Law Enforcement Officers’ Perceptions of Crime Victims, Roles/Responsibilities in Victim Response, and Victim Services

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1. Executive Summary

This project represents a continuation of a collaborative effort among several professionals with backgrounds in law enforcement, victim support services, and criminology. After learning about criminal victimization/crime victims in our community pre- and post-implementation of the Law Enforcement-Based Victim Specialist Program (VSP) in 2020 via official data from Auburn Police Department (APD) and social agency reports from Cayuga Counseling Services (CCS), and after assessing crime victims’ engagement with community resources and support in the aftermath of victimization including justice-related processes, our team was interested in local law enforcement agency culture as related to those they serve and work with to understand the ways by which this may affect practice. As such, we set out to explore officers’ perceptions of crime victims, officer-related roles/responsibilities in victim response, and victim services to determine whether there were any differences in attitudes/beliefs that may impact officers’ ability to serve crime victims or collaborate with victim services. Accordingly, the goal of the current study is to examine officers’ perceptions of:

a) Crime victims/survivors (including a broad range of persons who experience crime)
b) Officer-related roles/responsibilities in victim response
c) Victim services

By examining these three key areas, we can gain insights into group and individual norms that may influence practice and consider the likelihood of sustaining collaborative partnerships.

Additionally, a secondary goal of this study was to better understand the context of officers’ responses and deepen comprehension. As such, we asked officers about common calls for service, common crime victims encountered (and whether they existed in large quantities or were repeat victims), challenges officers believe crime victims have, challenges officers have in responding to crime victims, awareness/understanding of crime dynamics, frustrations they experience on the job, whether they receive departmental encouragement/rewards for working with crime victims, what they feel are advantages/disadvantages to victim services, whether they know of resources in the community to assist crime victims, whether they believe they have received adequate training, whether they engaged in referrals to victim services and how these determinations were made, and so on.

To achieve the aforementioned goals, we relied on a mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) approach. Specifically, we: 1) created an anonymous online survey that was distributed to all sworn officers in APD to gather quantitative information that would help us recognize patterns relating to views/norms, and 2) selected a purposive sample of officers for in-person interviews to derive contextual information relating to perceptions and actions.

There was a high response rate for the online survey (about 78%) and we had fairly good participation from officers for the in-person interviews (e.g. six officers participated). Findings from the survey data generally point to positive patterns that reveal informed perceptions relating to crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities, and victim services. Specific items (along with issues) are discussed in detail. Also, findings from in-person interviews indicated that almost all officers had a positive outlook on victim-related response and victim services, including how to connect crime victims/survivors to available resources. Although some factors hindered the ability of a few officers knowing about local resources, most officers interviewed were aware of and knowledgeable about community programs. Many thought that crime victims could benefit from these connections, but believed these individuals were often unaware of resources available to them that could be accessed. The majority of officers stated that many of the crime victims encountered were repeat victims harmed by the same offenders. Almost all officers concluded that the most common crime victims encountered were adults victimized by domestic
violence/abusive relationships (e.g. physical intimate partner violence) and children who have been abused and/or neglected (e.g. sexual abuse). These individuals were described by officers as struggling with various forms of trauma/abuse, mental health issues, and/or addiction, which contributed to revictimization. Many thought that crime victims could potentially alter their situation if they accessed services in the community and so the officers had high rates of referrals. The findings show all officers hold themselves responsible for responding to crime victims, although a small percentage did not engage in service referral due to their positions.

In all, the results signal a climate where officers recognize the importance of crime victims, victim response, and victim services, albeit there are a few exceptions for which recommendations are made to strengthen awareness, understanding, and practice (including through internal emphasis/training relating to crime victim realities, community resources, etc.). Training recommendations and implications for the department are discussed.
2. Literature Review

This research project explores officer culture in the Auburn Police Department (APD) through an examination of officers’ perceptions of crime victims, victim services, and their roles relating to victim assistance to consider whether group/individual social norms exist that may impact service delivery for crime victims and, therefore, justice outcomes.

According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, “[victims’] perceptions of the system can be influenced by the manner in which they are treated at the first response and during the follow-up investigation. How law enforcement agencies treat victims is a direct reflection of an agencies’ philosophy of policing and core values. Organizations that place a high priority on addressing the needs of victims of crime are likely to build greater community confidence, increase crime reporting, leverage significant resources through expanded collaborations with community partners, and eventually reduce crime”1. Good police work and practice, therefore, involve appropriate, supportive, informed, and collective approaches to criminal victimization/crime victims that contribute to safety and satisfaction of those served.

