsequently adopted this approach: see e.g. *R v Coulthard*, 2005 ABCA 413 at para 8.

Table 1: Relationships between the Offender and the Victim at the Time of the Offence⁵

	Current	Former	Total
Married	36 (24%)	10 (7%)	46 (31%)
Married but separated	9 (6%)	0 (0%)	9 (6%)
Common-law	55 (36%)	21 (14%)	76 (50%)
Dating	16 (10%)	6 (4%)	22 (14%)
Total	116 (76%)	37 (25%)	153 (101%)

The vast majority of the 153 offenders at both the trial and appeal levels were male: 150 male (98%) and three female (2%). One of the 150 cases involving male offenders involved a man charged with criminally harassing his former male partner. Thus in total, 149 or approximately 97% of the cases sampled in this study involved male violence against current or former female intimate partners. In one of the cases involving a female offender, the offender was charged with killing her abusive spouse, thus also implicating male violence against women.

Eighteen of the offenders in the sample, or just under 12%, were Indigenous, including two of the three female offenders. A number of the complainants appeared to be Indigenous, but this fact was not often mentioned specifically. Appeal cases outside the sample (i.e. those that do not cite s. 718.2(a)(ii) revealed that where s. 718.2(e) was at issue, the reasons for the sentence assigned less significance to the intimate relationship.

There were 51 first-time offenders (33%) and 53 offenders (35%) with prior records for domestic violence – including 32 offenders previously convicted of violent offences against the same complainant. The rest of the offenders had records for unrelated offences. Even among first-time offenders, some cases

involved abuse that took place over a significant period of time, but was only just coming to light.

The offender's abuse of alcohol was a significant factor in a large number of cases. In 55, or approximately 36% of all cases in the sample, the offender was intoxicated at the time of the offence. A combination of drugs and alcohol was sometimes referenced by the court, but all but one of these 55 cases included reference to the offender's alcohol consumption. Two of the three female offenders were intoxicated at the time of the offence. In a smaller number of cases, the complainant was also intoxicated, but this could not be quantified because relevant information was not always included in the judgments.

In many cases in this sample, very serious violence was inflicted on the victim and in eight cases, the female victim's new partner was also attacked. There were no cases in which female offenders committed offences against the complainant's new partner. In 33 cases (22%), all involving male offenders, the crimes took place in front of the children of either the mother or the couple. Applications for dangerous offender and long-term offender designations were not common. Only in two cases was a dangerous-offender application brought and in both cases, the court determined that a designation of long-term offender was more appropriate. In an additional three cases, the Crown sought and obtained a designation of long-term offender. No indeterminate sentences were imposed in this sample and none of the cases involved a sentence of life imprisonment, although one appeal decision reduced the life sentence imposed at trial to 13 years.⁶ These findings are notable given that many of the cases involve significant violence over an extended period of time in the context of more than one intimate partner. One might speculate that Crown counsel view the risk to future intimate partners differently than they view the risk to unidentified persons in the community. This may reflect

⁵ In five cases, the nature of the relationship could not be determined. The total number of intimate-partner victims was 158. In nine of these cases, an offender also committed a crime against the intimate partner's new partner. The total percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

⁶ *R c Roy*, 2010 QCCA 16.

the view that intimate-partner violence presents less of a threat than stranger violence (Crocker 2005, 199). However, a review of the 122 appellate cases not citing the section demonstrates 10 cases where an indeterminate sentence for a dangerous offender was upheld and two additional cases where the dangerous offender designation was affirmed on appeal and remitted back to the trial judge to determine appropriate sentence. It thus appears likely that dangerous offender proceedings do not reference s. 718.2(a)(ii) because the focus is on assessment of future risk and whether risk can be managed in the community, rather than on aggravating and mitigating factors.

In 43 cases (28%), offenders were on conditions imposed by probation orders, no-contact orders, bail conditions etc. at the time of the offence, including 26 cases (17%) where the offender was subject to a no-contact order that specifically mentioned the complainant at the time of the offence. Consistent with other studies, assault-based offences are the most common charges found in the sample (Crocker 2005, 203; Beaupré 2015, 6). Most of the offenders were charged with multiple offences. The following table provides a breakdown of the charges filed most often.

Table 2: Offences Charged

	Appeal Cases Which Cite the Section (% of 82 appellate cases)	Trial Cases Which Cite the Section (% of 71 trial cases)	Total (% of 153 cases)
Assault 1 (simpliciter)	29 (35%)	32 (45%)	61 (40%)
Assault 2 (causing bodily harm, or with weapon)	27 (33%)	19 (27%)	46 (30%)
Assault 3 (aggravated assault)	10 (12%)	8 (11%)	18 (12%)
Sexual Assault 1 (simpliciter)	13 (16%)	9 (13%)	22 (14 %)
Sexual Assault 2 (sexual assault causing bodily harm, or with weapon)	3 (4%)	4 (6%)	7 (5%)
Sexual Assault 3 (aggravated sexual assault)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	2 (1%)
Uttering Threats	24 (29%)	25 (35%)	49 (32%)
Weapon-related Offence	24 (29%)	18 (25%)	42 (27%)
Breach of recognizance/court order	15 (18%) ⁷	16 (23%)	31 (20%)
Criminal Harassment	10 (12%)	4 (6%)	14 (9%)
Attempted Murder	8 (10%)	4 (6%)	12 (8%)
Forcible Confinement	6 (7%)	6 (8%)	12 (8%)
Manslaughter	8 (10%)	3 (4%)	11 (7%)
Break and Enter (including unlawfully in dwelling house)	7 (9%)	3 (4%)	10 (7%)

⁷ These numbers are different from the 17% noted in the previous paragraph because no-contact orders were not the only type of orders breached and not all breaches of no-contact orders resulted in charges. The larger report provides greater detail.

MOVING FORWARD

The larger study, from which these preliminary results are drawn, will examine three interpretive issues regarding s. 718.2(a)(ii):

- i) Whether the section applies to former spouses and former common-law partners,
- ii) Whether the section applies to non-cohabitating intimate partners such as in a dating relationship, and
- iii) Whether the section applies to new partners of a former spouse/common-law partner of the offender.

The study will demonstrate that while judges tended to apply the section fairly consistently to offenders who committed violence against former intimate partners, judges applied it less consistently when cases involved non-cohabitating relationships and when violence was committed against a new intimate partner of a former spouse. There were no cases relying on s. 718.2(a)(ii) where the only victim was the former spouse's new male partner, although the study will discuss one case outside of the sample where a new partner was the only victim and the judge ruled that the section did not apply.⁸ The section was applied in cases where the former spouse and the new male partner were both victims, usually without differentiating between the two victims.

