CRJS 5020 – Honours Project

Availability and Accessibility of Community Based Services for Family Violence Victims: A

Comparative Case Study of Trochu, Alberta and Calgary, Alberta

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Abstract

Using a comparison case study method, the goal of this undergraduate honours project was to compile a resource inventory of the community based services for victims of family violence specific to a Southern Alberta rural town to those in an urban area. This topic is important to examine because rates of family violence are higher among rural populations than in urban areas (Statistics Canada, 2016, p. 43; Northcott, 2011, p. 10). Due to the unique nature of family violence criminality and victimization, victims require additional supports beyond those provided by the criminal justice system. Community based agencies offer various resources that may be used in helping individuals cope with, address, and/or escape situations involving family violence. The resource inventory includes and compares the community based services available to victims of family violence in the rural community of Trochu, Alberta, to those available in the urban center of Calgary, Alberta. In short, while there was no difference in the community based services available to family violence victims, differences were in the accessibility of community services were apparent in terms of: geography and transportation options; diversity of services; and the technology used by the agencies.

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This paper is the basis for an undergraduate honours project investigating the community

based resources available to victims of family violence in the rural community of Trochu,

Alberta to the resources available in the urban area of Calgary, Alberta. Utilizing a comparative

case study method, my objective was to identify what disparities exist, if any, in the availability

and accessibility of resources for persons victimized by family violence residing in Trochu,

Alberta as compared to Calgary, Alberta.

Focus

This project will compare the community based resources currently available to victims

of family violence in the rural community of Trochu, Alberta to those available in the urban

center of Calgary, Alberta.

There is a great deal of variation across disciplines and institutions in how rural is

defined. This paper will rely on the Statistics Canada (2012c) definition of rural as "all territory

lying outside populations centres," such that all of Canada is either a 'rural area' or a 'population

centre.' The term 'population centre' is defined as an "area with a population of at least 1,000

and no fewer than 400 persons per square kilometre… [and] replaces the term 'urban area'"

(Statistics Canada, 2012b). Statistics Canada (2012a) classifies Calgary, Alberta as a census

metropolitan area, which is defined as "one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a

population centre (known as the core)… [with] a population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000

or more must live in the core" (p. 90). Trochu, Alberta is a 'rural area' within the meaning of the

above definition due to its population density of less than 400 per kilometer (Statistics Canada,

2013b).

Trochu, Alberta community profile. Trochu, the rural community selected for this project, is "located in South Central Alberta on Highway 21 … 40 minutes straight East of Olds" (Kletke, n.d., para. 3) and is enclosed by the municipal district of Kneehill County. At the time of the 2011 Census, Trochu had a population of 1,072 – approximately one-fifth of which were recent (within the preceding five years) immigrants from the Philippines (Statistics Canada, 2013b). While no official statistics were available with regards to family violence within the community, according to the Town of Trochu's website, the town boasts a generally low crime rate (Kletke, n.d. para. 2), which is true of rural areas in general (Francisco & Chenier, 2007, p. 1).

Some amenities within the community include: a newly built school serving kindergarten to grade 12, and community facilities such as the Trochu Arboretum, an arena and multiple churches, and a golf course featuring the world's largest golf tee (Kletke, n.d. para. 2). Trochu receives law enforcement services from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachment in the neighbouring town of Three Hills, Alberta which is located approximately 15 kilometers to the south. The nearest hospital is also located in Three Hills, though Trochu does have a medical clinic with lab services and an assisted living facility. There is no public transit system and Greyhound ceased to provide transportation services to Kneehill county some years ago.

Calgary, Alberta community profile. Calgary, the urban centre that will serve as a comparison to Trochu, Alberta for the purposes of this case study, is located in Southern Alberta. According to the City of Calgary's (n.d.) website, it is the third largest municipality in Canada, with a population of over 1.2 million – 28% of which are members of visible minority groups (para. 1). A Statistics Canada (2016) table demonstrates that in 2014, Calgary had a family

violence rate of 206.0 per 100,000 of the population – slightly higher than the average total of 191.4 for all CMAs.

The City of Calgary contains all the typical amenities that would be expected of an urban centre its size; including parks and green spaces, community recreational facilities, schools and post-secondary institutions etc. The Calgary Police Service (CPS) is administered by the city through district offices and community stations located throughout the city. Residents of Calgary have full access to health services, with many health facilities and hospitals. There are many options for transportation in Calgary, including a public transit system, multiple taxi services, and ride-sharing agencies.

Rationale and Significance

Depending on how rural is defined, family violence rates are reported as anywhere from two to four times higher among rural populations than is found for urban populations in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016, p. 43; Northcott, 2011, p. 10). Due to government policies, we should expect resources provided by the government such as law enforcement and health services to be consistent no matter where an individual resides. However, the delivery of community based resources, also referred to as "human, social, [or] welfare services" (Cook, Alford, Uhrich & Conway, 2015, p. 3), is not regulated in the same way. Community based services fulfill important roles in in helping individuals cope with and address, or escape situations involving family violence. Thus, it is critical that individuals who reside in rural areas have access to the same range and quality of social supports as their urban dwelling counterparts enjoy.

