



Don't Snitch: Responses to Neighbourhood Intimidation

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Executive Summary

Community-wide intimidation refers to a general atmosphere of fear, silence, and non-cooperation with the police and criminal justice system within a particular neighbourhood or community affected by crime and violence. This is distinguished in the literature from individual-level intimidation: scare tactics and threats specifically targeted at one person or one small group of people following a specific incident. While the literature on individual-level intimidation is vast, much less is known about community-wide intimidation. Despite many anecdotal reports of community-wide intimidation, there is currently very limited reliable information on the prevalence and severity of community-wide intimidation in Canadian communities and elsewhere.

In an attempt to explain the dynamics surrounding the causes of community-wide intimidation, existing studies point to a lack of informal social control in disenfranchised communities, strong messaging from the current 'snitch culture' surrounding gang activity, and gang stereotypes that portray every possible gang-involved person as disproportionately violent. Regardless of potential causes, when deciding whether or not to report an incident to police, victims and bystanders generally consider whether the expected gains of reporting (the 'pros') will outweigh the costs of reporting, including the potential for retaliation (the 'cons').

When it comes to responses to community-wide intimidation, the literature refers to a variety of general suggestions, including: community outreach and education for residents; creating avenues for safe communication between community members and police; community policing; community-based prosecution strategies; civil injunctions targeting the activities of gang-involved persons; and inter-agency cooperation at the neighbourhood level. Only a few concrete examples of these approaches are provided in the literature, primarily from the United States and the United Kingdom. Most have not been well documented or evaluated for their impacts on communities. The most documented model is the Making WAVES program from the United Kingdom, which supports victims and witnesses in a variety of ways. An evaluation of the program showed promising results and emphasized the importance of inter-agency cooperation with community members. In Canada and Ottawa more specifically, efforts have focused on education and awareness campaigns for residents, and efforts to facilitate safe communication between residents and police. These initiatives have generally not been well documented, researched or evaluated for their effects and impacts on communities.

Overall, there is a large gap in knowledge regarding community-wide intimidation of residents in vulnerable and marginalized neighbourhoods, and effective ways of addressing this concern. Further research is needed in order to understand the dynamics, prevalence, severity, and impacts of community-wide intimidation in neighbourhoods affected by crime and violence. Future attempts to address community-wide intimidation should be based on an in-depth understanding of the complexity of the issue at the local neighbourhood level, and should be evaluated for their intended and unintended effects and impacts on the community.

Finally, much of the literature on community-wide intimidation focuses solely on the challenges it creates for the functioning of the criminal justice system, particularly residents' willingness to report to and cooperate with the police. Very little attention is paid to the effects of intimidation and fear on the quality of life of residents in disenfranchised neighbourhoods. Yet for service providers, community workers, and residents themselves, quality of life issues are of primary importance. Various stakeholders touched by this issue, then, may have different definitions of what "success" looks like in attempts to address community-wide intimidation. Future research and initiatives related to addressing community-wide intimidation in neighbourhoods should therefore reflect carefully on the intended impact of the approach - what do we hope to see change? Should the focus be solely or mainly on reporting to police as a solution? Or are there other, more sustainable ways to meet resident needs and ultimately improve the quality of life of vulnerable and marginalized groups affected by community-wide intimidation?

Introduction

For a long time, research on crime reporting suggested that the more serious the offence, the more likely and willing the people involved, including victims and witnesses, would be willing to talk to and cooperate with the police (Singer, 1988). This claim has long since been challenged, with an accumulation of research showing that many victims and witnesses of serious incidents, including sexual assault, physical assault and violence involving weapons, are not likely to report the incident to police or cooperate with the justice system (Singer, 1988). One of the main reasons cited for not cooperating with the police is “fear of retaliation” – being scared of “payback” or of negative consequences if you get involved in the criminal justice process. In fact, some research suggests that the more serious the incident, the more often fear of retaliation is cited as the reason for not reporting the offence to the police (Singer, 1988). This is especially true in cases where the victim knows the person who caused them harm, like in cases of date rape or intimate partner violence (Singer, 1988). It can, however, also be true in more visible incidents where there may or may not be a close personal relationship between the victim, bystanders and/or the offender.

The literature identifies two types of intimidation:

1. **Community-wide intimidation:** “a general atmosphere of fear and non-cooperation with the criminal justice system, within a particular area or community” (Elliott, 1998, p. 103; Healey, 1995); and
2. **Individual-level intimidation:** behaviours, tactics and threats specifically targeted at one person or one small group of people in particular, typically following a specific event or incident.

Although the literature separates *community-wide intimidation* and *individual-level intimidation* into different issues, they are likely intrinsically linked in some cases, where one type of intimidation can affect and reinforce the other in order to create a climate of fear and silence (Whitman & Davis, 2007). That said, the kinds of solutions that are often used to address each type of intimidation are fairly different from one another. The vast majority of the existing literature on the topic of intimidation and fear of cooperating with the criminal justice system is focused on individual-level intimidation, and falls within a legal perspective. The literature is full of examples of legal, legislative, and witness protection measures used to reduce individual-level intimidation and increase participation in the criminal justice process, particularly following an arrest. These measures seek to ensure that a victim or other witness testifies in court, and to avoid “witness tampering” (i.e., coercing a victim or witness to withdraw or alter their testimony). These responses to individual-level intimidation following an arrest are interesting, but they are not the focus of this literature review.