This study will also demonstrate that tensions exist between the need to denounce IPV and the need to reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples among prison inmates. Section 718.2(e) of the *Criminal Code* instructs courts to consider all options other than incarceration, particularly in the sentencing of Indigenous offenders. However, the judicial application of s. 718.2(a)(ii) suggests that denunciation and deterrence must prevail when sentencing for IPV. Courts have struggled, although often not explicitly, to reconcile these two provisions. Often these cases arise in the context of determining whether a noncustodial sentence would be uniquely

appropriate for the Indigenous offender. As the crime becomes more serious, less weight is given to s. 718.2(e) and more weight is given to the denunciation and deterrence required by s. 718.2(a)(ii). Two important factors for courts appear to be the extent to which the individual offender has personally suffered from the effects of colonialism and residential schools, and the degree to which the community can support the offender. A few cases mention the fact that Indigenous women are subject to IPV at an alarming rate, although few decisions directly balanced these two provisions against each other. Virtually no attention was given to the contributions of colonialism and residential schools to perpetuating violence against women within Indigenous communities.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Overall, the cases in this sample suggest that judges are considering IPV as a serious crime of violence. Judges do appear to recognize that IPV is highly gendered and that women are at particular risk when they attempt to leave a relationship, but what is not entirely clear is whether s. 718.2(a)(ii) is making much difference. Many cases where the section could be applied do not refer to it, but instead note the IPV context as an aggravating factor. In fact, more appellate sentencing cases involving IPV do not cite the section than cite the section. Section 718.2(a)(ii) is often cited in a cursory way, with little discussion of its history or purpose beyond describing it as an aggravating factor. It is simply added to the mix of aggravating and mitigating factors. When s. 718.2(a)(ii) appears to come into direct conflict with s. 718.2(e), courts are only occasionally explicit about how to reconcile these apparently conflicting factors. Noncustodial sentences are still granted, even in cases where offenders have a history of violating conditions and even where the complainant expresses fear for her safety. In some cases, the courts get stuck on interpretive issues, such as whether breaking into the victim's home before attacking her constitutes a home invasion, and may lose sight of just how dangerous the violent offences are. Nonetheless, the appellate decisions in this study reveal a number of cases where noncustodial sentences

8 *R v Marche*, 2013 CanLII 38788.

imposed at trial are overturned on appeal on the basis of s. 718.2(a)(ii). This provision gives the Crown a strong foundation on which to appeal a sentence that appears to be manifestly unfit and gives the appellate court a strong foundation for overturning the sentence imposed at trial. The trial decisions that underlie the appellate judgments in this study reveal that trial judges still on occasion impose sentences well below the range identified by appellate courts, particularly in the context of intimate partner sexual assault. Section 718.2(a)(ii) plays an important role in these appeals facilitating a reconsideration of the sentence.

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JUDGING VICTIMS: RESTORATIVE CHOICES FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

By Jo-Anne Wemmers, Ph.D.

Victims of crime often have to deal not only with victimization, but also with the insensitive reactions of others. Known as secondary victimization, insensitive, unsupportive and judgemental reactions can augment the victim's suffering. When victims react to their victimization in ways that do not meet society's expectations, they risk disapproval. This includes when victims of sexual violence choose restorative justice (RJ) rather than conventional criminal justice. This article examines the importance of choice for victims of sexual violence.

THE SO-CALLED IDEAL VICTIM

The word victim, like any term, is founded on a number of common assumptions. To better understand these assumptions, it is helpful to trace the origins of the word. Victim comes from the Latin word *victima*, which referred to a living creature sacrificed to a deity as part of a religious rite. The first recorded use of victim in English occurred in 1497;⁹ by 1781, the word had begun to refer to "one who suffers some injury, hardship, or loss, is badly treated or taken advantage of" (Oxford Dictionary 1989). According to Van Dijk (2009), the ancient connotation of scapegoat – someone sacrificed for the greater good of the group – underlies our treatment of victims today.

A woman who labels herself as a victim of sexual violence faces social costs (Ullman 2010). Society tends to devalue someone identified as a victim because of the associated negative connotations of suffering and sacrifice. Some people, especially victims of sexual assault, prefer instead the term survivor, which is widely considered to be a more positive label (Dunn 2010). To become a survivor, however, one must first suffer victimization (Wemmers 2017). As

soon as an individual defines the event as a crime, she or he seeks recognition and validation from others, and this becomes an important part of the recovery process (Ruback and Thompson 2001; Hill 2009; Strobl 2010). Being a victim is not a permanent state, however, and it is only after recognition of the victimization that recovery begins.

The meaning of an object, such as a victim, is not inherent in the object itself; it is something that others confer on the object based on their interpretation of it (Holstein and Miller 1990; Wemmers 2017). Recognizing someone as a victim is a subjective interpretation and is founded on a number of assumptions (Holstein and Miller 1990). The process of labelling a person as a victim and assigning him or her the role of victim can be described as a communication process between the victim and representatives of society (Strobl 2004). It is also important to appreciate that interpreting an experience as victimization is subjective (Fattah 2010). According to Christie (1986), victims and victimizations exhibiting specific characteristics are considered ideal by society at large and are more readily granted the full and legitimate status of being a victim (1986, 18). Sexual assault is particularly associated with numerous myths and stereotypes, such as real or legitimate rape versus less legitimate or - worse - invited rape (Ullman 2010).

Society tends to think of victims as weak, vulnerable and helpless individuals (Christie 1986; Dunn 2010). Research shows that persons who give the impression of being shy, weak and vulnerable are more likely to be considered victims than persons who seem aggressive, strong or powerful. Someone who does not exhibit the

⁹ The word *victim* first entered into the French language in 1495.

behaviour expected of a victim – such as advocating loudly for change – is not readily accepted as a victim (Doe 2003; Strobl 2004). When this happens, society's response often changes from sympathy to antipathy, and the person's status as a victim may be rejected (Holstein and Miller 1990; Shichor 2007; Van Dijk 2009).

Underlying the word victim is the assumption that another person is responsible for what happened. Another common assumption is that the perpetrator is bigger and stronger than the victim and a stranger to the victim (Christie 1986; Holstein and Miller 1990). It is easier to accept that the victim did not consent to the abuse if the offender was a stranger rather than someone the victim knew well, such as a friend or intimate partner (Doe 2003). Statistics show that females experience more sexual victimization than males, that most offenders are male, and that most victims of sexual assault know their attackers (Perreault 2015). Findings from the General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization show that in the majority of cases, the offender was not a stranger but a friend or acquaintance (Brennan and Taylor-Butts 2008; Perreault 2015). As Shichor (2007) points out, the greater the amount of responsibility attributed to victims for their victimization, the less sympathy society accords them. Persons who are in a marginal social position are at a high risk of both being victimized and not being recognized by society as victims (Fattah 2003; Ullman 2010; Wemmers 2017).

