

METHOD

Participants

Characteristics. The total sample of 162 participants was comprised of 105 homeless persons from seven municipalities including Marysville, Sacramento, Stockton, Vacaville, Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco, and 57 professionals from the same cities who were experienced with homeless victimization or had knowledge of factors involved in homeless victimization. There were 53 homeless men and 52 homeless women ranging in age from 19 to 61 (Mean = 40, Sd = 10). The sample included 47% White, 37% Black, 5% Hispanic, 5% Multi-Racial, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% American Indian/Alaskan Native. Education levels included 32% that did not graduate from high school, 42% with a high school diploma, 22% with 1 to 2 years of college, and 4% with a college degree.

The remaining 57 participants included 25 advocates of homeless persons, 17 law enforcement officers, and 15 prosecutors. Table 1 contains the number of participants per city for each data group.

Participation in this study was voluntary. Homeless participants were recruited from a pool of homeless persons residing at shelters or utilizing day service programs. Advocates of homeless persons, law enforcement officers, and prosecutors were recruited from a pool of like professionals employed by public and private organizations, agencies, and departments. Participants were not compensated for their participation.

Sampling Strategy. Due to the potentially fluid and unstable nature of the characteristics associated with homeless persons (outlined in the introduction section of this report) and the relatively small number of professionals who have experience with homeless victimization or knowledge of factors involved in homeless victimization, typical random sampling techniques based on estimations of population composition and size was not possible. Accordingly, a sampling technique often employed in field research of little known or hard to reach subjects, termed snowball technique (Hagan, 1993; Inciardi, Pottieger, Forney, Chitwood, and McBride, 1991; and Maxfield and Babbie, 1995), was used in the present study. This process begins with a single or

Table 1
Number of Participants Per City for Each Data Group

City	Homeless Persons	Advocates	Law Enforcement	Prosecutors
Marysville	15	3	1	1
Sacramento	15	5	3	3
Stockton	15	2	2	2
Vacaville	15	3	2	1
Berkeley	15	2	3	2
Oakland	15	6	3	3
San Francisco	15	4	3	3
Total	105	25	17	15

Note: n = 162.

small group of eligible participants who are then asked to identify, recruit, or provide additional contact information for other persons who meet the eligibility requirements of the study.

Participant Eligibility. Eligibility for homeless participants was based on geographical location, housing status in 2001, and willingness to participate in the study on a volunteer basis. Eligibility for the remaining participants was based on geographical location, occupation status in 2001, and willingness to participate in the study on a volunteer basis.

Site Selection. Funding limitations restricted the number (no more than seven) and location (within a few hours driving distance from the Department of Justice in Sacramento) of sites. The seven Northern California cities that were selected included Marysville, Sacramento, Stockton, Vacaville, Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco. The group of selected cities varied in size and total number of homeless citizens.

Instrumentation

Development of Questionnaire Used to Interview Homeless Persons. The questionnaire used to interview homeless participants (Appendix A) was preceded by a 20-item demographic inventory (Appendix B). The goal of the questionnaire was to obtain first-hand knowledge on the aspects of homeless victimization that were investigated in this study including prevalence, prevention, reporting, apprehension, prosecution, and categorization as a hate crime.

The development of the 20-item questionnaire was typical of most self-report items in that they were based on a literature review. Commentary from homeless persons and various professionals who had experience with homeless persons and/or homeless victimization were also used during the process of formulating items. Individual items were chosen randomly from item sorts. Items were language and sequenced such that potentially

threatening items were positioned strategically among potentially less threatening items.

Pilot Testing. Questionnaire items were pilot-tested on 21 homeless persons from two shelters located in Northern California cities (11 in Davis and 10 in Woodland). Revisions to the measure (rephrasing and repositioning of items) and the administration process (changes in strategies employed to elicit specific information) were made accordingly.

Validity of the Homeless Participant Questionnaire. A Principal Components Factor Analysis with Varimax extraction was performed on the questionnaire (using pilot data) used to interview homeless persons with SAS, version 8. Results yielded four unrotated factors with eigenvalues of 1.00. Following examination of the number of items that loaded on each factor (with a loading criterion of .40), item content, explained variance, and reliability coefficients, the determination was made that a unidimensional structure underlies the measure in its current form. A subsequent single-factor and reliability analyses accounted for 75% of the total variance and yielded an alpha of .55. Alpha levels between .50 and .60 are generally interpreted as moderate.