This review was commissioned to summarize the existing literature on and responses to the community-wide intimidation of residents in neighbourhoods where there are visible drug trade transactions, violent incidents, and shootings, and the resulting unwillingness of residents to cooperate with the police. In Ottawa, there is anecdotal evidence that some residents are fearful of reporting details of criminal incidents to police, as a result of feared or suspected retaliation from crime-involved persons residing in close proximity (see Hoffman & Bania, 2012; Trinh, 2014). This review concentrates on the dynamics involved in community-wide intimidation, and the solutions proposed to address it.

This review has three objectives:

- 1) to summarize the current literature on the nature and dynamics of community-wide intimidation and residents' reluctance to cooperate with police (i.e., initial reporting and giving of information to police upon experiencing or witnessing an incident);
- 2) to review existing initiatives that respond to the issue of community-wide intimidation, with a particular focus on community-based initiatives; and
- 3) to raise critical questions regarding the complex dynamics of this issue, and what the measures of success could and should be regarding efforts to reduce fear and intimidation in neighbourhoods (i.e., increasing reporting to police and/or improving quality of life of residents).

The intended audience for this review includes crime prevention and community development organizations and practitioners, social service providers, law enforcement professionals, and other researchers interested in the issue of community-wide intimidation and responses to it.

Methodology

To undertake this review, the academic and 'grey' (non-academic) literature was scanned using various combinations of the following key terms: intimidation, threats, fear, neighbourhood, community, crime, criminal activity, drugs, drug dealing, drug-related, shootings, murder, gang(s), gang-related, police, reporting. Two separate online searches were conducted. The first general online search engine resulted in 12 relevant publications spanning from 1995 to 2015. A second search was conducted using the Criminal Justice Abstracts database. This search was limited to journal articles published in 2000 and onward, in order to ensure the material was from accessible scholarly publications and was current and relevant. This second search resulted in 190 journal articles that fit these criteria; after initial abstract review for relevance, 7 journal articles were selected for further use.

To get an initial glimpse of responses to this issue in the Canadian and Ottawa context, a series of informal, preliminary consultations were conducted. A scan was performed of existing community-based responses to this issue in major Canadian cities by reaching out to the *Municipal Network on Crime Prevention*. An email request for information was sent to twenty-one (21) members of the Network across the country, eliciting four (4) email responses containing examples. In Ottawa more specifically, five (5) Key Informants were contacted for a brief telephone or email conversation. As current or former community service providers in crime- and gang-affected neighbourhoods in Ottawa, these Key Informants were able to speak to some of the dynamics and responses they have encountered in the city regarding community-wide intimidation. This was a convenience sampling method – this is not a representative or an exhaustive sample. The intention was to get an initial feel for local responses to the issue in Ottawa, if any.

Findings

The literature on community-wide intimidation is quite scarce, and most of it comes from the United States and the United Kingdom. While much is known about individual-level intimidation and responses to it, little research has focused on intimidation experienced at the community-level. Furthermore, most of the studies and reports that exist on community-level intimidation focus on intimidation and lack of cooperation with police in the context of local gang-related activity.

This section presents a summary of research in this area, including a description of what is known about the causes, reactions, and prevalence of community-wide intimidation, as well as community and state level responses to this form of intimidation. Overall, it is evident that there is a lack of published knowledge in this area, and that more information is needed, particularly in relation to what has been experienced by Canadian communities in recent years. Given the lack of research and data on this topic, the findings below should be interpreted as exploratory.

Factors involved in community-wide intimidation

According to the literature on community-wide intimidation, community members may feel intimidated to report criminal or violent incidents to police as a result of a number of complex and interrelated factors. Intimidation may result from the interplay of: representations of 'snitch' culture, low community cohesion, incidents of retaliation in the community, or the presence of gangs and assumptions of violence.

Before and up to the 1980s, gang culture was closely associated with a certain 'street code' where 'snitches' were either gang rivals or peer traitors who served

as informants for the police and law enforcement (Whitman & Davis, 2007). Snitching represents a threat to gang-involved persons because it suggests support for the criminal justice system, which is aimed at diminishing the presence of illegal activities, such as profitable drug dealing. The term 'snitch' was typically reserved for someone inside the criminal lifestyle. Research suggests that there has been a cultural shift in recent decades, where 'normal' citizens (i.e., those not involved in a criminal lifestyle) are now also being referred to as 'snitches' if they cooperate with the authorities (Browning, 2014). As a result, any community member who supports law enforcement and thereby interferes with the livelihood of some community residents may be portrayed as a snitch (Woldoff & Weiss, 2010, p. 192). A National Centre for Victims of Crime survey done in the United States determined that anti-snitching messaging is disseminated by direct or indirect threats and assaults against those who report/witness an incident and by widespread campaigns directed at the community as a whole (Whitman & Davis, 2007).