REACTING TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The word victim also assumes that specific responses are appropriate by both the criminal and civil justice systems; offenders must be punished and victims must be provided some form of reparation. The ideal victim is expected to deal with the offence by pressing charges and supporting the prosecution of the alleged offender. The ideal victim is expected to accept the costs (i.e. time) and trouble (embarrassing questioning) associated with meeting police and justice-system requirements, and to set aside their own interests (Strobl 2004). As with the original meaning of the word, society expects victims to sacrifice themselves for the greater good. Most victims, however, choose not to deal with the offence through the criminal justice system;

this is particularly true among victims of sexual assault. While one in three (31%) victimizations is reported to police, only one in 20 (5%) of all sexual assaults in Canada is reported to police (Perreault 2015). In other words, the vast majority of sexual assaults remain hidden from the authorities. This low rate of reporting hinders social change and enables stereotypes about sexual violence to persist.

Yet, while only 5% of sexual-assault victims in Canada report their victimization to police, as many as one in four victims of sexual assault is interested in restorative justice (RJ) (Tufts 2000; Perrault 2015). The 1999 GSS on victimization included a module on attitudes towards alternatives to criminal justice. After presenting victims with a definition of victim-offender mediation as an alternative to criminal justice, researchers asked victims to think about the criminal incident they had just reported and to indicate how interested they would have been in participating in a mediation program. Although 59% of victims of sexual assault said that they would not have been interested in RJ, 17% said that they would have been somewhat interested and 9% said that they would have been very interested (Tufts 2000). RJ is clearly not for everyone; some victims, however, are interested in it.

One U.S. study found that a majority of victims of sexual assault were interested in RJ. Unlike the above Canadian study, which examined victimization in the previous 12 months, the U.S. study looked at lifetime victimization. In the U.S. study, 56% of victims indicated that they would like the opportunity for RJ in addition to the conventional criminal justice system and 30% said that they would like the opportunity for RJ as an alternative to court. The study also found that victims who had chosen to not report the assault to police were most likely to favour RJ as an alternative to court (Marsh and Wager 2015).

The New Zealand Law Commission examined the issue of low rates of reporting sexual violence and concluded that there is a need for alternative responses in cases of sexual violence. The 2015 report, *The Justice Response to Victims of Sexual Violence: Criminal Trials and Alternative Processes*, recommended that the victim decide on an appropriate response, whether it involves meeting with

the perpetrator and seeking redress, or reconciliation with family and community (see Law Commission 2015, Chapter 9). New Zealand has implemented sweeping reforms in the criminal justice system and every offence is now considered for RJ processes.¹⁰ While it is still too early to evaluate the full impact of these legislative changes, it will be important to watch how the changes are implemented.

BENEFITS FOR VICTIMS

Studies suggest that victim participation in RJ may be beneficial for victims' psychological wellbeing, by reducing symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and stress (Gustafson 2005; Wager 2013; Koss 2014). RESTORE, a pilot program that ran from 2003 to 2007 in Arizona, is perhaps one of the best-known RJ programs explicitly targeting victims of sexual violence. Taking a victim-centred approach to RJ, RESTORE offered victims the opportunity to participate in a dialogue with the offenders who attacked them as an alternative to criminal prosecution. This was not a one-off intervention: cases were carefully screened and victims were supported prior to, during and after the dialogues to ensure their safety and well being. An evaluation of the RESTORE program found that victims showed a decrease in PTSD from intake (82%) to post-conference (66%). Victims who participated in the program not only experienced a reduction in stress, but also felt empowered. All of the victims who participated in the RESTORE program strongly agreed with the statement that "taking back their power" was a major reason to select RESTORE over other justice options (Koss 2014). In 2005, New Zealand launched a similar program, known as Project Restore.

Making choices is integral to victims' healing process (Muscat 2010). Based on a scoping study of 58 publications on sexual violence and RJ, which included 10 victims' accounts, Wager (2013) found that victims tended to consider the conferencing experience as empowering, rather than traumatizing. Conferencing involves a dialogue between a victim and offender

in the presence of support persons. When victim and offender have a pre-existing relationship, RJ can help to redefine the relationship and diminish fear of retaliation for reporting (Mercer and Sten-Madsen 2015). Victims become empowered by gaining acknowledgement of the harm done, which enables them to reclaim their lives and transforms them from victims to survivors (Wager 2013; Mercer and Sten-Madsen 2015).

JUDGING VICTIMS' CHOICES

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing RJ in the context of sexual violence is the negative attitude of others (i.e. non-victims). The Dalhousie University Facebook incident illustrates this problem. In December 2014, Dalhousie University in Halifax made national headlines. Some male students of the dentistry program had created a private Facebook group, ironically called the "Class of DDS 2015 Gentlemen," and posted inappropriate comments about female students in the program. The group posted a poll asking members which classmates they would have "hate sex" with. When the female students targeted by these comments learned about them, they were shocked. However, their response was to turn the incident into an opportunity for education rather than for punishment. The University enlisted the help of Jennifer Llewellyn, an expert in restorative justice and professor at Dalhousie's Schulich School of Law.

The decision to use a form of restorative justice was widely criticized. Across Canada, women's groups spoke out against RJ and insisted that the male students be expelled (Llewellyn, Demsey and Smith 2015). Critics argued that the victims were being forced to participate in the restorative process and expressed concern about the wellbeing of the victims (Brownlee 2015). The female students were shocked by these negative and unsupportive reactions. They felt that the University had empowered them to choose, and they chose to let the men continue their studies and encouraged them to learn from their misbehaviour (Llewellyn, Demsey and Smith 2015).

¹⁰ Section 24A was introduced into the *Sentencing Act, 2002*, in 2014, allowing for adjournments for restorative justice processes in certain cases.

The women involved in the Dalhousie Facebook incident said that they wanted to prevent this kind of sexist behaviour from carrying over into a professional setting, where these men would eventually work with – and perhaps even supervise – women who might not feel able to stand up to them. The restorative process not only confronted the male students with the consequences of their behaviour, but also uncovered the culture of misogyny and sexism at the University that enabled the creation of the Facebook group (Llewellyn, Demsey and Smith 2015). Thanks to the courage of these women, all parties – the University, the victims and the offenders – were able to transform a painful situation into an opportunity for learning and healing.

The public outcry was not intended to re-victimize the women, but to protect them. Many victim advocates have voiced sincere concerns about the safety of victims of gender-based violence in RJ programs (Wemmers and Cyr 2002; Nelund 2015; McGlynn et al. 2012; Koss 2014). Many criminal-justice professionals act out of compassion and concern about the impacts of trauma on individuals when they make a decision not to provide information on RJ. Comparing the views of the public and victims of sexual violence, Marsh and Wager (2015) found that victims were less likely than non-victims to see conferencing as dangerous for victims. While one must always be vigilant of power imbalances, it is also important to avoid disempowering victims by making choices for them or by not giving them a choice at all (Wemmers and Cousineau 2005; Wemmers and Cyr 2016).