Crime victims play a crucial role in justice. For a long time, they have been ignored and left out of the justice process, yet they are ultimately the ones who are hurt/harmed and contribute to offenders being apprehended by police, held accountable by courts, and punished by corrections for law violating behaviors (Rennison & Dodge, 2022), thereby making them an important group. Approaches to policing, historically, have not relied on research/evidence-based practices; instead, crafted by beliefs and “local custom, opinions, theories, and subjective impressions” (Sherman, 1998, p. 6), practices have contained bias, created misunderstandings, and presented problems when interactions with the public. This disconnect between officers and those in the community they served, along other issues (e.g. social inequalities, corruption, etc.), have hindered justice outcomes. Over time, with a push for a more informed police force by moral and civic reformers, policing has been professionalized. August Volmer, the “father of modern law enforcement” and other individuals in the 20th century, argued that scientific research, education/training, etc. are needed in the American police force to effectively respond to crime, which has since resulted in many innovations that have transformed into modern practices (Carte, 1972; Oliver, 2017). Policing continues to evolve. As evidenced by the expansion of goals under the International Association of Chief of Police, policing is no longer about mere apprehension of offenders, but it is also about advancing police science, fostering collaboration and cooperation with other agencies, and promoting best practices for police service to reduce and prevent crime (see: https://www.theiacp.org/).

Traditionally, interventions to reduce and prevent violence have focused on offender accountability through the criminal justice system while those aimed to assist crime victims/survivors have been non-existent or limited and present through other institutions such as the social service system. Contemporary practices have advanced over time to include evidence-based practices (e.g., Laub & Frisch, 2016; Welsh & Farrington, 2001) and collaborative strategies (e.g., Carnwell & Buchanan, 2008; Pycroft & Gough, 2019), which have shown promise in addressing crime victims’ needs, reducing future victimization, and increasing satisfaction among those seeking help and keeping society safe. It is now well-understood that policing in a diverse society requires multi-agency, community-based approaches (Pycros & Gough, 2019) that take scientific research into consideration and work on sustained partnerships (e.g. www.popcenter.org). Law enforcement practitioners, therefore, are working closely with others in the community such as victim service professionals and researchers, to better understand, analyze, and respond to crime - and perpetrators as well as victims.
Law enforcement officers respond to a variety of calls for service, some of which involve repeat crime victims, offenders, and events. Domestic situations, for example, comprise one of the most common calls for service (Eigenberg et al., 2012) with domestic violence being a common crime (Catalano et al., 2009). It is important to note that most of these victims do not reach out for help from formal institutions like police (Breiding et al., 2014; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000); in fact, they are less likely to do so than other victims of violence due to fear of reprisal, privacy issues, and other concerns (e.g., Felson et al., 2002) and we “severely underestimate the magnitude of the problem” (Roe, 2004). Instead, these crime victims are more likely to seek social support from family, friends, and social service agencies (Kaukinen, 2004). When they do reach out for help from the police, it is most often after repeat incidents that have escalated in frequency and severity, and when weapons and injury are present (Akers & Kaukinen, 2002). Like these victims, sexual assault survivors commonly hesitate to report their victimization to police for numerous reasons, including shame/self-blame and the belief that their credibility may be questioned due to risk-taking behavior, clothing styles, or other factors (O’Neal, 2019), and child victims are often hidden as they are largely unable to report their victimization (Finkelhor et al., 2012).

Historically, and tied to cultural factors, victims of gender-based violence have been treated less seriously than other crime victims. They not only have been blamed for another’s actions, but also doubted, dismissed, etc. by police as well as others in the criminal justice system (e.g. Lutze & Symons, 2003), resulting in secondary victimization (Campbell, 1998) that has contributed to consequences like continued abuse and injustice. Education and advocacy (e.g. women’s movement), research (e.g. the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment), and landmark cases (e.g. Thurman v. Torrington, CT), have created changes in the way we understand and process these events - and legislation has been adopted to recognize these offenses as crimes. Officers have shifted from seeing these issues as private or personal matters to those that warrant intervention (Gover et al., 2011), with practices now aiming to protect these crime victims from harm. Although officers have discretion (Lee et al., 2013), law enforcement agencies across the U.S., for instance, now have mandatory or pro-arrest policies in cases of intimate partner violence when there are noticeable indicators of violence (Lutze & Symons, 2003). Additionally, trauma-informed interviewing/training has been increasingly integrated into departmental curriculum. Still, issues remain in the present day that must be addressed to improve police services (e.g. DeJong et al., 2008; Stewart et al., 2013). For example, while shifts in the ways officers think about gender-based violence have been documented, research has found some officers still subscribe to problematic myths and hold negative attitudes towards victim/survivors (e.g., about one-third of officers in one study blamed victims for the perpetrator’s abuse and most felt the victims could easily leave if they wanted to (Toon & Hart, 2005); such beliefs can harm crime victims and contribute to negative interactions and outcomes (Johnson, 2004).