Previous incidents of direct, individual-level retaliation in a community can often cause residents to feel intimidated and unwilling to cooperate with police. There is ample anecdotal evidence from police forces around the United States of such incidents occurring in various communities (O'Flaherty & Sethi, 2010). There have also been several serious and widely publicized cases in the U.S. where "homes have been firebombed and witnesses and family members were injured or killed" due to their interaction with the police. Additionally, some witnesses who report crime receive threats, which vary in seriousness, despite state/police witness assistance (Connick & Davis, 2015; Smith, 2008). These highly visible instances of retaliation send a clear anti-snitch message to the community directly affected by the incident, and beyond (Smith, 2008).

In neighbourhoods where gang activity is prominent, the anti-snitch narrative seeks to ensure community members outside of the gang adhere to the message of not supporting the criminal justice system. Since gang-involved persons typically do not outwardly proclaim their inclusion in a gang, they do so through particular gang subculture symbols and representations, and public acts such as selling drugs (Densley, 2012; Felson, 2006; Katz, 1998). Gang-involved persons may also align themselves with forms of popular culture that emphasize violence and demand respect and authority over others, such as some types of rap music. Some rap music has prominent anti-snitch messaging, which depicts a snitch as "anyone who calls the police or cooperates with criminal justice officials" (Kahn, 2007, as cited by Woldoff & Weiss, 2010, p. 188). This type of rap music emphasizes that snitches will face various consequences, including physical violence or stigmatization in the community, as a result of the failure to keep quiet (Whitman & Davis, 2007). Gang-involved persons may publicly emulate this rap culture in order to signify their status as a gang member and their perceived higher place in the community (Woldoff & Weiss, 2010).

While in some neighbourhoods there exist informal systems of social control¹, such as activities and/or groups that support community safety, anti-snitch messaging weakens informal social control because it scares and stigmatizes citizens who would typically watch out for one another and/or cooperate with local institutions (Woldoff & Weiss, 2010, p. 197). Furthermore, some residents may wish to prevent harm or arrest to fellow community members they might know personally, or avoid bringing in unwelcome negative attention to the neighbourhood (Woldoff & Weiss, 2010). As a result, residents choose to keep to themselves and to avoid unnecessary interactions in their community (Bania, 2012). This lack of informal social control opens up a niche for an alternative power system that functions through intimidation and violence (Woldoff & Weiss, 2010, p. 197). Melde & Rennison mention that “it is through intimidation that gang members perceive they can both protect themselves from potential attack and commit crimes with little fear of reprisal” (2010, p. 622).

It is believed that community members read signs of the anti-snitch narrative, and when combined with stereotypes of gangs, view persons emulating gang culture as disproportionately violent. When community members are then making decisions regarding whether or not to report an incident to the police, they may choose not to in order to lessen the prospect of future victimization, regardless of whether they receive any direct threat of harm (Melde & Rennison, 2010). In addition to concern for future harm, decisions to not report crime may also be related to fear of stigmatization in the community as a ‘snitch’, by acting as an informant against members in one’s community (Woldoff & Wiss, 2010).

Residents’ reactions to community-wide intimidation

The literature suggests that once feelings of intimidation are present in a community, members in that community will typically consider the potential gains of cooperating with the police before deciding whether to do so. Such gains will also be assessed against any potential costs for cooperating before a final decision is made. Those who choose to cooperate with the police and disregard feelings of intimidation typically believe that the potential gains for reporting will outweigh any potential (immediate or future) costs. Those who choose not to cooperate feel as though the costs associated with reporting an incident will likely be more harmful to themselves and the community, than any potential benefits that may occur (Woldoff & Weiss, 2010).

¹ Informal social control refers to the actions and reactions of individuals and groups that bring about conformity to social norms and laws, including peer and community pressure, bystander intervention in a crime, and collective responses such as citizen safety groups.

Potential gains

Potential gains of cooperating with police may include (Melde & Rennison, 2010):

- arrest of the perpetrator and their removal from the community
- access to victim services
- accurate reporting of local crime rate, and
- appropriate protection from police.

These gains are often considered in relation to (O'Flaherty & Sethi, 2010):

- perceptions of the police and of their ability to make arrests
- beliefs regarding the ability of prosecutors to win cases
- the likelihood of sentences of detention/incarceration given by the judge
- impressions about the ease or complexity of dealing with the criminal justice system, and
- the potential for negative views of the community by outsiders and public officials.