INFORMATION TO EMPOWER CHOICE

The vulnerability of victims of sexual violence raises concerns about if, when and how to approach the topic of RJ with victims. While some might say that the risk of secondary victimization is too high (Wemmers & Cousineau 2005; Koss 2014), failing to discuss RJ risks depriving victims of an opportunity to heal (McGlynn et al. 2012).

While some victims are interested in RJ, victims in Canada and elsewhere are often not informed that RJ is an option (Wemmers and Van Camp 2011). For example, Marsh and Wager (2015) conducted a

web-based survey with 121 residents of the United Kingdom; 40 identified themselves as survivors of sexual violence. The authors found that most of the 40 had never heard of RJ before taking part in the study.

Victims want to be informed so that they can know their choices and decide which justice option they want to pursue. Based on qualitative interviews with 34 victims of serious violent crimes, including eight cases of sexual violence, Van Camp and Wemmers (2016; Wemmers and Van Camp 2011) examined victims' experiences with restorative justice in Canada and Belgium. Focusing on how the victims learned about RJ options, the authors identified two main approaches: one protective and the other proactive. In the protective approach, victims were told about RJ only if they asked about it explicitly. In the proactive approach, victims were informed about RJ. This enabled them to make up their own minds about whether or not to pursue the option. They could even come back to it at a later time if they were not immediately interested in it. Van Camp and Wemmers found that victims preferred a proactive approach to a protective one. Making choices is essential for victims' healing process and victims want to decide for themselves what they want to do (Morissette and Wemmers 2016). This requires, however, that they be informed of all possible options, including RJ. As survivors remind us, we must not underestimate their strength (McGlynn et al. 2012).

In Canada, at the federal level, the *Criminal Code* and the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* authorize RJ processes. For example, section 717 of the *Criminal Code* provides that alternative measures may be used if the offender accepts responsibility for the offence. Section 19 of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* describes how and when conferences, including restorative conferences, may be convened. The right to request and receive information about RJ is also included in both the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights Act* and the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*. In 2015, Manitoba became the first province to introduce legislation, the *Restorative Justice Act*, aimed to increase the use of RJ and promote public safety by providing resolution that affords healing, reparation and re-integration.

Marsh and Wager (2015) report that while survivors of sexual violence have mixed views about when authorities should offer victims the option of RJ, the best time may be upon initial contact. It is important that RJ options remain flexible and accessible at any stage of the criminal justice process (Tinsely and McDonald 2011; Van Camp 2014; Wemmers 2017). Considering the impact of trauma on learning and memory, it may be best to provide information multiple times, at various stages in the process (see McDonald 2016).

CONCLUSION

Judging by the reporting rates for sexual violence, victims may be more interested in RJ than in conventional criminal justice. The findings of prior studies highlight the importance of further research and, in particular, public education about the needs and rights of victims. The negative reactions of others, including the general public, constitute a source of secondary victimization. The women's movement has played an important role in encouraging women to speak out about sexual assault to everyone – not just to police – to effect social change and draw attention to the needs of victims (Ullman 2010). To achieve this goal, we must ensure that victims can access a safe environment where they can speak out and refrain from judging the choices they make.

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A STRATEGY FOR ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE CANADIAN VICTIMS BILL OF RIGHTS – OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE BETTER USE OF CURRENT DATA HOLDINGS

By Melanie Kowalski

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the role of victims in the criminal justice system has grown through various means, such as legislative reform and increased funding for services. The *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (CVBR), which came into force in 2015, is a significant development for victims of crime.¹¹ The CVBR establishes statutory rights for victims to information, protection and participation, as well as the right to request restitution. The CVBR also establishes a complaint process for alleged breaches of these rights by a federal department or agency. These changes are expected to have significant impacts on Canada's justice system and on victim services.

The Minister of Justice's mandate letter requires that "... work will be informed by performance measurement, evidence, and feedback from Canadians."¹² The CVBR presents a strategic opportunity to develop and align statistical measures to support evidence-based policy and decision-making related to victims of crime (Johnston-Way and O'Sullivan 2016).

In an effort to identify data that could be used to measure the impact of the CVBR on the justice system, the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, in partnership

with the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) at Statistics Canada, undertook a data-mapping study. The goal of the study was to outline research needs and opportunities to gather information about how victims of crime interact with the justice system. To facilitate the project, the CCJS consulted representatives of numerous Justice partners (police services, courts, corrections and victim services), along with those of federal, provincial and territorial governments, and non-governmental and academic organizations, between October 2015 and February 2016 to determine the feasibility of collecting data at various stages of justice processes. Results from these consultations clearly indicated that while data sources differ, various partners already collect a wide array of valuable information. Furthermore, many Justice partners indicated that they had begun to plan how best to realign internal processes, including data gathering, to respond effectively to the CVBR. This report describes potential approaches to assessing the impact of the CVBR by exploiting existing data sources.

¹¹ The Department of Justice website has comprehensive and accessible information about the CVBR.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/policing/victims/rolerights.html>

The Library of Parliament provides summaries of legislation before Parliament. *The Legislative Summary of Bill C-32: An Act to enact the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights and to amend certain Acts* can be accessed at:

http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/LegislativeSummaries/bills_ls.asp?ls=c32&Parl=41&Ses=2

¹² The mandate letter for the federal Minister of Justice can be accessed at: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-justice-and-attorney-general-canada-mandate-letter>

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE CANADIAN VICTIMS BILL OF RIGHTS

The strength of the CVBR will be measured by how well it responds to the needs of victims. To determine the impact of the CVBR, different kinds of statistical information will need to be collected, particularly information that indicates:

- Whether the justice system has created the necessary mechanisms and/or processes to address CVBR requirements (e.g., police services distributing CVBR information cards; Correctional Service Canada's Victim Portal providing victims with information about federally incarcerated offenders; the numbers of victim-impact-statement forms provided to victims, etc.)
- Whether victims access the rights afforded them by the CVBR, and which factors influence them to access these rights.
- Whether CVBR provisions have in fact produced positive outcomes through services made available for victims, such as a greater feeling among victims of personal safety or of being treated fairly by the justice system.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPLOIT CURRENT DATA HOLDINGS

The CCJS consultations identified a number of options for the collection and sharing of victim information to assess the impact of the CVBR; these were presented to the Federal Ombudsman of Victims of Crime. The options listed below outline different ways that current data holdings might be exploited and/or further developed to enhance understanding of the CVBR's impacts. These options reflect different methods or approaches to collecting information and may be used in combination.

Option A: Victim Services National Data Requirements Aggregate Survey

The provinces and territories are responsible for providing the majority of services to victims and consequently have a wealth of information about those to whom they provide services. There is no systematic, standard method to define, collect, report and publish these valuable data, however. Administrative data from victim

services across Canada needs to be standardized to support effective analysis. To examine, compare and analyze data about the services delivered in different jurisdictions, similar data must be collected in similar ways and to similar standards. In collaboration with victim services organizations, CCJS must determine:

- a. the scope of analysis (which victim services to examine);
- b. which data to collect (e.g. numbers and characteristics of victims and of services, etc.);
- c. how to standardize information and make it comparable across jurisdictions (or service types);
- d. how often to collect and update this information;
- e. the best method to gather information; and, finally,
- f. how to publish or otherwise disseminate this information.