While urban centers have a great number of easily accessible community services for a wide assortment of social disorders, rural communities are unable to sustain the same quantity of services locally, and so, will necessarily be required to seek resources outside of their

communities. For example, some agencies operate out of a centralized office that serves several small communities nearby, and thus a personal mode of transportation may be required to access the services offered by such an agency. For this reason, I make a distinction between availability of services: wherein the program or service is currently in operation and is open to the relevant population; and accessibility: as a measure of whether an individual is able to use the resource (McKillip, 1998). I anticipate that while the availability of community based resources will be similar for family violence victims in both Trochu, Alberta and Calgary, Alberta, the relative isolation of Trochu may impose additional barriers to accessing services that will not be reflected in the data collected for Calgary, Alberta.

The case of Trochu, Alberta was selected as the rural community used for this project because the primary investigator was born to residents of this community and identified as a member of this community until the age of majority. Familiarity with the community of Trochu saved time and resources, and knowledge of the community aided in the interpretation of findings for this case study. Calgary, Alberta serves as an appropriate comparative case to Trochu due to its the success of its specialized domestic violence court in "holding offenders more accountable and improving safety for victims" (Tutty & Koshan, 2013, p. 731) through both an expedited court process and integration with community resources. As safety for victims is a stated mandate of the specialized domestic violence court system, I would infer that a full range of community based services are being provided to family violence victims in Calgary as a consequence and compliment to the system.

Additionally, both of these communities have an online directory of community services – the Kneehill Community Services Directory and Calgary Community Services Guide respectively. These directories made for a simple and easily comparable starting point in

examining the very different cases of Trochu, Alberta and Calgary, Alberta, while allowing the

for a narrow scope of inquiry.

Theoretical Framework

Family Violence

Canada's Department of Justice (2015) broadly defines family violence as any situation where an individual employs "abusive behaviour to control and/or harm a member of their family, or someone with whom they have an intimate relationship" (What is Family Violence?, para. 1). In this context, 'family' can mean individuals belonging to an immediate family unit (parents and children, siblings) or an extended family unit (grandparents, cousins, aunts etc.), as well as dating partners. Thus, child abuse, elder abuse and intimate partner violence (also known as spousal abuse) are all types of family violence. As well, the term 'domestic violence' is sometimes used interchangeably with 'family violence' and elsewhere limited to mean abuse between intimate partner relationships only. Within this paper, both 'domestic violence' and 'family violence' will be used synonymously and in adherence to the above definition.

The actual mechanism of family violence is another way to categorize violent behaviour within a family setting. The four most widely recognized forms of family violence or abuse are physical, sexual, emotional (or psychological) and financial (Department of Justice, 2015, Forms and types of violence, para. 1) though some organizations – such as the Calgary Emergency Women's Shelter (2009) distinguish other elements of abusive relationships, intimidation, isolation and spiritual abuse in particular, as additional forms of domestic abuse (pp. 10-11), though these could arguably be placed within the aforementioned categories.

Violence and abuse, when intentionally committed – or threatened – by one individual against another, is unarguably criminal. While the *Criminal Code of Canada* (1985) does not contain a general statute naming domestic violence or intimate partner violence or family violence by any other name as a crime; acts committed within a violent family setting will

usually correspond with a criminal offence – for example, ss. 271-273 (sexual assault) and s. 264.1 (uttering threats). Objectively, this makes sense. The act of sexual assault – as forced sex or sex under the threat of force – is no less criminal when committed by members of a family unit then when the parties to the offence are strangers, so there is no need to have separate provisions for family violence for these types of offences.

However, some significant problems arise from limiting our understanding of family violence to incidents for which the perpetrator can be charged with a *Criminal Code* offense. Certain types of abusive behaviour, specifically emotional or psychological abuse, is minimalized. It is important to note that, despite the heightened level of attention paid to physical and sexual abuse by both researchers and the justice system, Straus & Sweet's (1992) research comparing the effects of both physical and psychological abuse on victims of intimate partner violence, revealed that the latter tends to have a longer-lasting, more harmful impact on the victim (as cited in Momirov & Duffy, 2011, p. 30). The circumstances where a criminal charge can be laid in terms of this form of abuse are limited to stalking behaviour or criminal harassment under s. 264(1) and uttering threats under s. 264.1 (1). The Department of Justice (2016) also identifies mischief (s. 430) as a potential charge for emotional abuse ("Federal legislation addressing family violence in Canada," para. 4), but under the *Criminal Code* definition of this offense, 'mischief' is limited to wilful destruction, damage, or interference with property (s. 430(1)). Missing is an offense for perpetrators who torment and control their victims with language. And the 'hate speech' law under s. 391(1) doesn't fit, as 'public incitement of hatred' doesn't fit well with family violence for a couple reasons; first, it rarely occurs in a public venue and second, it is generally directed against a specific individual, and not a group. Some recognized forms of financial abuse, such as an abuser exercising unreasonable control

over the family income, are also not represented by a *Criminal Code* statute.

 Physical and sexual abuse are, in a sense, more objective than financial and emotional abuse; directly translating to offences found within the *Criminal Code* and far more likely to leave direct evidence (for example, a weapon or samples from a rape kit) that can be used to prosecute an accused person. A victim of sexual or physical violence is also far more likely to require medical attention following an episode of abuse. Momirov & Duffy (2011) point out that, comparatively, emotional or psychological abuse is far more subjective, and thus difficult for authorities to identify (p. 28). Financial abuse is similarly subtle. Likely due to the aforementioned reasons, the Calgary Police Service's (2014) annual report lumps all non-*Criminal Code* offences reported into a category labelled "Information & Standbys," which represent more than 83% of all domestic violence incidents (p. 20). This statistic is fairly consistent with Burczycka's (2016) finding that Canadians report emotional or financial abuse by a current or former intimate partner at a rate that is more than three times greater than physical or sexual abuse (pp. 3-4).