Potential costs

Potential costs (or potential forms of retaliation) for cooperation with the police may include:

- stigmatization and being ostracized from the community and/or neighbourhood (Topalli, 2005)
- verbal abuse (including threats) to oneself or family and/or friends (Elliott, 1998)
- physical violence towards oneself or family and/or friends (O'Flaherty & Sethi, 2010)
- damage to one's physical property or property owned/used by the community (Elliott, 1998), and
- denial of informal community rewards (i.e., some residents may be rewarded for remaining silent, through material goods or privileges) (Woldoff & Weiss, 2010).

Therefore, to decide whether or not to report an incident, bystanders and victims generally consider whether the expected gains of reporting will outweigh the potential costs of reporting (i.e., retaliation).

Prevalence of community-wide intimidation

Research on how common community-wide intimidation is, is fairly lacking and also mixed. This review identified articles, judicial reports, and qualitative studies containing many anecdotal examples of community-level intimidation in the U.S. Some American researchers also suggest a recent increase in gang-related intimidation through the use of social media platforms to promote anti-snitch culture and leave intimidating messages (Browning, 2014). They also claim that intimidation via social media is particularly harmful as messages remain online in a very public form and cannot easily be destroyed (Browning, 2014). Closer to home, local Key Informants reported community-wide intimidation to be a concern in some Ottawa neighbourhoods where there is a gang presence, but could not think of any reliable data or sources on this.

It is very difficult to determine the prevalence and the depth of community-wide intimidation and its effects on residents. Quantitative data on intimidation from police reports and criminal statistics is scarce, often because its collection suggests that such intimidation was unsuccessful. The very nature of intimidation means that it silences victims and bystanders from reporting crime in the first place, so these same people are not likely to report that they are being intimidated (O'Flaherty & Sethi, 2010). Other reliable measures, such as surveys, are uncommon. One article mentioned a survey by the U.S. National Centre for Victims of Crime in 2007 that revealed that in Massachusetts, almost two-thirds of 600 teens residing in high-crime neighbourhoods said: "people won't report gang crimes because they are afraid of being beaten up or killed (as cited in Smith, 2008, p. 21). This survey was not located despite many different searches for it, and no other surveys of its kind were found.

Overall, the literature suggests that gang-inspired community intimidation is a fairly pervasive issue in the U.S., but its actual prevalence and depth are unknown (Finn & Healey, 1996; Fyfe & McKay, 1999; Healey, 1995). This review revealed no information on the prevalence of community-wide intimidation in Canadian communities.

Responses to community-wide intimidation

The literature contains a variety of suggestions of general approaches to address community-wide intimidation at the local level. Many of these were also echoed by respondents from the Municipal Network for Crime Prevention and by Key Informants in Ottawa. These general strategies include:

- community outreach and education for residents;
- reducing the risk of identification of victims and witnesses;
- increasing avenues for safe communication between community members and police;
- increasing trust and confidence in the police and criminal justice system;

- increasing the visibility of police in gang-affected neighbourhoods;
- community policing;
- community-based prosecution strategies;
- civil injunctions targeting the activities of gang-involved persons; and
- inter-agency cooperation at the neighbourhood level.

We found only a few concrete examples of the implementation of these types of strategies to counter community-wide intimidation, either in the literature or through our initial consultations. The specific initiatives uncovered are presented below, along with some of the main criticisms of these approaches. The effects and effectiveness of most of these strategies on community-wide intimidation have not been well researched or documented. Evaluation efforts and results are presented when available.

Community Education on How and Why to Report

One popular approach to encourage reporting to police in vulnerable communities is public education campaigns such as “Make the Right Call” in Ottawa (see Crime Prevention Ottawa, 2010; Hoffman & Bania, 2012). This typically involves distributing a long list of telephone numbers to call for different types of incidents, such as a crime in progress (i.e., 911), versus witnessing drug activities, housing security issues, graffiti, property maintenance, or emergency maintenance. The reality is that in many cases, if a resident calls the “wrong” number for a particular issue or incident, they are not likely to get much support. These campaigns are meant to educate the public and make persons responsible for calling the “right” number for their specific concern. They are based on the belief that if residents have the correct information on who to call, they will report. Given the particular dynamics involved in community-wide intimidation, “Crime Stoppers” is also often included in public education discussions of who to call if you wish to report an incident on an anonymous basis (see Bania, 2012; Crime Prevention Ottawa, 2010; Hoffman & Bania, 2012). These campaigns are often accompanied by messaging that “every call makes a difference”, whether residents can see the impact from their call to police or not (Key Informant interview #1). They explain to residents the processes undertaken following a call to police, and the reasons why immediate police action is often not possible or visible (Key Informant interview #1; see Appendix A).

Another, more direct example of a public education campaign aimed at combatting the effects of community-wide intimidation comes from Edmonton. In 2011, partners in the local Somali community launched a series of 15 posters with provocative images and words designed to encourage residents with information about 11 unsolved homicides involving Somali victims to come forward to police (CTV News Edmonton, 2011). One of the posters reads: “‘Don't

snitch' leads to this" and shows a grieving Somali mother at her son's gravestone (see CTV News Edmonton, 2011; Appendix B).