Most crime victims do not report victimization to police. It is estimated that around 41% of violent crime victimizations are reported to police, and less property crime victimizations, which includes financial crimes like burglary and theft along with other crimes, are reported (around 33%) according to the National Crime Victimization Survey (Morgan et al., 2020). Variations exist within these results. For example, while some property victimizations are frequently reported (e.g. auto theft), others often are not (Deem et al., 2007; Morgan et al., 2020). These crime victims may not come forward for many reasons, including thinking that their victimization is not significant enough to report it, believing the police might not be able to do anything about it, fear of being blamed, etc. Consequently, most crime is not reported to law enforcement and thereby not reflected in most crime data sources, which seriously underestimates the extent of crime (victimization surveys, however, help us see the “dark figure” of crime). Nevertheless, of those who do report their victimization to police, around half express unfavorable encounters whereby
their experiences were minimized, disbelieved, denied, or dismissed (e.g. Patterson, 2011; Stephens & Sinden, 2000). Such secondary victimization (Campbell, 1998) further harms those already harmed and it may contribute to or exacerbate negative mental health, social, behavioral, and other outcomes (e.g. Halder & Jaishankar, 2011; Patterson, 2011; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015). Because law enforcement is a heavily masculinized institution, some crime victims may hesitate coming forward due to fear that police will identify with male perpetrators and fail to support or otherwise protect female victims from harm (e.g. Xie & Baumer, 2019), due to internalized gender perceptions that a man can/should deal with his own victimization, or other reasons. Some officers may indeed hold such problematic attitudes toward crime victims that can be discouraging, ill-disposed, etc.

In recent years, research has emerged on crime victims’ decisions to call police (e.g. Kaukinen, 2002; Xie & Baumer, 2019), their perceptions of police (e.g., Koster et al., 2016) and police interviews (e.g. Holmberg, 2004), their satisfaction with police (e.g. Tweksbury & West, 2001), and more. The findings overall show that crime victims’ decisions to report victimization to authorities vary not only across crimes, but also across gender, race, and other lines. Complexities exist relating to these factors and other characteristics/dynamics. Research shows, for example, that reporting varies based on one’s racial background (e.g. Kaukinen, 2004), yet there are mixed results relating to whether certain groups are more or less likely to report victimization to police (e.g. studies show that persons of color are more likely to report intimate partner victimization to police than White counterparts but less likely to report for some other crimes). Nevertheless, given the challenging nature of crime reporting and coming forward to police for support, it is important to examine how justice practitioners see and assist these crime victims. Research suggests that officers’ ability to demonstrate understanding and empathy towards crime victims can increase satisfaction (e.g., Maddox et al., 2011).

The interactions crime victims have with law enforcement can contribute to assistance, resource connection, etc., which can facilitate their healing, justice engagement, and more. However, when problematic encounters or reactions are experienced, harm and injustice result. Cultural beliefs/group social norms - along with individual attitudes and preferences - may influence officers’ treatment of crime victims, the likelihood of supporting crime victims, and their willingness to work with victim services. This has obvious implications for justice outcomes. Officer views/reactions to crime victims have the potential to help or harm them. If these victims are doubted, blamed, or otherwise attacked, they may not cooperate and offenders therefore will not be brought to justice (Kaiser et al., 2017). Since police represent important agents who can help victims pursue justice, understanding their beliefs and interactions may help facilitate justice outcomes. Investigating whether bias or misunderstandings exist in agencies is therefore paramount to justice. If we can be confident that officers are well attuned to the realities of victimization and related issues, and if we understand whether they are also open to working with other agencies that victims may consider, we can better assess the prospect of integrative practices that meet the needs of crime victims. A small portion of the population accounts for a large portion of those who experience victimization (Bland & Ariel, 2020) and research shows that those who use victim services can significantly reduce future victimizations (Xie & Lynch, 2017). As such, when crime victims come into contact with police, it is imperative for police to treat them fairly and objectively, and to connect them with social support that can address resource loss or other harms, to better meet the needs these victims may have.