Victims of Family Violence

 As discussed above, family violence is a unique category of crime presenting additional challenges to all facets of the criminal justice system and other stakeholders, including community based agencies. A family violence victim, like the victim of any crime, is anyone who has been 'injured, harmed or killed as a consequence…" of family violence (Pierson & Thomas, 2010, p. 535). Due to the nature of victimization, researchers Hannem & Leonardi (2014) believe that 'family-victims' require "unique, additional considerations in light of the complexity of the family dynamic and the kinship relationship between the victim and offender" (p. 5). Part of the reason for this is that the bonds between those in a familial relationship

inherently make the victim more vulnerable to repeat victimization. Additionally, family-victims may be in a position where they wish or are required to continue a relationship with their abuser; which Hannem & Leonardi note is fairly unique to this category of crime. Though outside the scope of this project to discuss in detail, the movement towards raising awareness of family violence which began in the late 80's resulted in changes in policy and the criminal justice response to family violence – including specialized domestic violence courts and police domestic violence response units – that much improved the experience of family violence victims within the criminal justice process (Riedel & Walsh, 2011, p. 147).

Community Based Services

Community based services, also referred as human services, welfare services, or social services by Cook, Alford, Uhrich & Conway (2015), can be defined as "any programs and services intended to enhance people's lives, development, and well-being" (p. 3). They distinguish between these and "informal resources, including neighbours, friends, and family … [as well as] church and civic memberships, reflecting long-term relationships" (p. 3) which an individual in crisis may also reach out to for assistance.

As individual circumstances vary widely, there is no particular formula for what community based services are crucial to the victims of family violence. Anything from food banks to shelters to peer support groups might fall under the umbrella of community based services for family violence victims. For this reason, I chose to limit my scope of investigation for this project to those programs and services that are identified within the Calgary Community Services Guide and the Kneehill Community Services Directory as being for victims of:

- 'family violence,'
- 'family abuse,'

- 'domestic violence,'

- 'domestic abuse,'

- 'spousal violence,'

- 'spousal abuse,'

- 'intimate partner violence,'

- 'elder abuse,' and

- 'child abuse,'

by using these keywords when searching the aforementioned documents.

Literature Review

Overview of Family Violence in Canada

Overall, family violence accounted for approximately one-quarter of all police-reported violent crime in Canada in 2014, according Canada's most recent report on the issue (Ibrahim, 2016a, p. 21). This statistic is slightly higher among both children and youth (under 17 years of age) as well as senior (65 years and older) victims of violent crime; wherein a family member was the perpetrator of approximately one-third of violent crimes (Ibrahim & Karam, 2016, p. 25; Ibrahim, 2016b, p. 27). Interestingly, while rates of violent victimization are, in general, highest among individuals 15-30 years of age (Perreault, 2015, p. 12), violent victimization by a family member is highest for the 25-40 age group (Statistics Canada, 2016, p. 38). In terms of gender, Ibrahim (2016a) reported that nearly 70% of victims in cases of family violence are female, the majority of which are victimized by a current or past spouse or intimate partner (p. 21). Women experience violent victimization by a past or current partner at a rate three times higher than that of men (p. 21). Comparatively, men are more likely than women to have been abused by a parent or an extended family member (24% and 18% respectively, compared to 15% and 11% for women) (p. 21).

Ibrahim (2016a) mentions that the family violence statistics disseminated within Statistics Canada's yearly statistical profile on the topic include only police-reported *Criminal Code* offences considered to be violent, such as "uttering threats and physical and sexual violence [and] homicide" (p. 21). Excluded are other types of abuse which the police consider to be non-violent or for which there exists no *Criminal Code* offence. This is problematic, given that the forms of family violence are far more diverse forms than is fitting of this list, and we are thus missing the full picture as to the extent of family violence in Canada. Many researchers have

pointed out that further research in the area of familial victimization is needed (Hannem &

Leonardi, 2014, p. 12; Momirov & Duffy, 2011, p. 12). And, as with all types of crime, there

will be cases of family violence that, for various reasons, have not been reported to the police.

One of the most reported reasons for failing to report victimization is that the nature of the crime

is "a private or personal matter" (Perreault, 2015, p. 26). As the very nature of family violence is

inherently more 'private or personal' than violence committed by an acquaintance or stranger, its

associated dark figure is likely greater. This proposition is difficult to test for family violence in

general, as certain vulnerable groups (children and dependants) are hard to reach. However, self-

report statistics from the 2014 General Social Survey reveal that, compared to the average

reporting of 31% (Perreault, 2015, p. 23), spousal abuse victims were 1% less likely to report

abuse to the police (Burczycka, 2016, p. 3). Further confounding of police-reported data, is

Burczycka's (2016) finding that men and women are equally likely to report having experienced

violence at the hands of a current or former intimate partner – though it should be noted that

women tended to experience more severe forms of violence (p. 3). Men were also 22% more

likely to indicate that they had failed to report spousal abuse (p. 3). These findings help to shed

some light on the 'dark figure' of family violence.