Some of the questionnaire items were of an obtrusive nature and therefore had the potential to adversely effect the willingness of participants to be forthcoming. Assurances from homeless shelter and day-service facility administrators and program directors indicated that responses to questionnaire items from homeless participants were in keeping with what they knew to be valid information.

Development of Surveys used to Consult with Advocates of Homeless Persons, Law Enforcement Officers, and Prosecutors. The goal of the questionnaires (Appendices C, D, and E, respectively) used to consult with advocates of homeless persons, law enforcement personnel, and prosecutors was to obtain first-hand knowledge of

the aspects of homeless victimization that were investigated in this study including prevalence, prevention, reporting, apprehension, prosecution, and categorization as a hate crime. Items selected for inclusion in the measure were also based on a literature review. The final item on all questionnaires was open-ended and provided an opportunity for participants to add information of their choosing.

Procedure

Research Session for Homeless Persons.

Several minutes were used at the outset of each interview to establish rapport with each participant. Information provided at the beginning of the interview included the name and professional affiliation of the researcher and the purpose of the study. Participants were also advised of the types of questions contained in the questionnaire, that no personal identifying information would be recorded or otherwise utilized, and that participation was on a voluntary basis and could be stopped at any time during the interview. The same information was also provided in a written consent form (Appendix F) that each participant was asked to sign as a requisite for participation in the study.

Each participant was then queried on 20 demographic items and 20 items pertaining to victimization during individual, face-to-face interviews of approximately 20 minutes in length. Flexibility was exercised in wording and sequencing of items in an effort to facilitate rapport when necessary. At the close of each interview, participants were verbally debriefed (Appendix G) on the location and number of participants being interviewed, what the information gleaned from the interviews would be used for, and how they could access a copy of the final report.

Research Sessions for Advocates of Homeless Persons, Law Enforcement Officers, and Prosecutors. Semi-structured consultation interviews were conducted with advocates of homeless persons, law enforcement personnel, and prosecutors. Information provided prior to each interview included the name and professional affiliation of the researcher and the purpose of the study. Participants were also advised of the types of questions contained in the questionnaire, that their statements would remain confidential, and that participation was on a voluntary basis.

Participants were queried on the aspects of homeless victimization that were investigated for the purposes of this study including prevalence, prevention, reporting, apprehension, prosecution, and hate crime during individual, face-to-face interviews of approximately 30 minutes in length. At the close of each interview, participants were verbally debriefed on the location and number of participants being interviewed, what the information gleaned from the interviews would be used for, and that they would be sent a copy of the final report.

Analysis

Research Design. Data derived from an investigative field study, in conjunction with current literature indications, was used in a qualitative analysis designed to better understand the prevalence and nature of homeless victimization. The analysis was performed using Grounded Theory processes. Grounded Theory uses set procedures for analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) which provide a “procedure for developing categories of information, interconnecting the categories, building a ‘story’ that connects the categories, and ending with a discursive set of theoretical propositions” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The resulting propositions provide the basis for responses to the research

questions outlined in Senate Resolution 18.