Researchers have spent considerable time studying police occupational and organizational culture, including those involving citizens (see Paoline, 2003). Recently, studies of police perceptions of crime victims, victim services, and officer-related roles/responsibilities in victim response (the main areas in this study) have taken place. Officer perceptions involving others are important to examine as whether or not officers subscribe to myths/misconceptions can influence and impact the treatment of crime victims,
willingness to collaborate with victims services, and more. Various instruments have been created and tested to study law enforcement attitudes towards crime victims. Many focus on gender violence (e.g. intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking); and these have been helpful in addressing many misperceptions and myths. Examples include tools related to trauma reactions (e.g., Franklin et al., 2020), rape and domestic violence myths (e.g., Garza & Franklin, 2021; Gerger et al., 2007), and victim-blaming attitudes or beliefs (Venema, 2019). Other tools also exist. Generally speaking, research shows that cases falling outside stereotypical views impact the thoughts and actions of officers. One study by O’Neal (2017) found that officers challenged victims’ credibility of rape when the victimization differed from what they thought was “real rape” (stranger, force, etc.), there was inconsistency in victim statements/testimony, and “character flaws” relating to mental health, activities, etc. were observed. Other studies also revealed that officer beliefs impact practice (Goodsen et al., 2020; Lutze & Symons, 2003). Goodsen and colleagues (2022) note that research on cultural myths suggest that misconceptions shape expectations and create challenging power dynamics that influence interactions with crime victims and the respective outcomes. Accordingly, we would like to learn about officers’ perceptions of crime victims of gender violence, and, because many other persons also experience victimization, we would like to learn about officers’ perceptions of victims of financial and other crimes to see whether myths exist and whether they relate to officers’ service referrals.

Beyond officers’ perceptions of crime victims, recent studies have explored officers’ perceptions relating to the role police officers have in victim response, such as for intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and other victims (e.g. Lynch & Logan, 2015; Johnson & Dai, 2016). For example, one study looked at officers' willingness to help victims of intimate partner violence, arrest perpetrators, and provide support, finding that they were more likely to do so when they identified strongly with the in-group but did so to a lesser extent when they belonged to an out-group (Baldry & Pagliaro, 2014) [other studies also found that concentrated disadvantage increased the likelihood for perpetrator arrest - Lee et al., 2013]. Additionally, studies have investigated whether officers feel prepared for victim response by asking them about training in the academy and on the job, in addition to other factors, and how this impacts their performances (Watson et al., 2014).

Research has also commenced on officer perceptions of and engagement with victim services (e.g., Goodsen et al., 2020; 2022). The findings show that officer characteristics relate to police-initiated victim service referral (e.g. Goodson et al., 2020; Stalans & Finn, 1995, 2000), and the likelihood for referrals is increased when the victim is younger in age and when physical abuse is present (Goodsen et al., 2022). Research has demonstrated that victim services such as advocacy and counseling can greatly assist crime victims in addressing the loss of resources, safety, and healing (e.g. Bennett et al., 2004); these services are often rated by victims/survivors as the most important type of support (Erez & Belknap, 1998). Further, the use of such services relates to reductions in subsequent victimization - around a 40% reduction compared to a 34% reduction associated with reporting only to police (Goodsen et al., 2022). As such, victim services represent a vital component to justice, yet we know little about whether officers resist assisting crime victims by connecting them to victim services. This is especially important to examine here as policing, like other criminal justice careers, is a masculinized occupation that focuses on being “tough”, apprehending offenders, etc. while social services are frequently feminized and seen as “soft”, thereby possibly presenting conflicting views that create boundaries to working together in service of others (Buzawa & Buzawa, 2003; Roberg, 2004).

Lastly, studies commonly overlook officer perceptions of challenges they face in serving these crime victims, which could be beneficial to understand as it may help to consider training or strategies that can better inform and shape future response. These should be examined and understood in the local context. Crime victims suffer serious costs and consequences associated with victimization, and this may lead to
maladaptive behavior (e.g. substance use) which officers may encounter when responding to calls. Social, economic, and other issues may also be present in communities that impact interpersonal relationships and encounters. As such, it is critical to provide crime victims with support that may protect them and increase wellbeing while also reducing future victimization and preventing maladaptive behavior.

In sum, in addition to studying perceptions officers have of many different kinds of crime victims, this study will look at officers’ perceptions of their role in victim response and their perceptions of victim services to see if there are group patterns warranting attention/intervention and discussion. It will also explore officer-related concerns/challenges to learn whether there are any obstacles to serving crime victims, what they may be, and whether new strategies that integrate victim service specialists into the police department can help better serve crime victims in our community. Attention will also be given to relevant community factors when contemplating issues and solutions.

2.1 Background Information & Local Context

In recent years, there has been a slight increase in the rates of violent victimization across the United States and locally in New York. According to The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), in 2018, 3.3 million people 12 years of age and older were the victims of violent crimes and there were an estimated 6.0 million violent incidents (Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019), which is an uptick from the previous year (Morgan & Oudekerk, 2018). There was a slight decline in 2019 (Morgan & Oudekerk, 2020), but reports suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased crimes from 2020 to current times (e.g. homicide - Coreley, 2021; domestic violence - Boman & Gallupe, 2020; Sharma & Borah, 2020; etc.). Research has also established that crime victimization targets low-income and racial/ethnic minority groups at higher rates than their counterparts- see Black et al., 2011; Rennison & Welchans, 2000). Over half of criminal victimizations are not reported to police (Morgan & Truman, 2020), suggesting more needs to be done to reach crime victims and connect them to services. Collaborative approaches that combine law enforcement with victim services, then, become increasingly important for knowing about and responding to crime in ways that may better meet crime victims’ justice needs.