Family Violence in Rural Areas

Statistics Canada does not release statistics on the prevalence of family violence in rural

areas as compared to urban areas. However, the 2014 statistical profile on family violence did

report that the combined rate of family violence for all census metropolitan areas (CMAs) was

191.4 per 100,000 of the population, whereas the total for all non-CMAs was 365.3, with 243.1

being the overall average rate in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016, p. 43). While this statistic does

give us some insight into rural vs urban family violence rates, it is imperfect in that the 'non-

CMA' category also contains data concerning areas that would not be considered rural. In a somewhat dated study, Northcott's (2011) analysis of data from the Incident-based Uniform Crime Report (UCR2) demonstrated that between 2006-2008, domestic violence rates in rural areas were three to four times greater than the rates found in urban areas (p. 10). It is important to note that the definition of rural used in Northcott's study (communities with a population of less than 5000) differs from Statistics Canada's definition of rural. In an even older analysis of UCR2 data from 2005, Francisco & Chenier (2007) demonstrated that the "proportion of violent crime committed by family members was highest in rural areas (38%)" (p. 5) compared to just 29% in the rest of Canada (p. 5).

There are many theories as to why family violence rates are consistently higher in rural areas and why victims of family violence are more apt to stay in violence situations. Northcott (2011) attributes the phenomena as a consequence of "the culture of self-sufficiency, which leads to hesitation in seeking help; community denial and victim blaming, which are common in smaller communities; and geographical remoteness, which leads to difficulties in seeking services" (p. 13). Wendt & Hornosty (2010) reach a similar conclusion; but add that individuals who lead a rural lifestyle are inherently more connected to their community (both the land and people) simply because they share those connections with fewer others, and thus less willing to leave it (p. 57). McLaughlin & Church (1992) credited the conservative ideologies of rural communities as the primary reason for their finding that rural women stay in abusive relationships five to eight times longer than urban dwelling women (as cited in McCallum & Lauzon, 2005, p. 132). Generally, the difference seems to be a question of culture.

Community Based Services for Victims of Family Violence

Hannem & Leonardi's (2014) study based in Ontario revealed significantly fewer community based resources for 'family-victims' (a demographic that includes both family violence victims and persons who experience indirect victimization by a family member). They consider this to be problematic, especially given that a large proportion of serious crimes are committed against family members, pointing out that, despite awareness of this among service providers, services are typically orientated for victims of stranger-perpetrated crime (p. 6). Further, family-victims who wish to continue their relationship with the offender may face additional barriers in accessing services, as this decision attracts stigma from both service providers and the members of the community (p. 6). Creation of specialized domestic violence courts and other major changes in criminal justice policy in the early 1990's heightened awareness of family violence and asserted the phenomena as a serious form of crime in the eyes of the public and agents of the criminal justice system. However, Hannem & Leonardi argue that these new policies advocating swift, punitive measures for domestic violence are misapplied in some cases; the complexity of familial relationships necessitates complex responses, rather than a blanket solution (p. 11). Finally, they are critical of a lack of services specifically for family-victims and the families of offenders, concluding that their study has identified 'clear gaps' in services in Ontario (p. 13).

Shelters are identified as one of the most important resources for family violence victims, as they provide an immediate solution when safety is a concern within the home (Tutty & Rothery, 2002). In fact, Beattie & Hutchins' (2015) snapshot of shelters that gathered data for April 16, 2014 found that 78% of individuals admitted to shelters indicated that abuse was their primary reason for using the facility (One in four women residents had sought shelter at the

facility before, para. 1). The majority of shelters in Canada are considered "first-stage" (also

referred to as 'emergency or crisis shelters) in that they are meant to house a displaced individual

for a short-span of time (Tutty & Rothery, 2002, p. 25). But shelters often serve a wider function

than simply providing housing to displaced individuals. Shelters may also support their clients

with: "safety and protection planning (90% of shelters), transportation services (87%), advocacy

on behalf of women (86%), housing referrals (85%), and individual short-term counselling

(85%)" (Beattie & Hutchins, 2015, Transition homes and emergency shelters are the primary

providers of shelter, para. 6). The women interviewed for Tutty & Rothery's (2002) study

identified the emotional support received from shelter staff and other residents during their crisis,

the safe atmosphere of the shelter, the availability of child support programming, and access to

information regarding other community agencies as the most beneficial elements of their stay at

the shelter (p. 33).

Access to Community Services in Rural Canada

There is recognition among both researchers and social service practitioners that access to

services is often limited in rural areas. A report examining community resources available to

victimized family members in Ontario conducted by Hannem & Leonardi (2014) found that

"larger municipalities are better resourced and have a larger number of services than smaller

communities" (p. 19). Within Alberta, a recent framework released by the Government of

Alberta (2013) acknowledged that community resources tend to be underserved, especially in

rural areas (p. 26). The authors of this report propose that prevention and response efforts at the

local level are more effective, and advocate for increased support for such groups operating in

rural and remote communities (p. 26).

McCallum & Lauzon (2005) propose that it is a combination of geographical, economic, and ideological factors that result in a deficiency of community based services in rural areas (p. 131). While they make a case that the health care system is often the best situated to respond where services are needed but not available in rural areas, they also find that this is often a poor solution as health care workers don't always have the necessary knowledge or resources for intervening in situations involving domestic violence (p. 131). The women interviewed for McCallum & Lauzon's (2005) study identified the relative isolation of their rural lifestyles and conservative values as much of the reason that they struggled to receive help in their communities (pp. 132-133). The women explained that the close-knit nature of their communities meant a lack of privacy – as service providers often knew the victims and their families outside of the help-seeking context and may have even heard about the abusive situation as a rumour circulating within the community (p. 133). This could foreseeably have a shaming effect on the individual, discouraging them from reaching out to others for help in the future.