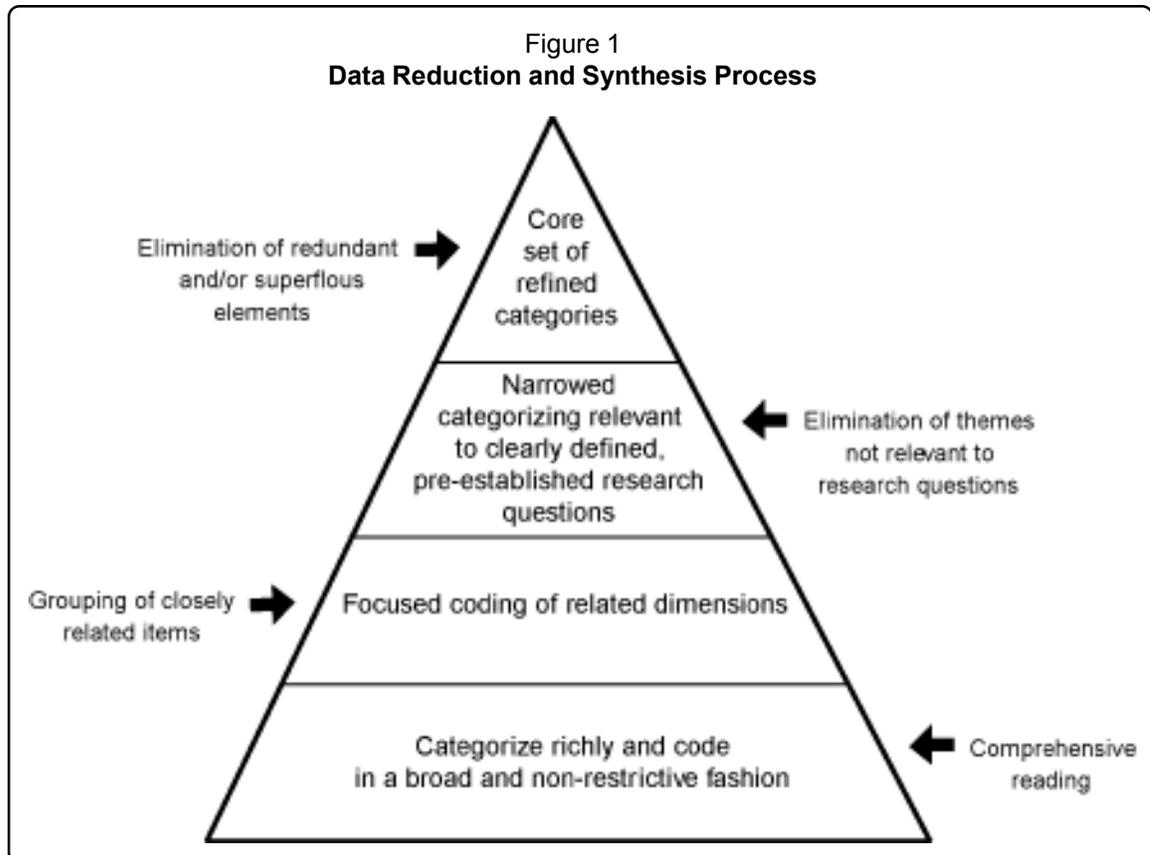
Approach. The approach used for reduction and synthesis of interview data involves a progressive focusing of data implications aimed at the formulation of a core set of refined categories of phenomena. The process begins with a comprehensive reading of all data. This is followed by categorizing and coding the data in a broad and non-restrictive fashion. A second reading allows grouping of related dimensions (closely related items). A third reading is conducted in which irrelevant themes to the research question are removed. A final reading, eliminating redundant or superfluous elements, yields a core set of refined categories. This progressive focus process is illustrated in Figure 1.

Categories of phenomena for each data group (homeless persons, advocates of homeless persons, law enforcement officers, and prosecutors) were

examined for relationships and patterns within and across those groups. Categories of phenomena represented by the data for each city (Marysville, Sacramento, Stockton, Vacaville, Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco) were examined for relationships and patterns within and across each city.

Relationships and patterns within a particular group or city provide information useful for identifying and implementing strategies for preventing crimes against homeless persons, and improving reporting, apprehension, and prosecution of those crimes which do occur, within a specific group or city. Commonalities across groups and cities increase generalizability of the results.

Research Limitations. Logistical limitations of the present study included subjectivity involved in qualitative analysis of retrospective; self-report;



anonymous data; restricted length of the investigation period; restricted geographical location of the subject pool; the use of a female researcher to interview homeless males about intimate aspects of their victimization experiences (sexual assault and sexual abuse); and prohibitive characteristics of some homeless participants (mental illness and alcohol and drug abuse).

A conceptual limitation was the inability to compare and contrast all aspects of data implications. This was due to lack of recall on the part of some homeless participants who verbally indicated they were, or appeared to be, under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol and/or suffering from a physical or mental disorder(s). Additionally, the analysis was further restricted by the inability to quantify the total number of victimizations. Accordingly, the number of victims and the number of indicated victimization(s) within a data

group or offense category (as opposed to the total number of victimizations) were analyzed.

Suggestions for future research should incorporate a wider geographical spread and a longer investigation period into the research design. Additionally, homeless individuals could be selected for participation in the study based on ability to recall, quantify, and report victimization experiences within a specified period of time in order that quantitative analysis can be performed.

Future work should be carried out using a multivariate approach to elicit possible interactions between various aspects of homeless victimization. Specifically, multiple regression analysis could be used to examine the relationship between victim characteristics and victimization. Discriminant analysis could be used to compare and contrast homeless victims with homeless non-victims.

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