The City of Auburn is located in the Central New York Region of upstate NY. The city has a population size of 26,454 within 8.4 sq. miles. Of those residents, 85.5% are White, 8.7% are Black/African American, 3.7% Hispanic or Latino, 0.4% Asian American, 0.5% Native American, and 4.0% two or more races present. The City’s population is 49% female and 51% male with 19.8% under 18 years of age and 16.8% those 65 years and over, and 10.65% of those under the age of 65 are identified as having a disability. The City of Auburn is considered a federally economically distressed community due to nearly one-in-five residents (17.6%) living below the poverty level. The median household income is $40,708, which is only 70% of the national median household income average of $57,652. Auburn has also increased in recent years in terms of its crime score and dangerousness.

- In 2019, APD had 57 officers and received 35,137 calls for service. They investigated crimes against persons, property, society (in addition to quality of life and traffic related encounters), including 65 assault allegations, 1,242 domestic violence, 609 harassment, 124 protection order violations, 89 sex offenses, 15 robberies, 133 for burglary, 305 drug investigations, 679 larcenies, 339 mental health calls, 190 suicide attempts, 136 overdoses, 136 missing persons, 1 homicide, and 1,246 motor vehicle accidents.
- In 2020, APD had 62 officers and 32,884 calls for service. They investigated 60 assault allegations, 1,413 for domestic violence, 549 harassment, 103 protection orders violated, 74 sex offenses, 19 robberies, 120 for burglary, 229 drug investigations, 710 larcenies, 354 mental health calls, 232 suicide attempts, 152 overdoses, 97 missing persons, and 972 motor vehicle accidents.
This indicates a slight uptick in reports of domestic violence, robbery, larceny, mental health
calls, suicide attempts, and overdoses, and a slight decline in other events. Domestic calls along with motor vehicle accidents appear to be most prevalent calls for service.

Currently, APD has 62 sworn officers. Most officers identify as White (96.8%) and male (83.9%).

Because of the successful partnership we had last year (i.e., outcome evaluation of the Victim Service Specialist), we learned about crime victims in our community (e.g., who is affected, the types of crimes experienced, the kinds of services requested/used by crime victims, and victim-related engagement in justice processes) and found that the integration of a Victim Service Specialist in APD was significant to justice as it helped bridge the gap between law enforcement and crime victim services. The specialist in APD reached different kinds of crime victims than those commonly served by CCS, and increased crime victims’ connecting to support services such as therapy/counseling, legal advocacy, etc, as well as justice-related engagement including with obtaining information on justice processes, communicating with police, and obtaining an order of protection. While the integration of this specialist points to a promising practice, we do not yet know whether officers share the same views on crime victims, roles/responsibilities in victim response and victim services, which is important to consider for crime victims’ justice outcomes.

2.2 Aim of the Study/Purpose

The current study aims to examine law enforcement officers’ perceptions of crime victims, their roles/responsibilities in victim response, and victim services as well as their use of victim services and any challenges/obstacles that might exist that impact practice. Specifically, we ask the following Research Questions (RQs):

**RQ1:** “Do officers subscribe to victim-related myths (e.g. on trauma, victim presentation, victim blaming) - and, if so, what are they?”

**RQ2:** “Do officers believe they have a role/responsibility in victim response? Do they feel prepared to respond to crime victims, and does the agency seem to support such activities?”

**RQ3:** “What are officers’ views on victim services? Do they feel comfortable collaborating? What do they see as advantages/disadvantages to doing so?”

Other items were also explored to help us learn about group/individuals norms, and whether there are implications for training and practice.

3. Methodology

The current project seeks to learn about the culture of officers in APD as relevant to crime victims and victim services. Information was gathered by our team to better understand officers’ experiences and perceptions of crime victims, their roles/responsibilities in victim response, and victim services. To reach these goals, we relied on a mixed-methods approach. Through an anonymous online survey, responses will allow us to analyze culture by reflecting on group patterns indicative of perceptions/norms - and through in-person interviews, we can gain deeper insights into individuals’ views relating to crime victims, officer-victim dynamics, and the viability of sustaining a victim service partnership.