Schmidt (2005) identifies visibility, accessibility, professional ethics and public scrutiny as challenges faced by community service workers in rural communities (p. 18). He explains visibility in two respects; first, clients who access services available in rural communities may be at a heightened risk of stigmatization by other members of the community. Similarly, living in a rural community means there is a greater likelihood that clients will be personally acquainted with the worker and familiar with their lifestyle, which has the potential to interfere with their ability to deliver professional services. Additionally, those aspects of the worker's personal life may then be accessible to members of the community and potential clients – potentially inviting a violation of professional boundaries. Lastly, Schmidt mentions the pressures of public scrutiny that a worker might experience as a result of the decisions made in their case – as their

professional opinions may evaluated by the community members based on the worker's standing in and engagement with the community, rather than their abilities as a professional. Ginter's (2005) article from the same volume raises very similar concerns regarding social work practice in another small community.

Through interviews with Homefront caseworkers and other stakeholders in Calgary's specialized domestic violence court, Tutty, Koshan, Jesso, Ogden, & Warrell (2011) identified barriers to treatment for rural clients served by the court. One community worker noted that "the rural folks who live an hour and a half outside of Calgary" often struggle to access treatment as certain groups may only meet once per week, which could interfere with an individual's work or other commitments (p. 64). Another community worker seconded this in stating "[a] lot of rural areas don't have access to specialized courts and specialized treatment personal" (p. 101) as they simply are not able to take part in the court process. It is acknowledged repeatedly by the respondents that the domestic violence court process, though tailored specifically to the needs of victims and perpetrators of family violence, is still often very stressful for clients. The additional barriers associated with travel to both the court dates and treatment programs (especially if one has limited or no access to personal transportation) could foreseeably increase the strain on rural individuals accessing these services.

Methodology

The objective of this project was to determine whether there exist inconsistencies in the availability and accessibility of community based services for family violence victims in the rural community of Trochu, Alberta and the urban area of Calgary, Alberta. In order to limit the scope of this project, saving time and resources, the Kneehill Community Services Directory and Calgary Community Services Guide served as the primary investigative tools and starting point for each case. Additional information on the selected agencies was collected through their website and by contacting them over the phone. A resource inventory was utilized as an organizational tool for the information collected. Analysis of the data collected was qualitative, relying on the resource inventory and additional information noted through the data collection process.

Past Methodologies Used When Exploring Access to Community Services

Previous studies reveal, unsurprisingly, that the easiest way of collecting information about the experience of rural dwelling individuals and their ability to access the support services they need, is simply to ask the parties involved. Thus, many past studies on this topic have utilized an interview process to collect information regarding the delivery and effectiveness of community services; usually focusing on wither the perceptions of the clients or the service providers. Hannem & Leonardi's (2014) study examining the needs of family-victims within the criminal justice system used a structured interview format in order to collect data from service agencies and experts in the field of family violence and victimization, and semi-structured interviews with victimized family members in order to collect data (p. 14). Experts and agencies were chosen for participation based on their knowledge and practices, position in the community, and credibility as assessed by the Canadian Families and Corrections Network's Board of

Directors and the interviewer (pp. 14-15). Tutty, Koshan, Jesso, Ogden, & Warrell (2011) evaluated the success of the early specialized domestic court in Calgary, including its ability to coordinate with community based services, through interviews with criminal justice and community service professionals. Ginter's (2005) study utilized a semi-structured interview format to identify issues faced by rural victims of family violence taking part in peer support groups in their home community. Also accomplishing the feat of direct consultation with interested parties, Eastman, Bunch, Hamilton, & Carawan (2007) collected data about rural service delivery using self-administered surveys.

Case Study Approach

While interviews with service providers or clients, as in the above studies, would have revealed greater detail about the delivery of community based services to family violence victims in Trochu, Alberta, such an undertaking was outside the means available for this undergraduate honours project. Instead, I approached the case from a hypothetical standpoint; searching for community based resources from the perspective of individuals living in Trochu, Alberta. Further, the case study method is appropriate for examining issues where "the available literature or existing knowledge base is poor" (Yin, 1998, p. 236).

The case study method has the advantage of being very flexible, in that it is acceptable to use different techniques for collecting data and to use different types of data when conducting an analysis (Yin, 1998, p. 233). This project underwent much reformulating as it progressed; which is generally acceptable and even necessary when using case study methodology or other qualitative methods.

Procedure. I began this comparative case study by identifying key terms related to family violence that are widely used in the literature. While the terms are not synonymous, the phenomena they describe is closely related within the topic of family violence. They are:

- 'family violence,'

- 'family abuse,'

- 'domestic violence,'

- 'domestic abuse,'

- 'spousal violence,'

- 'spousal abuse,'

- 'intimate partner violence,'

- 'elder abuse,' and

- 'child abuse.'

I searched for these terms in both the Kneehill Community Services Directory and Calgary Community Services Guide. For each agency identified through this process, I added the agency's information to the resource inventory, and made note of any additional information that was of interest to my inquiry. I further collected information concerning each agency and the services they provide to family violence victims through the agency's websites, including brochures and other documents uploaded to them.