The main critique of these types of public education campaigns is that they tend to oversimplify the complexity of the issue at hand. It is superficial to expect that most residents feeling intimidated to cooperate with criminal justice officials will decide to do so if they feel bad for the victim, and/or if they know which specific number to call for each incident they encounter (Bania, 2012; Key Informant interviews #2, #3 and #5). As the literature stipulates, the factors people weigh in terms of the potential gains versus the potential costs of reporting to police are much more complex. It is important to know what the real problem and concern is in order to develop an appropriate strategy.

Furthermore, residents and community workers affected by these dynamics call for different types of solutions. They ask for better social supports and more positive opportunities for the youth in their communities. They ask for more stability and continuity in the organizational representatives responsible for helping them address their concerns (e.g., Community Police Officers, Housing security), in order to promote relationship building and increase accountability. They ask for more and better communication with and between the local authorities in question, especially the police, housing, and municipal authorities. They also ask for more communication and transparency on the part of these local institutions as to the reasoning behind their decision-making, and more institutional accountability for tangible results and change (Bania, 2012; Key Informant interviews #1 through #5). Important considerations beyond having the "right" number to call, then, include whether residents feel they can report in confidence and without fear of retaliation or negative consequences, and whether residents feel satisfied with the responsiveness and quality of service from local authorities (Hoffman & Bania, 2012).

Community Policing / Avenues for Communication Between the Community & Police

Strengthening the ties and communication between community members and police was one of the most popular recommended strategies in the literature and consultations. The belief is that by building long-term relationships with citizens and tenant groups through continuous, frequent and respectful contact, community police officers can build trust among community members and offer accountability (Healey, 1995). Such a relationship is suspected to facilitate the reporting of crime and prevent the possibility for intimidation and incidents related to intimidation in the community. Examples of community policing strategies listed in the literature on intimidation include: establishing community policing centres in local empty apartments or store fronts; having community police officers attend neighbourhood gatherings and events; having police

officers visit the families of potential intimidators to explain laws concerning obstruction of justice; and mobile precincts to decrease response time to incidents (Healey, 1995).

Locally, our preliminary consultations revealed two specific examples of initiatives in Ottawa that included increasing avenues for communication and relationship building between community members and the police in neighbourhoods affected by intimidation. One example comes from the No Community Left Behind (NCLB) approach in South East Ottawa. NCLB is a community-based initiative that began in 2005 and that brings together practices of community development and community policing. It was originally developed specifically in response to gang violence and gang-related intimidation in a public housing community where residents were fearful and distrustful, and complaining about open drug dealing, prostitution, physical violence and coercion and intimidation by gang-involved persons. It evolved into a fairly comprehensive, multi-modal initiative operating in a variety of neighbourhoods (for a complete description of NCLB and its history, visit www.nocommunityleftbehind.ca and see Bania, 2012 p. 124-130). Within its first two years, results from annual neighbourhood surveys conducted in NCLB neighbourhoods revealed that residents' feelings of safety went up considerably, by a range of at least 17 percentage points to 33 percentage points (NCLB Newsletter, 2007).

Though it is a fairly complex initiative, residents and service providers alike felt strongly that the original successes of NCLB were largely attributable to the two Neighbourhood Police Officers assigned to the project. They had been given the permission by their superiors to focus all of their time and energy in one neighbourhood, to interact face-to-face with residents as often as possible during positive community events as well as during more difficult times (e.g., following a drug raid). Residents reported positive and productive two-way communication with their Neighbourhood Officers, and trust and reassurance that the neighbours who were causing them concerns were being monitored (Bania, 2012). Though there was pressure on the police service to institute this style of neighbourhood community policing as a long-term strategy in Ottawa neighbourhoods affected by fear and intimidation, such proposals were rejected citing it was too resource-intensive and that there was a lack of policing resources for this type of work (Bania, 2012).

One Key Informant (interview #1) described another initiative in a different Ottawa neighbourhood, where a 2-hour window was consistently included into the daily schedule of the Community House to offer residents the opportunity to drop-in and talk. During this 2-hour drop-in time, there were always Community House staff present, and resident leaders were also often available. Initially, this was instituted as an open opportunity for residents to share their thoughts and ideas with Community House representatives. However, it quickly became a safe space and time for residents to attend the Community House to call the police or housing security with an incident or concern they wished to report. Police or security officers were instructed to show up at the Community House instead of at the person's residence, which made the resident reporting the incident feel safer in speaking to authorities.

In the U.S., some States have also assigned prosecutors to specific communities so that one prosecutor has the responsibility for one case from the beginning to end. This strategy also involves matching the cultural background, knowledge and linguistic skills of prosecution officials to the neighbourhoods they serve. Again, the intention is to promote trust and accountability between residents and representatives of the justice system (Healey, 1995).

It was outside of the scope of this review to conduct a more thorough assessment of police and law enforcement initiatives in Ottawa to build and sustain relationships of trust with communities affected by intimidation. Further research into the types and the effectiveness of such initiatives would be beneficial.