Option B: Increasing the quality of information in existing administrative data sets and adding questions to the General Social Survey on Victimization

Several Statistics Canada programs collect data on victims that could be exploited and enhanced to fill current gaps. The CCJS is currently redesigning its surveys to improve the information collected from police and correctional services, and courts. This is an opportune time to examine the quality of the data currently collected and address any identified gaps. For example, the Police Administration Survey collects baseline information on police personnel and expenditures from policing services across Canada. This survey would be a useful tool to measure how police services across Canada provide information to victims about their rights and the services available to them. This would also help to measure performance on the CVBR's right to information.

The Integrated Criminal Court Survey (ICCS) collects detailed caseload, case-processing and sentencing information for all *Criminal Code* and other federal statute charges tried in criminal courts in Canada. The ICCS is currently undergoing a redesign and initial consultations identified victim information as a key need. Therefore, as part of redesign activities, CCJS will review the ICCS with its national partners and examine how to better capture information about victims. In particular, information on:

- Sentences involving a restitution order (aligns with the CVBR's right to request restitution)
- Type of conditions imposed as part of orders that include restitution (aligns with the CVBR's right to request restitution)
- Whether a victim-impact statement was filed in court (aligns with the CVBR's right to participation)

Analysis of current and post-redesign ICCS data can help to determine whether certain types of offences are more likely to lead to sentences that include restitution orders. This analysis can also correlate the presentation of victim-impact statements with particular outcomes and types of offences.

The CCJS will soon begin to collect new data through the Canadian Correctional Services Survey (CCSS), a redesigned version of the Integrated Correctional Services Survey. The CCSS will continue to collect data from both youth and adult correctional-services programs, such as data about custodial and community supervision. Information on restitution will be captured in almost all jurisdictions, either through stand-alone restitution orders for youth, or as a condition of probation orders or conditional sentence orders (for both adults and youth). The CCSS will also collect data about the amounts of restitution ordered (aligns with the CVBR's right to request restitution).

Depending on when jurisdictions started to gather these data, it might be possible to measure some of the CVBR's impacts.

Self-reported victimization: General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization)

Since many crimes are not reported to police for a variety of reasons, self-reported victimization data represent an essential complement to justice-system statistics. To get a complete picture of criminal activity and criminal victimization in Canada, and to develop sound justice policy, the perspectives of both police and victims must be considered.

Data collected through the GSS on Canadians' Safety (Victimization) focuses on victims of crime and their experiences. Unlike the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR), the GSS (Victimization) collects data about both reported and unreported crimes (limited to eight crime types). Statistics Canada currently conducts the GSS (Victimization) every five years – most recently in 2014. The CCJS could bolster the 2019 edition to support the assessment of the CVBR's impacts.

New content could include more detailed questions about victims of crime, their perceptions of the justice system, and the overall impact of the services they accessed. Questions about whether victims felt that they participated in the justice process, whether their safety was considered throughout court processes, and whether they had been informed of their rights when they reported the crime

to police, would all contribute to the assessment of the CVBR's impacts. Additional questions exploring why victims did not access services could also be considered.

While some data gaps might be addressed through modifications to Statistics Canada surveys, other data gaps might be better addressed through alternate data collection methods or through administrative data collected by other departments or organizations. Such departments and organizations include the Parole Board of Canada, Correctional Service Canada and various victim services agencies across Canada.

Option C: Measurement of outcomes

The spirit of the CVBR is, in essence, to ensure that the justice system responds appropriately to victims of crime, not only by providing services, but also by ensuring that the services meet their needs and result in positive outcomes. As such, measurements of the types of outcomes experienced as a result of services would be highly useful for Justice partners. Measuring these outcomes, however, presents many challenges. Victims' needs and the services available vary considerably from one jurisdiction to another. The contexts, objectives and results of programs related to counselling, shelters, collection of restitution and restorative justice, all differ. As such, there is no one-size-fits-all measure of outcomes. To properly measure outcomes of victim services, specific questions on possible impacts and outcomes must be developed that pertain specifically to the type of service provided.

Statistics Canada, in partnership with provincial and territorial directors of victim-services organizations, could develop a series of outcome measures based on specific types of services. These measures could be part of an exit survey administered by victim-services agencies. Statistics Canada would work with Justice partners to determine which services to focus on, the best ways to collect information and to standardize questions, how frequently to collect data, and how best to publish or otherwise disseminate the results. Due to the variety of victim services, it is highly recommended that this option begin with a pilot project in a single jurisdiction prior to exploring national implementation.

In addition, Statistics Canada could support the development of a core set of questions about levels of satisfaction that would be employed by all victim-services agencies. The notion of satisfaction is complex, so it is essential that it be clearly defined by Justice partners. This will ensure that the information collected adequately addresses the relevant policy questions, that it is a reliable measure of victim experiences, and that it is sufficiently standardized to support comparisons across jurisdictions and service types. The core set of satisfaction questions would be tested, employed by jurisdictions and collected as part of the proposed aggregate survey (Option A).

MOVING FORWARD

To properly assess the CVBR's impacts and the performance of various parts of the justice system, a combination of all three options would be required. Adequate funding would also be required.

In May 2016, the Policy Centre for Victim Issues provided funds to the CCJS to work with provincial and territorial directors of victim-services agencies on the development of standardized indicators of the numbers and types of services that victims access (Option A). Administrative data from victim-services agencies across Canada are currently undergoing a standardization process to support the collection and dissemination of these data. The CCJS is developing the victim-services national data-requirements aggregate survey to help measure how well the justice system provides services to victims and whether victims access these services.

The aim is to publish information about performance at the national, provincial and territorial levels, including the numbers and characteristics of victims served, and their use and experience of victim services, such as assistance with victim- and community-impact statements.

Much of this data may be available for periods before the implementation of the CVBR, and can be used to examine the CVBR's impact on victim services. National indicators will enhance capacity to develop relevant policy, legislation and initiatives. In addition to providing tools for measuring the CVBR's impacts, these

data could also help to set funding priorities. The data would also help to inform the federal, provincial and territorial governments about how the various parts of the justice system have responded to the CVBR – that is, how police, courts and correctional systems engage victims as active participants in the justice system, and whether victims are active in criminal-justice processes.