3.1 Participants and Procedures

Part 1 of the study involved an anonymous online survey (see Appendix). We first located and reviewed existing research to identify relevant factors and tools that could assist us in the process of learning about law enforcement officers’ perceptions of crime victims, the victim specialist program, and their roles and responsibilities in victim response. For the section on crime victims, we included measures
asking about crime victims based on trauma (Franklin et al., 2020), victim myths (Garza & Franklin, 2021; Gerger et al., 2007), and victim blaming (e.g. Venema, 2019). For the section on office roles/responsibilities, we focused on duties and job-related items (Baldry & Pagliaro, 2014; Johnson & Dai, 2016), and for the section on victim services, we looked at attitudes towards victim services/advocates (e.g. Goodsen et al., 2020). We also adopted/adapted performance monitoring materials from the Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims (ELERV) project site, which was the predecessor program to LEV, provided by the IACP, through the Law Enforcement and the Communities They Serve: Supporting Collective Healing in the Wake of Harm. This was used to consider questions relating to perceptions of crime victims more broadly and to learn more about perceptions of officer roles, responsibilities, and training while the previous items were reviewed for content in the three areas being studied (i.e., crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities, victim services). In short, our measures were developed based on work from existing projects in ways that worked well for our collaboration. We then added additional items based on our needs. The measures mostly included statements about crime victims, roles/responsibilities in serving crime victims, and victim services that officers would respond to on a Likert-scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The survey sought to be inclusive in the different types of crime victims who officers may encounter. Much of the existing research focuses on crimes of gender violence, and we expanded the kinds of crime victims to include these as well as other victims (e.g. financial crime victims, special groups) too. Additional inquiries were made into officers’ perceptions, interactions, and actions.

The survey was distributed to all sworn officers in the department (n = 64). It was estimated to take 10 minutes to complete. An invitation to participate in the survey was sent to all APD officers during National Crime Victims’ Rights week. Two follow up email invitations were also sent to increase the response rate. The survey was open for approximately one month and yielded a high response rate (about 78.1%, n = 50). This information generated our quantitative results, which will be discussed later in this section.

Part 2 of the study involved conducting in-person interviews with a sample of officers using a semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix) developed for purposes of this study. The questionnaire contained items about the three key areas (i.e., perceptions of crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities, and victim services) and also asked about actual use of victim services. Officers were also asked about challenges they think crime victims have, obstacles they encounter, advantages/disadvantages associated with victim service collaboration, and more.

Given that research has suggested that 6-12 interviews are needed to reach saturation of 70-92% (see Guest et al.’s (2006)), we initially invited 10 officers for in-person interviews and then expanded our invitations to reach additional officers after follow-up invitations were sent out and met without response. In all, 18 officers were contacted with six officers agreeing to participate (n = 6) - which is around one-third of those invited. The sampling frame from which we selected included 64 officers: Police chief (1.6%, n = 1), deputy police chief (1.6%, n = 1), police captain (3.1%, n = 2), police lieutenant (4.7%, n = 3), police sergeant (14.1%, n = 9), police detective (7.8%, n = 5), police officer (67.2%, n = 43). There were seven different titles/ranks, so we used purposive sampling to capture data from diverse perspectives. Although not statistically representative, this strategy was selected as it is frequently relied upon by researchers to reach persons, and findings do not have to be statistically representative of the greater population to be qualitatively generalizable. Maximum variation was achieved and, through selecting officers from various ranks and backgrounds, a range of diverse insights were to be included. This derived our rich qualitative information.

3.2 Data Quality Issues & Challenges
The online survey yielded a high response rate, especially when considering that online surveys typically result in fewer than half the respondents participating. Around 78.1% of the sample (n = 50 of 64) engaged with the survey, albeit not all respondents selected responses for all items (e.g., about 43 answered most or all questions), which resulted in variations in the numbers seen for survey items that are reflected in the results section. As for the in-person interviews, we initially invited 10 and hoped that 6-8 (or more) would be willing to accept the invitation to participate. We also offered incentives. We initially heard back from 3 respondents who completed the interview. We then reached out to others via follow up emails. After a period of time passed, we moved on to other respondents. Part of the challenge, as noted by members of the team, was that several email addresses blocked communications from the LEV Project email address and bounced back. We then asked the Chief to assist us by sharing the invitation with all sworn officers, and this seemed to have helped in increasing the number of participants for the in-person interviews. In total, we sent invitations to 18 officers from various ranks and we received 6 volunteers for the in-person interviews (about one-third of those invited). This was enough to reach saturation.

4. Results

The online survey produced descriptive information relating to officers’ attitudes/beliefs about crime victims, victim response, and victim services while the in-person interviews generated deeper insights pertaining to these areas.

4.1 Online Survey

The survey data revealed that most of the officers who responded were Male (72.1%, n = 31), followed by “Rather not say” (18.6%, n = 8), and then Female (9.3%, n = 4). The majority were White (93.0%, n = 40) and the remainder were in an Other category (7.0%, n = 3). Close to half the respondents had a college degree (47.6%, n = 20), close to half completed some college or had an associate’s degree (47.6%, n = 20), and a few others had a high school diploma (4.8%, n = 2). The mean years of officer service is 8.6 (s.d. 7.4), with a range of 1 to 26. Also, most reported being police/patrol officers (70.0%, n = 35), followed by sergeants (14.0%, n = 7), and then detectives (6.0%, n = 3), and other titles (10.0%, n = 5).