Civil Gang Injunctions

Civil gang injunctions have been used in various states across the U.S. since the 1990s. They are used to prohibit selected gang members from engaging in technically lawful behaviours that are deemed to be associated with gang activity (e.g., loitering at schools, carrying pagers and riding bicycles) in order to challenge their ability to function as a profitable and successful gang member. Once a gang member receives a civil injunction for such activities (ordered by a court of law), they must refrain from participating in those activities or they will face arrest. The underlying logic is that the injunctions will curtail the gang activities that are believed to diminish residents' sense of safety by impacting gang visibility soon after the injunction is filed and enforced (Maxson, Hennigan, & Sloane, 2005).

Such injunctions have become a more popular approach to reducing community-wide intimidation by gangs in particular states, including California. An evaluation on the use of civil injunctions to decrease community-wide intimidation by gangs was conducted in 2004 in five neighbourhoods in San Bernardino, California. The evaluation found that civil injunctions did appear to result in minimalized gang presence in the neighbourhood, fewer reports of gang intimidation by residents, and less fear of confrontation with gang members immediately following the instalment of the injunction. However, the evaluation also concluded that these results appeared to last only in the short-term and that there were no significant intermediate or long-term outcomes resulting in the use of injunctions for combatting community-wide intimidation. Indeed, the evaluators concluded that the use of injunctions may only promote lasting change when paired with improvements in the services provided to neighbourhood residents and the creation of positive opportunities and alternatives for gang-involved persons (Maxson et al., 2005). Critiques have also noted that such injunctions are based in stereotypical depictions of black community members and result in the promotion of fear of particular racialized groups as they criminalize the behaviours of urban youth because of suspected criminal involvement (Muniz, 2014).

Peaceaholics (Washington, D.C.)

One of the main intervention strategies noted in the literature is “Peaceaholics”, a non-government agency that was based in an urban neighbourhood in Washington, D.C. from 2006-2010. The group received municipal grant funding to employ ex-gang members to work with current gang members in a particular neighbourhood, in order to resolve any disputes as they arose. The underlying logic was that ex-gang members who were familiar with the customs of the gang and who had pre-established relationships with gang members and community members could be trained in conflict resolution. As a result of their daily presence in the neighborhood and established trust with all residents, they would be in a position to help peacefully resolve any disagreements among gang members as they arose, instead of the incidents leading to violence in the community. Additionally, if community members felt vulnerable or intimidated by the presence of the gang, Peaceaholics staff would act as an intermediary between gang members and community members to resolve any grievances. This particular kind of conflict resolution was expected to result in a decrease in violence in the community, and a decrease in the need for intimidation of residents who would have been exposed to violent incidents (Smith, 2008).

At one point, Peaceaholics was D.C.'s most well-known violence prevention initiative, and received much media attention. However, the organization was marred in controversy following accusations that its two co-founders were involved in the misuse of grant funds. Their municipal funding was terminated in 2010 and in 2014, leaders of the group were found guilty of misusing public funds and were ordered to pay restitution (Alexander, 2014). No information was found regarding the effectiveness or impact of the Peaceaholics project.

Making WAVES (Liverpool, England)

The other strategy discussed in the literature is "Making WAVES", which is the most comprehensive and well-documented approach to the issue identified through this search. It was first established as a pilot project in the Everton neighbourhood of Liverpool, England in 2007. The Making WAVES project is based in the community and run by community members, and relies heavily on municipal resources including social services and housing, and collaboration from local law enforcement. In this sense, it appears to be a hybrid community-municipal strategy (Quigg, Warren, Hungerford, Hughes, & Furness, 2010).

Making WAVES seeks to reduce intimidation and increase crime reporting by encouraging intimidated witnesses to report crime and by facilitating their access to support services and interaction with criminal justice officials. To accomplish this, the project funds a local coordinator within the community, with whom victims or witnesses can meet with to discuss an incident. After understanding the particular situation of the victim or witness, the coordinator provides an honest and frank assessment of the process the individual may be subject to if they report the crime to criminal justice officials, as well as the particular services that could be available to them. The decision to report is then left with the individual. The coordinator assists the individual in accessing the particular services they may need (from various agencies), regardless of whether they choose to involve law enforcement or not. Within this arrangement, the coordinator is also able, with the consent of the victim/witness, to pass on information to the police while keeping the person's identity confidential (Quigg et al., 2010). A visual depiction of the Making WAVES process is depicted below.