SUMMARY

The justice sector collects a wealth of data that could assist in examining the impact of victim services pre- and post-CVBR. This report describes possible approaches to building on current administrative and sample surveys at Statistics Canada by increasing the quality of data collected and/or by adding new content to address gaps, as well as by exploiting existing data sources (collected through victim-services administrative data) to develop national indicators. Finally, another option would be to develop a new survey that would assess and measure the outcomes experienced by victims who access these services. It is important to note that a combination of all three options would be necessary to assess the many facets of the CVBR. The best approach would likely involve linking data sets, adding new variables to existing surveys or increasing data quality and the scope of information already collected. With the full engagement of Justice partners and with the help of victim-services agencies across Canada, national indicators of victim issues can be standardized and collected at various parts of the criminal-justice system across federal and provincial/territorial jurisdictions to assess the impacts of the CVBR and to answer key questions such as: How are victims exercising their rights? And is the CVBR making a difference?

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MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS: THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH IN ADDRESSING A COMPLEX NATIONAL CRISIS

By Marsha Axford

BACKGROUND

The overrepresentation of Indigenous Canadians in the criminal justice system (CJS), both as victims and as accused, is a serious and ongoing challenge. Federal departments, provincial justice systems, social service organizations, and academic researchers have examined the issue for many years (see Solicitor General 1996; Rudin

2005; and The Office of the Correctional Investigator 2013 for an overview). Although some steps have been taken to address Indigenous overrepresentation as accused in the CJS (for example, through national and provincial inquiries and the consideration of *Gladue* factors in court), little measurable progress has been made.

THE HOMICIDE SURVEY

The Homicide Survey was introduced in 1961 and has been revised and expanded multiple times in its history. From the outset, the Survey collected information from investigative officers about the relationship between the victim and the accused involved in their homicide. Prior to 1991 however, the Survey collected this information via a write-in text field with possible relationship types defined in the Survey User Guide. The options for relationship type were expanded over time, and the write-in text field was changed to a list of options from which the responding investigative officer can now choose. Changes to relationship types occurred in 1991, 1997 and 2015. The Homicide Survey began to include “casual acquaintance” as a relationship type in 1997.

According to the Survey User Guide, a “casual acquaintance” is someone known to the victim, but who has no romantic, sexual or close friendship with the victim. This relationship type is to be used when none of the other “acquaintance” relationship types (i.e. close friend, neighbour, authority figure, business relationship or criminal relationship) are appropriate. The Homicide Survey’s relationship types are hierarchical; the closer the relationship to the victim, the higher the relationship is on the hierarchy. Further, in cases where multiple relationship types describe the link between accused and victim, only the closest relationship type is selected. For example, if the accused and victim were spouses and also business partners, only the spousal relationship would be reported. If the accused were the uncle of the victim and also her neighbour, only the familial relationship would be reported. In the Homicide Survey, the only relationship type considered more distant than “casual acquaintance” is “stranger.”

The Homicide Survey features separate questionnaires focused on the homicide incident, the accused and the victim. In some cases, there are multiple accused and victim questionnaires for a single incident questionnaire. The victim questionnaire collects the relationship between victim and the closest accused person.¹³ The incident questionnaire includes a free-text “narrative” section: a summary provided by the investigative officer of the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the homicide incident. The officer determines how much detail to include in the narrative; the intent is to summarize relevant information about the incident, victim and accused.

¹³ If there are multiple suspects, only the closest relationship is recorded. For example, between two accused where one is the victim’s husband and the other is the victim’s husband’s brother (the victim’s brother-in-law), only the relationship between the victim and her husband would be recorded.

Recently, attention has focused on the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples among victims of violent crime. Many national and international organizations have made recommendations to address the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada (Native Women's Association of Canada 2010; Pearce 2013; United Nations 2014; Royal Canadian Mounted Police 2014; Royal Canadian Mounted Police 2015; United Nations 2015; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015;). After the 2015 federal election, the new government issued mandate letters to all Ministers outlining expectations and goals for the next four years. The Ministers of Justice, and Indigenous and Northern Affairs, with support from the Minister of the Status of Women, were mandated to develop an approach to an inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). While initial investigations had begun in other public agencies (for example, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police [RCMP] reports released in 2014 and 2015) the mandate letter reaffirmed the government's commitment to move the issue forward.

In 2014, Statistics Canada worked with the RCMP and the wider Canadian police community to gather information on the Aboriginal¹⁴ identity of female victims of homicide. These data were used to produce the RCMP's report *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview* and to update Statistics Canada's Homicide Survey database. The Homicide Survey includes a section for responding police services to report the Aboriginal identity of victims and accused persons, although historically this information has not been routinely reported. The RCMP-Statistics Canada initiative provided Statistics Canada with the Aboriginal identity of female victims of homicide between 1980 and 2014; 2014 was the first reporting year that Aboriginal

identity was reported on the Homicide Survey for all victims and accused persons, regardless of sex.

Analysis of the newly updated dataset revealed that a relatively large proportion of female victims between 1980 and 2015 were killed by a "casual acquaintance" (12%), and that Aboriginal female victims (18%) were more likely than non-Aboriginal female victims (11%) to be killed by a "casual acquaintance." This difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal females, contextualized in the wider focus on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, was the impetus for initiating deeper analysis of the Homicide Survey dataset.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL COLLABORATION

In the spring of 2016, Statistics Canada's Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) and the Department of Justice Canada's Research and Statistics Division (RSD) began to collaborate on a special analysis of Homicide Survey data. This partnership provided Statistics Canada with additional resources to publish new analyses within a short period of time. The goal was to further examine specific aspects of "casual acquaintance" murders, particularly the relationships between accused persons and female victims, and the circumstances surrounding the homicides. The project involved reading and analyzing a free-text portion of the Homicide Survey called a "narrative," which is provided by responding officers on the Homicide Survey, for cases in which the victim was murdered by a "casual acquaintance."

Officials from Statistics Canada and the Department of Justice discussed the scope of the special analysis and the resources required to complete the project. The officials decided to assign two Department of Justice employees with previous file-coding experience

¹⁴ The terms "Indigenous" and "Aboriginal" are used interchangeably in this report. Statistics Canada uses the terms "Aboriginal" in the Homicide Survey to maintain consistency with the wording and definitions used in the 2016 Census of Populations. For the purposes of this report, when referring to identity as collected by the Homicide Survey, the term "Aboriginal" is used.

to the project. The two became temporary deemed¹⁵ employees of Statistics Canada, in accordance with Statistics Canada legislation. The officials felt that two researchers working together could:

1. discuss and analyze the content of police narratives throughout the re-coding process;
2. allow for additional insight into possible new relationship types that a single researcher working alone may not have considered; and
3. provide peer support throughout the process, as analyzing a large number of homicide narratives within a short period of time can be difficult and result in vicarious trauma (Campbell 2002).

The goal was to include the special analysis in Statistics Canada's annual publication of detailed homicide data: the *Juristat* article "Homicide in Canada, 2015."¹⁶ Work on recoding of the data and building a supplementary dataset began in May 2016 and was completed in August 2016. The two Department of Justice employees worked at Statistics Canada two days per week on these tasks.