The categories of information collected for each agency was informed by McKillip's (1998) explanation of what should be included in a resource inventory: "(a) *Who is providing the services?* including agency/company name, address, phone number, hours of operation, and [qualifications of staff]; (b) *What services are being provided?* including types of services and

capacity; and (c) *Who receives services?* including eligibility, ages, and client types" (p. 265 [original emphasis]). (See Appendix A for the resource inventories).

For the agencies identified in the Kneehill Community Services Directory, I contacted each of the agencies by telephone to confirm the information found in the directory and online. I believed this to be necessary because the directory was originally posted in 2015, and I believed it was necessary to ascertain that the services it listed were still available.

Limitations. Del Balso & Lewis (2012) make a distinction between the use of a case study for the purposes of generalizing results to fit an anticipated wider pattern of phenomena, and case studies wherein the researcher's goal is to explore unique phenomena specific to the case at hand (p. 177). This project will attempt the former, as I will discuss my findings in the context of access to rural community services in general, though generalizability of those findings is extremely limited in that I am only examining a single case. Because my findings are limited in this way, I can not make broad assumptions regarding the community services available in other rural communities except perhaps in the near vicinity to Trochu. This is similar to what Tan & Haining (2016) concede about the results of their case study in terms of the link between health and perceptions of criminal victimization. To this end, this project will have little external validity (Del Balso & Lewis, 2012, p. 142).

The internal validity of this project is somewhat limited in that, in an actual case wherein a family violence victim was searching for resources, they would be highly unlikely to search the directories for each above terms related to family violence. More likely, an individual would know only one or two of the relevant terms and use those, or search for resources based on their specific needs (ie. food, shelter, counselling etc.), or simply skim through the list of agencies until something caught their attention. As all of the terms selected for the keyword search were

identified as being related to family violence within the literature reviewed, and I used the same list of keywords for both the Kneehill and Calgary directories, in order to conserve the reliability – or consistency of the measure (Lipsey, 2012).

Further, this project may have been enhanced through the inclusion of government resources for family violence victims. Most notably, Alberta Health Services and Alberta Human Services have programs designed specifically for both prevention and response to family violence. Around the same time that the criminal justice was undergoing changes in its handling of victims and family violence, Alberta Health Services implemented a protocol requiring emergency room nurses to inquire if patients 'feel safe at home' in order to provide individuals, without discrimination, the opportunity to disclose any concerns regarding their safety (Warthe, 2000). Alberta Human Services (2016) offers an 'Escaping Abuse Benefit' to offset the financial hardship of leaving an abusive family situation. As well police services play a large part in the delivery of services to family violence victims as theybare often the point of first contact for family violence victims. All of these institutions liaise with community based organizations, but also provide services that could be utilized by victims of family violence.

Ethical considerations. As all of the information I collected in completing this project was publically available, my presence in the field had 'minimal to no impact' on the welfare persons I interacted with. However, when I did interact with workers of the community service agencies, I took care to identify myself as a student researcher, explain the nature of my project, and answer any questions the individual asked about the project. Transparency of my cause was necessary to ensure that my questions are answered and that the individual was comfortable speaking with me. The Tri-Council Policy Statement necessitates that research is carried out in an open manner and with full consent of the participants, no matter their capacity in participating

(Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014). I have completed the online research ethics tutorial made available by the Tri-Council, in order to ensure that this project adheres to the policies set forth by that body.

Another potential ethical issue is the inherent bias of examining a community to which I was previously a member. Trochu, Alberta was selected due to the time and budget constraints inherent of an undergraduate research project. Because I already possessed knowledge of this community, the process of navigating the community and its resources for the purposes of collecting data was easier than if I were to have examined a community with which I was unfamiliar. However, due to this familiarity, I entered this project with preconceived expectations of what I would find in terms of both the availability and accessibility of resources. I believe my use of a resource inventory to organize the data collected will reduce the chance of researcher bias impacting the findings of this project.

Reflection

Originally, I had proposed to explore community locations in order to locate services for victims of family violence in Calgary, Alberta and Trochu, Alberta. However, upon discovering that Kneehill county has an online directory of community services, I opted to limit my search for services to what is available online. There are several reasons for this: for one, online searches are less time consuming – especially accounting for travel time between Trochu and Calgary. As well, I would generally expect that the vast majority of people have access to internet services, and in fact, a 2012 survey conducted by Statistics Canada (2013a) confirms that 86% of households in Alberta (tied with British Columbia for the highest provincial rate of household internet access) have internet access. Additionally, most agencies have their own

websites which provide details about their programs and services. Limiting my search to primarily online data collection is also reasonable from the perspective of family violence victims, as the internet provides a measure of anonymity and privacy which is likely to be desirable to family violence victims, whereas going to community locations could be potentially dangerous for the victim if the perpetrator were alerted to their search. Thus, I concluded that there was no particular advantage to entering the community to seek the information I required.

To echo the above, the online resources turned out to be much more useful sources of information than I originally envision. I was able to collect most of the information I needed from the directories or agency website. Whereas I began with the intention to contact every agency identified by both the Calgary and the Kneehill Community Service Directory by telephone using a list of questions corresponding to the resource inventory; in the end I only called the Kneehill services. This was partially due to how time-consuming it would have been to contact all of the agencies identified by the Calgary Community Services Guide. Further, the agencies in Calgary tended to have more information on their websites, thus, the Calgary agencies had less 'blanks' in the resource inventory than the Kneehill agencies.