Figure 1: The Making WAVES process

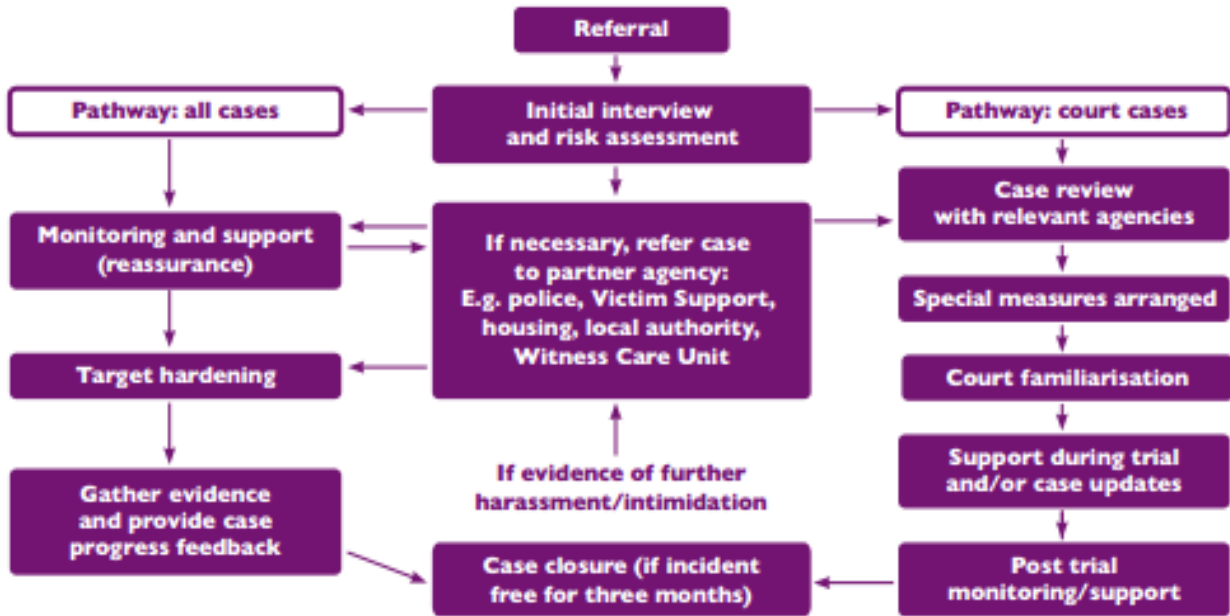


Figure extracted from Quigg et al. (2010)

A case example provided by the Making WAVES staff for dealing with community-wide intimidation by gangs is also provided in the box below.

Box 6: Multi-agency response to tackling gang-related crime case study

Case description: A resident self-referred themselves to Making WAVES after witnessing a gang-related crime; they were reluctant to report it directly to the police because of the high risk of reprisal attacks and intimidation. The victim lived in an area that was well known for serious drug dealing and gang-related crime; shootings had also been known to happen in the area. The local community had a distrust of the police as they believed the offenders were aware of who had been reporting crimes.

Key actions taken: The Making WAVES co-ordinator assured the witness of the confidentiality regarding their identity and provided them with a secure environment in which to talk. The co-ordinator, with permission from the witness, passed on intelligence regarding criminal activity occurring in the neighbourhood. The co-ordinator contacted agencies in the community to facilitate a multi-agency response to the case.

Agencies involved: Police, housing association, local authority, community justice court, Fire and Rescue Service, Victim Support.

Outcomes: The police organised an undercover operation acting upon the intelligence brought forward leading to a senior gang member being arrested and charged. A multi-agency 'walkabout' was implemented on the estate, allowing residents to report issues of concern and enable environmental problems (e.g. litter and graffiti) to be addressed. The housing association began holding resident and tenant surgeries (meetings) allowing the local community to pass on information or raise issues of concern.

"We knew someone was doing something, because we did not know where to go for information or anything [before]" Case witness.

Figure extracted from Quigg et al. (2010)

Since the original pilot project in 2007, five additional sites around Liverpool have been implemented. The project was evaluated in 2010 and was found to have led to improvements in the reporting of crime, greater multi-agency support for victims, and an overall reduction in levels of intimidation experienced and reported by local community members (i.e., a reduction of intimidation levels from 55% to 22%). The evaluation also concluded that the success of the project was dependent on the implementation of key project elements, including the employment of a single, local project coordinator in a neutral location for victims/witnesses to report crimes and access support, and the creation and maintenance of a multi-agency project steering group (Quigg et al., 2010).

Conclusions

Main findings

The literature on community-wide intimidation of residents and the resulting unwillingness to cooperate with the police in neighbourhoods where there is visible crime and violence is very limited. The existing literature identifies a number of factors at play in the dynamics surrounding community-wide intimidation, particularly as it relates to gang activity. These factors include the relatively recent emergence of snitch culture surrounding gang activity, where anyone who calls the police or cooperates with the justice system will be labelled a 'snitch' and subject to consequences, including physical violence or stigmatization in the community. Other inter-related factors involve a lack of informal social control that opens up the space for an alternative power system that functions through intimidation and violence, and stereotypical depictions of gang members that paint every gang-involved person as disproportionately violent. When deciding whether or not to report an incident, bystanders and victims generally consider whether the expected gains of reporting (the 'pros') will outweigh the costs of reporting, including the potential for retaliation (the 'cons').