Once the majority of cases had been reviewed and re-coded, one of the employees continued to work at Statistics Canada part time until the *Juristat* article's release on November 23rd, 2016. The employee incorporated feedback from internal and external review processes, re-analyzed data where necessary, contributed to the editing process, and assisted in release-day activities.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

A Memorandum of Understanding outlined the activities, services and products expected of the Justice Canada employees assigned to Statistics Canada for the project. Activities included developing a coding structure and method for analysis, creating a supplementary dataset based on the information found in the Homicide Survey narratives, and incorporating statistical findings into the *Juristat* article "Homicide in Canada, 2015."

As part of the process to be deemed Statistics Canada employees, the researchers took an oath as per the *Statistics Act*. The oath binds employees to the requirements of the *Act* and all policies related to the use of data collected and held by Statistics Canada, particularly those related to confidentiality. All work on the project was completed on protected networks in Statistics Canada offices, where the researchers accessed only the datasets and files required to complete the project.

A total of 755 victims were originally identified for inclusion in the study, based on a number of criteria, including:

- a. The victim was female;
- b. The homicide was recorded in a Homicide Survey submitted to Statistics Canada between 1980 and 2015; and
- c. The relationship between the accused and the victim was reported as "casual acquaintance."¹⁷

The CCJS team pulled a subsample of 100 of the narratives that met the above criteria for cursory analysis by the Justice employees. This initial examination served to orient the researchers to the types of information contained in the

¹⁵ The federal *Statistics Act* allows Statistics Canada to use the services of individuals (persons, incorporated contractors, public servants) to do work for Statistics Canada without being an employee in the general sense of the term. The *Act* refers to these individuals as "deemed to be a person employed under this Act," hence the expression "deemed employee." A deemed employee is someone who is providing a specific service which, in most cases, involves having access to confidential information for statistical purposes. In performing this service, the person has the same obligations of a Statistics Canada employee to keep identifiable information confidential.

¹⁶ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14668-eng.pdf>

¹⁷ While "casual acquaintance" was added as an official relationship type in 1997, previously this information was captured via write-in field, so investigative officers could still report the relationship as "casual acquaintance" prior to 1997.

narratives and to develop a preliminary list of relationship types that might provide further context to the homicide incidents. After this initial overview, the two researchers met with the CCJS team to discuss methodology, the relevance of context and specific relationship types identified in the narratives, technical details of the existing Homicide Survey dataset and other research-specific issues.

All 755 narratives (including the 100 previously examined) were read by both researchers simultaneously to identify recurring themes and contexts. During the review process, the CCJS team and the two researchers consulted methodologists from Statistics Canada's Household Survey Methods Division (HSMD). The methodologists helped select appropriate thresholds that justified the creation of new relationship types (1% of the entire sample) and provided direction on inter-coder verification to ensure that the new categories were statistically accurate and robust.¹⁸

Themes and contexts for which 1% or more of the total sample were identified were assigned descriptive names and analyzed according to Aboriginal identity. Themes identified among fewer than 1% of sample were not changed from "casual acquaintance" as the evidence was insufficient to support the creation of a new relationship type.¹⁹

During the subsample analysis, the researchers identified a number of relationship types and contexts that did not meet the criteria for inclusion (1%), or were determined to be related more to motive than to relationship type, or were considered too context-specific. In some cases, the information available was too vague to be considered reliable. For example, the length of time that a victim and accused person were acquainted was identified as a theme in some of the narratives (e.g., the victim and

accused were acquainted for less than 24 hours before the homicide occurred). Theoretically, the length of a relationship could help define the difference between "stranger" and "casual acquaintance." This is done in other jurisdictions,²⁰ but since the Homicide Survey does not collect this information, and the availability of these data in the narratives was variable, it was excluded from the study. The potential category of a predatory/targeted "relationship" was also identified during the subsample analysis, but was determined to relate more to motive than relationship, and was not included in the final coding structure, in part because the Homicide Survey already collects information about motive.

RESULTS

Due to incomplete information, seven homicide victims were excluded from the final dataset, for a total of 748 female victims killed by a casual acquaintance between 1980 and 2015. For about half of the victims (390 or 52%), the police narratives included enough information to support further analysis of the nature and context of the "casual acquaintance" relationship between accused and victim. The researchers determined that in 17% of the 748 cases, the relationship could be better described by a relationship type currently collected on the Homicide Survey (e.g., neighbour, or other intimate partner). In many of these cases, the "better" relationship type did not exist at the time the Homicide Survey was completed. Often the Just over one-third (35%) of all accused-victim "casual acquaintance" relationships could be described by a new relationship type.

In 48% of the 748 cases, the researchers did not reclassify the "casual acquaintance" relationship because the narratives featured either enough information to justify the original classification, or not enough details to justify reclassification.

18 When the researchers had analyzed and recoded all of the in-scope narratives, a randomly selected subset (n=100) of the in-scope cases were coded independently by the CCJS team and compared with the researchers' coding of the same cases. The coding matched in 98% of the selected cases, a high level of overall reliability.

19 The Homicide Survey database was not changed based on this analysis. The new relationship types were identified in a separate dataset that was created for this special analysis only.

20 In Australia, for example, the relationship between victim and offender is classified as "stranger" when the victim and offender did not know each other, or knew each other for less than 24 hours (see Bryant and Cussen 2015).

Overall, the researchers identified eight new relationship types among the “casual acquaintance” cases:

- Co-substance user: the relationship was based solely on the co-consumption of intoxicating substances immediately prior to the homicide.
- Other non-family household member: e.g. roommates or boarders who were not paying rent.
- Other institutional member: e.g. a resident in the same rooming house, hospital, psychiatric facility or nursing home.
- Partner or ex-partner of a family member: e.g. the boyfriend of the victim's daughter.
- Partner or ex-partner of the victim's current or former sexual partner: a “love-triangle” type of relationship, where the accused and victim might not have a direct relationship. For example, the accused could be involved in an affair with the victim's legal husband.
- Reverse authority figure²¹: The victim was in a position of trust or authority over the accused and is not related to the accused. For example, the accused-victim relationship could be student-teacher, patient-doctor or prisoner-guard.
- Family friend: The accused was a friend of a family member of the victim (e.g. a friend of the victim's father).
- Casual friend: The police reported that the accused was a peer or friend of the victim, but did not meet the definition of a “close friend,” described in the Survey User Guide as a longstanding non-sexual relationship.

The relationship type of co-substance user was identified most frequently: 18% of the 748 victims were killed by someone with whom they were consuming intoxicating substances in a bar, private residence, or public outdoor location immediately prior to the homicide. Aboriginal

female victims were much more likely to be killed by a co-substance user (38%) compared to non-Aboriginal female victims (12%). Of the 136 victims killed by a co-substance user, 39% were murdered after they left the original location of substance use with the accused. Again, there was a considerable difference between the two groups, with non-Aboriginal women being much more likely to leave with the accused than Aboriginal women (51% compared to 27%).