The resource inventory played a lesser role than I initially anticipated. When I conceived of using the resource inventory, I intended to organize all collected data within the inventory, and rely on comparison of the inventories as the exclusive means of analysis. However, some of the information I chose to collect was perhaps unnecessary – notably, asking whether an agency provides services to LGBT+ individuals. After all, human rights legislation in Alberta prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, thus all agencies are required to offer services to persons who identify as belonging to a sexual minority. Another issue I encountered was that some of the information I sought didn't necessarily have a concrete answer – such as average

wait times and capacity of given programs. The answers I received for these questions was 'it

depends,' or 'first come, first served.'

Findings and Discussion

Immediately apparent from a cursory glance at the resource inventories for Trochu, Alberta and Calgary, Alberta is the difference in quantity of agencies listed. The resource inventory for Trochu, which contains resources identified within the Kneehill Community Service Directory, lists a total of five agencies for family violence victims – only two of which are in Kneehill county. None of these agencies operate out of Trochu, Alberta. By comparison, the total number of agencies for family violence victims found in the Calgary Community Services Guide was fourteen (See Figure 1).

Despite the significantly fewer agencies operating in or offering services to rural individuals, the range of available services for family violence victims is consistent between Trochu, Alberta and Calgary, Alberta. Every agency listed in the Calgary Community Services Guide is also available in Trochu, as there is no cause limiting the services to residents of a specific region. While it is clear from a cursory glance at the resource inventory (see Appendix A) that the Kneehill Community Services Directory does not list the full range of services as is found in the Calgary Community Services Guide, respondents from Three Hills Victims Services and the Central Alberta Emergency Women's Shelter assured me that no person in a crisis situation would be left without the help they need. The coordinator of Three Hills Victims Services stated that the agency has a dedicated vehicle for driving individuals in crisis to emergency shelters or other support services (personal communication, March 24, 2017). The worker who took my call at the Central Alberta Emergency Women's Shelter explained that if an adult male victim of family violence (a demographic not served by this shelter) were to contact the agency during a crisis, the agency would be able to provide him accommodation at a hotel until other arrangements could be made (personal communication, March 23, 2017).

The accessibility of community services for family violence victims in Trochu and Calgary tells a different narrative. The key differences between the accessibility of community services was most apparent in terms of: geography and transportation options; diversity of services; and the technology used by the agencies.

Geography and Transportation Options

Transportation in rural areas can be a challenge without the use of a personal vehicle. In urban areas such as Calgary, the public transit system makes it possible, if not always convenient, to travel to and from anywhere within the city. Individuals living in rural communities like Trochu do not have access to public transportation to larger communities where services are offered. In the past, individuals could travel between most towns and cities in Canada using Greyhound, but at the time of paper, nearly ten years has passed since Greyhound serviced any of the towns in Kneehill county. As mentioned above, respondents from both the Three Hills Victim's Services and the Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter stated that their agencies are able to transport individuals in crisis when no other options are available. The problem then, is when rural dwelling individuals are in need of support services outside of crisis situations

For example, the nearest service that provides individual counselling services outside of crisis situations is Family Services of Central Alberta located in Red Deer. If an individual required counselling over the long-term as a consequence of their victimization, but did not have access to a person vehicle, this service would be virtually inaccessible to them. Further, informal social supports within the individual's community (friends, family, religious leaders etc.) may become less accessible as a consequence of leaving the community to access services. This is

problematic given Wendt & Hornosty's (2010) findings that rural individuals tend to have

stronger connections to their community and its people.

Diversity of Services

Another difference between community based services for family violence victims was that

services in the Calgary Community Services Guide tended to be more specialized; catering to

specific demographics. A few examples (See Table 1): Calgary's Kerby Centre offers programs

and services specifically for senior citizens (55+), including an emergency and second-stage

shelter; the Calgary Humane Society's Petsafe Keeping Program provides short-term emergency

placement for the pets of family violence victims; and the Calgary Immigrant Women's

Association provides family violence related services to immigrant families. Of course, rural

clients would be able to access some of the services provided by these agencies if they travelled

to Calgary. However, as previously discussed, travel from rural communities to urban areas may

pose additional challenges.

It is worth mentioning here, though it was not included in the Calgary Community

Services Guide, that there is also a community based service called Homefront that operates

alongside the specialized domestic violence court system in Calgary. Victims are supported

through the court process by a Homefront court caseworker, who disseminates information about

the victim's case, general legal information and information regarding the community resources

available to the victim (Tutty & Koshan, 2013, p. 736). Homefront is part of the Calgary

Domestic Violence Collective which is a collaboration between interested communities and

agencies across Calgary (some, but not all of which are community based) with the goal of

"reduc[ing] the incidence of family violence in Calgary through effective and seamless service

delivery, collaboration, promotion of prevention initiatives, advocacy, professional and public

education and media relations" (Warthe, 2000, p. 14). This agency does not provide frontline

services to the community, but instead provides services to agencies that do; offering training

and ensuring policy and practice are consistent among agencies in the system (Warthe, 2000, p.

14).

Technology

The last significant difference between the accessibility of service agencies identified for

Trochu and Calgary was in terms of their use of technology. The websites of agencies in Calgary

were, on whole, more modern as compared to the Kneehill agency websites. This makes the

websites easier to navigate for the user, so that finding information is a simple process. The same

could be said for the respectively directories of services.