It is very difficult to determine the prevalence and the severity of community-wide intimidation and its effects. The literature reviewed suggests that this type of intimidation is fairly pervasive in the U.S. and the United Kingdom, but its actual prevalence and depth are unknown. Aside from a handful of media news articles from different cities, this review found no information on the prevalence of community-wide intimidation in Canadian communities.

When it comes to responses to community-wide intimidation in neighbourhoods affected by crime and violence, the literature contains a variety of general suggestions, including: community outreach and education; creating avenues for safe communication between community members and police; community

policing; community-based prosecution strategies; civil injunctions targeting the activities of gang-involved persons; and inter-agency cooperation at the neighbourhood level. Only a few concrete examples of these approaches are provided in the literature. Most have not been well documented or evaluated for their impacts (both intended and unintended) on communities, or have given rise to critiques and concerns. The most elaborate model we uncovered is the Making WAVES program from the United Kingdom, which combines a number of suggested strategies around supporting victims and witnesses. An evaluation of the program showed promising results and emphasized the importance of inter-agency cooperation.

Our very preliminary consultations with crime prevention practitioners and service providers in Canada and Ottawa identified a few concrete examples of initiatives that have been implemented at the local level. These include specific education and awareness campaigns targeted at residents, and efforts to facilitate safe communication between residents and police. These initiatives have not been well researched or evaluated for their effects and impacts on communities.

Overall, there is a large gap in knowledge regarding community-wide intimidation of residents in vulnerable and marginalized neighbourhoods, and effective ways of addressing this concern.

Future considerations

The dynamics, prevalence, severity, and impacts of community-wide intimidation in neighbourhoods affected by crime and violence are not well known. Although the literature separates community-wide intimidation and individual-level intimidation into different issues, it is worth exploring the extent to which one type of intimidation can affect and reinforce the other to create a climate of silence and fear. Furthermore, other factors that contribute to community-wide intimidation are complex, and may not be the same in every neighbourhood. Neither is the relationship between the prevalence and severity of intimidation and the potential or readiness for initiating and implementing a response. Is there a point when residents feel comfortable tackling issues of intimidation in their neighbourhood? What kinds of factors play into that readiness? These issues could benefit from more in-depth study.

Furthermore, much of the literature in this area focuses solely on the dynamics of intimidation in relation to the functioning of the criminal justice system, particularly residents' willingness to report to and cooperate with the police. Very little attention is paid to the effects of intimidation and fear on the quality of life of residents in such neighbourhoods. For social service providers and community workers on the ground, the wellbeing of residents is of primary

concern, not their willingness to cooperate with police (Key Informant interviews #1 through #5). When approached to engage in community education and mobilization efforts around the issue of intimidation and reporting to police (e.g., “Make the Right Call” campaigns), residents themselves most often prefer to talk about quality of life issues. This includes the need for better access to a variety of services, including mental health supports and meaningful opportunities for youth (Key Informant interviews #3 through #5). In other words, the various stakeholders involved in this issue can have very different definitions of what “success” looks like in addressing what they perceive as the problem related to intimidation.

Any future research or initiative related to addressing community-wide intimidation in neighbourhoods should reflect carefully on, and be explicit about, the intended impact of the approach. What are the desired longer-term outcomes? What do we hope to see change? What structures, processes and activities must be in place to get there? As one Key Informant put it: “Who are we really trying to help? If it is in fact vulnerable and intimidated residents, maybe the focus shouldn’t be so much on reporting to police and the justice system as a solution” (Key Informant interview #2). Although attention is paid in the literature to improving relationships between residents, law enforcement and service providers, very little focus is placed on equitable resource distribution and on the quality of the services provided by these organizations. In addition to educating residents on how to better access and navigate systems, focus should also be placed on more responsive systems, procedures and processes that better accommodate resident needs and ultimately improve the quality of life of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

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Appendix A

My call makes a difference

REPORTING CRIME MAKES MY COMMUNITY SAFER

This campaign was developed through a partnership between
Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre,
Ottawa Community Housing, and the Ottawa Police Service.



OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE
SERVICE DE POLICE D'OTTAWA
*Working together for a safer community
La sécurité de notre communauté, un travail d'équipe*

WHAT WE HEAR PEOPLE SAY

“No one else calls, so why should I?”

“Nothing happened”

“Nothing will change”

“No one came”

“Nothing was done”

“They arrived 2 hours later”

“They already know”

“People will know it was
me that called”

EVERY CALL HELPS BUILD A SOLUTION

Every call:

- ◆ Shows that there is a problem
- ◆ Is counted
- ◆ Is a critical step in helping to change a problem
- ◆ Is a critical step in building a case to make change
- ◆ Helps convince others that there is a problem
- ◆ Reminds others that there is a problem

REMEMBER

You can ask that Police/Security do not come to your door when you call.
You can ask that they call you if they need more information.

Appendix B

Low resolution image from:

CTV Edmonton News (2011). *Local Somali Community Makes Push for Information on Unsolved Murders*. Published July 5, 2011. Retrieved from <http://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/local-somali-community-makes-the-push-for-information-on-unsolved-murders-1.666162>



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