Officers were next asked about perceptions relating to crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities, and victim services, with all items on a Likert scale containing response categories ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). For ease of reporting and interpreting the results, attitudinal responses were collapsed into three groupings - strongly disagree/disagree, neutral, and agree/strongly agree (note: the full five category response options and results can be found in the materials in the Appendix - see Tables & Charts). Additionally, for items that apply, we assigned a Myth Awareness Rating for appropriate items. A ✓/green indicates that most officer responses, or at least the largest choice grouping, reflected the most desirable response option (i.e., low endorsement of myths or high endorsement of realities); on a few occasions, we noted when items were in line with expectations yet should be revisited/discussed with a ✓/orange if over 10% of the officers subscribed to the myth/misperception. Also, we noted X/red when the item was misunderstood.

4.1.1 Officer Perceptions of Crime Victims

The survey items responded to by officers relating to perceptions of crime victims (see 7.1 Survey in the Appendix) are discussed below. We presented statements into four areas based on discussions we had together: general, gender-based violence, financial crimes, and other.
GENERAL

1. *A crime victim’s reluctance to give a detailed account of the crime to an officer is an indicator of the accuracy of their statement.*

This statement is generally false. Many crime victims may be reluctant to give detailed accounts of crimes to police, and their reluctance is not an indicator of the accuracy of their statement. As previously noted, there are many reasons people may hesitate to report crimes to police and so they may be timid about disclosing details when they do. The results for this item revealed that most officer perceptions reflect this understanding as 42.6% (n = 20) of officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement while 36.2% (n = 17) were neutral and 21.3% (n = 10) agreed or strongly agreed. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓ (But please revisit/discuss)*

2. *A crime victim’s inability to recall details about the event is reason to question the accuracy of his/her statement.*

Crime victims respond differently to their victimization. Sometimes, victims are unable to recall details about traumatic events and this is a natural response to unnatural occurrences as documented by a wealth of medical and social scientific research. The results for this item revealed that most officer perceptions reflect this understanding as 36.2% (n = 17) strongly disagreed/disagreed with the statement while 31.2% (n = 15) were neutral and 31.9% (n = 15) agreed/strongly agreed. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓ (Please revisit/discuss)*

3. *Crime victims’ reactions differ between people with different cultural backgrounds.*

This statement is largely true. The results for this item revealed that most officer perceptions reflect this understanding as 63.8% (n = 30) of officers strongly agreed or agreed with the statement while 25.5% (n = 12) were neutral and only 10.6% (n = 5) disagreed although no one strongly disagreed. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓ (Please revisit/discuss)*

4. *The type of relationship a crime victim and perpetrator have (e.g. intimate, peer, stranger) influences the victim’s emotional expressions and behavior.*

The results for this item revealed that nearly all officers held this perception; 91.5% (n = 43) of officers strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. About 8.5% were neutral (n = 4) and no one disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓*

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

7. *Victims of intimate partner violence often provoke their partners’ violence.*
The only person responsible for violence is the one perpetrating it. The results for this item revealed that 59.6% (n = 28) of the officers strongly disagreed/disagreed with the statement, suggesting most hold this attitude. However, about 27.7% (n = 13) were neutral and 12.8% (n = 6) agreed/strongly agreed with this statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✅ (Please revisit/discuss)*

8. Women who stay in abusive relationships are to blame for their own victimization because if it really were bad, they would leave.

A symptom of being abused in staying in a harmful relationship. This reflects the phenomenon of learned helplessness. The results for this item revealed that 74.5% (n = 35) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, which shows they are aware of this reality. However, about 19.2% (n = 9) were neutral and 6.4% (n = 3) agreed although no one strongly agreed with this statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✅*

9. When a man is accused of rape, it is more often than not due to a woman who misinterprets or lies about what happened, or seeks retaliation for some kind of relationship failure.

This is false. The results for this item revealed that 70.2% (n = 33) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, suggesting most hold this attitude. However, 25.5% (n = 12) were neutral and 4.3% (n = 2) agreed with that statement although no one strongly agreed. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✅*

11. In same-sex relationships, the more masculine, bigger and/or stronger partner is typically the abuser.

This is a myth. The results for this item revealed that 70.2% (n = 33) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, suggesting most hold this attitude. However, about 27.7% (n = 13) were neutral and 2.1% (n = 1) agreed with this statement although no one strongly did. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✅*

**FINANCIAL & CYBER CRIMES**

6. Victims of financial crimes face limited consequences compared to other crimes - mainly loss of money, but rarely other harms.