The Calgary Community Services Guide lists 211 Alberta on the bottom of every page

and names InformAlberta in the introduction to the guide. Both 211 Alberta and InformAlberta

are online directories of resources for anything from tax assistance, to housing to libraries.

Though they are similar to the Calgary Community Services Guide and the Kneehill Community

Service Directory, both have some unique features. InformAlberta's (n.d.) tools include the

ability to make an account and save a list of services for future reference, and 211 Alberta (n.d.)

is available by telephone in over 150 different languages in select areas of the province. Calgary

is one of those areas, but Trochu is not.

Conclusion

While the availability of community services for victims of family violence is consistent between Calgary, Alberta and Trochu, Alberta, the accessibility of community services for family violence victims in Trochu, Alberta is limited; most notably in terms of geography and transportation options, as well as the diversity of services and the antiquated technology that is more likely to be used in rural areas. Of course, it should be noted that Trochu is not a particularly isolated community, there are many other towns in Alberta and beyond (especially in Northern Canada) that would have provided a stark contrast to the wide array of services available in Calgary, Alberta. In Trochu, and elsewhere, the sad reality is that the lack of accessible services is likely a contributing factor to the higher rural rates of family violence, and victims' decisions to stay in abusive relationships longer in rural areas.

On the other hand, perhaps the focus shouldn't be on the response to family violence, but instead prevention and public awareness to the issue. The evidence shows that public education surrounding family violence is lower in rural communities than in urban areas. Conservative ideologies, while not inherently promoting violence, colour the perceptions of rural dwelling individuals and justify outdated thoughts about gender roles and family structure. By alerting people to the nature and extent of family violence in Canada and especially in rural areas, we can remove the stigma associated with family violence, thereby making it safer (and also more accessible) for victims to seek help.

The coordinator for Three Hills Victims Services seemed to share this sentiment. She mentioned that the week prior to our conversation on March 24, 2017 she had given a presentation to the pastors of several churches in Kneehill county about the warning signs of family violence and where victims could be referred for help (personal communication).

Awareness might also be realized by the increasingly interconnectedness of society through technological advances. Cook, Alford, Uhrich & Conway (2015) discuss technology as one solution to breaking down the barriers associated with living in rural areas, such as being able to assess and pre-screen clients over video chat services.

Future areas on investigation should explore access to community based services in more isolated communities in Canada, and what role public education program play in preventing family violence. Researchers could also examine what public awareness campaigns are the most effective in educating people about family violence, and help agencies develop and implement the most effective strategies.

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Table 1.

Specialized community based services for family violence victims in Calgary, Alberta.

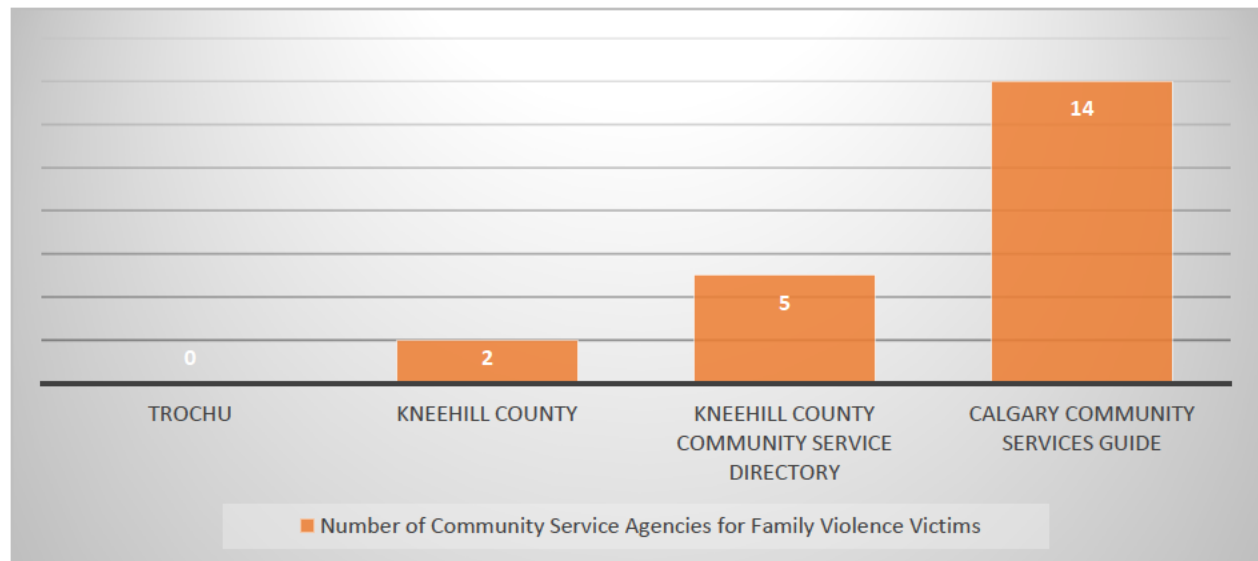| Agency	Target Demographic/Service
Kerby Centre	seniors (55+)
Children's Cottage Society	children
Calgary Humane Society	animals
Discovery House; Sonshine Centre; Brenda Stratford Centre etc.	Second-stage or transitional shelters

Figure 1. Number of community based agencies listed in Kneehill community services directory

and Calgary community service guide, by location of agency.

Appendix A

Resource Inventory for Trochu, Alberta and Calgary, Alberta

Copy of Trochu & Calgary - Camille Honours-2.xlsx