Much smaller proportions of victims were killed by someone they knew outside of the co-substance user context:

- 6% were killed by an other non-family household member
- 4% by another institutional member
- 3% by a partner or ex-partner of a family member
- 2% by a partner or ex-partner of the victim's current or former sexual partner
- 1% by a reverse authority figure
- 1% by a family friend
- 1% by a casual friend

Other differences were noted between the homicides of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal females within these less frequently reported categories. For example, 5% of non-Aboriginal victims were killed by an other institutional member, compared to 1% of Aboriginal victims. Non-Aboriginal females were also more likely to be killed by an other non-family household member (6% compared to 3% for Aboriginal victims).

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

This analysis would not have been completed without the collaborative efforts of Statistics Canada and Department of Justice Canada. The project provides a deeper level of understanding of the contexts and relationships related to homicides of females, and adds to a growing body of knowledge of the risk factors associated with violence and how they may differ between Aboriginal and non-

21 “Authority figure” is a relationship type currently captured by the Homicide Survey.

Aboriginal females. In the context of MMIWG, no single department or organization will be able to address the myriad of relevant factors and none have access to all of the expertise necessary for such an undertaking. Collaboration is necessary and important to address such a complex national problem, and the research completed by Justice Canada and Statistics Canada demonstrates what this type of cooperation can produce.

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VICTIM-RELATED CONFERENCES IN 2017

International Conference on Victim Assistance

January 9th – 10th

Paris, France

<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/united-nations/events/events-2017/article/international-conference-on-victim-assistance-09-01-17>

2017 NASPA Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Conference: A NASPA Strategies Conference

January 19th – 21st

Austin, TX, USA

<https://www.naspa.org/events/2017scsvpr>

The 31st Annual International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment

January 31st - February 3rd

San Diego, CA, USA

http://www.sandiegoconference.org/Documents/2017conf_docs/2017_SD_CONFERENCE_MANUAL-sm.pdf

Sixth International and Tenth Biennial Conference of the Indian Society of Victimology (ISV)

February 23rd - 25th

Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

<http://www.nirmauni.ac.in/ILNU/Events/562>

Trauma-Informed Sexual Assault Investigation and Adjudication Institute

February 28th - March 3rd

Warrensburg, MO, USA

<http://www.cvent.com/events/trauma-informed-sexual-assault-investigation-and-adjudication-institute-warrensburg-mo/event-summary-8d44435256fa46d9abacb9ad828b297.aspx?RefID=Central%20Missouri%202016%20Summary>

2017 National Conference on Bullying

March 1st - 3rd

Orlando, FL, USA

<http://www.schoolsafety911.org/event05.html>

18th Annual Statewide Child Abuse Prevention Conference

March 24th – 25th

Location TBD

<http://taasa.memberlodge.org/event-2399866>

14th International Hawai'i Summit on Preventing, Assessing & Treating Trauma Across the Lifespan

March 27th – 30th

Honolulu, HI

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57e20b7703596e2bdd49195c/t/58a2104129687febd8b73892/1487016004779/14th+HI+Brochure+-+Proof+edited+-+Final+PWK+02.09.17.pdf>

33rd International Symposium on Child Abuse

March 27th – 30th

Huntsville, AL, USA

<http://www.cvent.com/events/33rd-international-symposium-on-child-abuse/event-summary-8ea29d7918334407856da4304adb7cff.aspx>

35th Annual Protecting Our Children National American Indian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect

April 2nd – 5th

San Diego, CA, USA

<http://www.nicwa.org/conference/>

17th Annual International Family Justice Conference

April 4th – 6th

Milwaukee, WI, USA

<http://www.familyjusticecenter.org/training/conferences-and-events/>

2017 WVCAN Conference: Be the Light

April 4th – 5th

Charleston, WV, USA

<http://wvcn.org/event/wvcn-annual-conference/>

2017 Association for Death Education and Counseling Annual Conference

April 5th – 8th

Portland, OR, USA

<https://www.adec.org/ADEC/2017>

11th Annual Every Victim, Every Time Crime Victim Conference

April 18th – 19th

Bryan, TX, USA

<http://www.evetbv.org/>

International Conference on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Systems Change

April 18th – 20th
Orlando, FL, USA

<http://www.evawintl.org/conferencedetail.aspx?confid=28>

ICCLVC 2017: 19th International Conference on Criminal Law, Victims and Compensation

May 4th – 5th
Rome, Italy

<https://www.waset.org/conference/2017/05/rome/ICCLVC>

Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs 2017 Annual Conference

May 9th – 11th
Spokane, WA, USA

<http://www.wcsap.org/wcsap-annual-conference>

Crime Victim Law 2017 Conference

May 11th – 12th
Portland, OR, USA

https://law.lclark.edu/centers/national_crime_victim_law_institute/projects/education_and_training/annual_conference/archive/2017/overview.php

2017 Child Aware Approaches Conference

May 15th – 16th
Brisbane, Australia

<http://childawareconference.org.au/>

12th Annual Conference on Crimes against Women

May 22nd – 25th
Dallas, TX, USA

<http://www.conferencecaw.org/home>

Wyoming's Joint Symposium on Children & Youth – Crimes Against Children & Children's Justice

May 23rd – 24th
Laramie, WY, USA

<http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07edb2o20jb66d69f3&llr=szt6qapab>

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault: National Sexual Assault Conference

June 7th – 9th
Dallas, TX, USA

<http://taasa.memberlodge.org/event-2451316>

American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children 2017 Advanced Training Summit

June 15th – 26th
Portland, OR, USA

<http://www.apsac.org/events>

2017 No More Harm National Conference

June 26th – 27th
Brisbane, Australia

<http://no2bullying.org.au/>

11th Annual Girl Bullying and Empowerment National Conference

June 27th – 30th
Orlando, FL, USA

<http://www.stopgirlbullying.com/>

Crimes Against Children Conference

August 7th – 10th
Dallas, TX, USA

<http://www.cacconference.org/>

23rd National Organization for Victim Assistance Annual Training Event

August 14th – 17th
San Diego, CA, USA

<http://www.trynova.org/nova-training-event/overview/>

22nd International Summit on Violence, Abuse & Trauma

September 21st – 27th
San Diego, CA, USA

<http://www.ivatcenters.org/san-diego-summit>

ISPCAN European Regional Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect

October 1st – 4th
The Hague, Netherlands

www.ispcan.org

29th Annual COVA Conference

October 22nd – 25th
Keystone, CO, USA

<http://www.coloradocrimevictims.org/cova-conference.html>

11th Annual Alberta Restorative Justice Conference

November 2017: Restorative Justice Week

Calgary, AL, Canada

<http://www.arja.ca/annualconference/>

Annual Restorative Justice Symposium

November 19th-21st

Ottawa, ON, Canada

**19th Ending Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence
Conference**

November 29th – December 1st

Lexington, KY, USA

<https://www.kcadv.org/annual-conference/details>