The results for this item revealed that 43.5% (n = 20) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. About 43.5% were neutral (n = 20) and 13.0% agreed (n = 6) although no one strongly agreed. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✅ (Please revisit/discuss)*

10. Technology-facilitated violence (e.g. cyberbullying, cyberstalking, etc.) is not real violence and those experiencing it should ignore it.

Cyber, digital, and technology-facilitated harms have consequences that parallel other kinds of crime victimization. The results for this item revealed that 74.5% (n = 35) of the officers strongly
disagreed/disagreed with the statement, which shows awareness. About 17.0% (n = 8) were neutral and 8.5% (n = 4) agreed/strongly agreed with this statement. **Myth Awareness Rating: ✓**

**OTHER**

5. *A person injured during an attempt to buy drugs is a victim.*

The results for this item revealed that most officers (61.7%, n = 29) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. About 21.3% (n = 10) were neutral. However, 17.0% (n = 8) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, suggesting that they may not think of this person as a crime victim. **Myth Awareness Rating: ✓ (Please revisit/discuss)**

12. *Homeless individuals perpetrate crime more often than they are victims of it.*

This is false as they are more likely to be victims than perpetrators. The results for this item revealed that only 25.5% (n = 12) of the officers disagreed with the statement although no one strongly disagreed, while 40.4% (n = 19) were neutral and 34.0% (n = 16) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. **Myth Awareness Rating: X (Address)**

13. *Alcohol is often the culprit underlying most violence.*

Alcohol only brings out behavior in individuals who are predisposed to acting in a certain way. Not everyone who drinks becomes violent, for instance, meaning that alcohol is a facilitator but not a true cause of one’s behavior (if it were causal, everyone who consumes it would become violent). The results for this item revealed that 21.3% (n = 10) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, which shows some awareness of this item. About 42.6% (n = 20) were neutral and 36.2% (n = 17) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, which is worth discussing. **Myth Awareness Rating: X (Address)**

14. *Individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health issues are more likely to be victims compared to those who are not experiencing these issues.*

This is a true statement. Persons with mental health issues experience higher rates of victimization than their counterparts. The results for this item revealed that 29.8% (n = 14) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. However, 36.2% (n = 17) were neutral and 34.0% (n = 16) disagreed with the statement although no one strongly. **Myth Awareness Rating: X (Address)**

15. *Perpetrators of crime also commonly have histories of victimization.*

This is true. The results for this item revealed that 40.4% (n = 19) agreed with the statement although no one strongly agreed, suggesting many hold this attitude. Around 42.6% (n = 20) were neutral and 17.0% (n = 8) disagreed with this statement but no one strongly. **Myth Awareness Rating: X (Address)**
16. Many crime victims exaggerate the extent to which they have been harmed.

This is a myth. The results for this item revealed that 53.2% (n = 25) of the officers disagreed with the statement, suggesting most hold this attitude; no one, however, strongly disagreed. About 38.3% (n = 18) were neutral and 8.5% (n = 4) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. **Myth Awareness Rating: ✅**

17. After a crime, victims receive ample support (e.g., therapy, counseling, shelters, etc.).

The results for this item revealed that 44.7% (n = 21) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, recognizing that many may not receive the support they need or seek, which is in line with research stating that most crime victims do not receive the support they need in the aftermath of crime (Campbell et al., 2001). About 42.6% (n = 20) were neutral and 12.8% (n = 6) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. **Myth Awareness Rating: ✅ (Please revisit/discuss)**

4.1.2 Officer Perceptions of Roles/Responsibilities in Victim Response & Preparation

RESPONSIBILITIES

18. As an officer, my job is to respond to calls for serving and ensure safety of the public/citizens through investigating crimes and apprehending offenders; it is not to help crime victims with the needs they may have.

The results for this item revealed that 76.1% (n = 35) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, 17.4% (n = 8) were neutral and 6.5% (n = 3) agreed although no one strongly agreed.

19. As an officer, I believe that it is my responsibility to connect crime victims with community support/resources that can assist them.

The results for this item revealed that 89.1% (n = 41) agreed or strongly agreed, 8.7% (n = 4) were neutral and only 2.2% (n = 1) disagreed but no one strongly disagreed.

20. Too many social problems like mental health, substance abuse, and other social service needs are often hefted onto the police.

The results for this item revealed that 78.3% (n = 36) agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 17.4% (n = 8) were neutral and 4.3% (n = 2) disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement.

TRAINING

21. I feel that I received adequate training while in the Academy on providing support when interacting with victims, both on and off scene.
The results for this item revealed that 37.0% (n = 17) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 21.7% (n = 10) were neutral and 41.3% (n = 19) strongly disagreed/disagreed with this statement. *This is an item worth revisiting and discussing.*

22. *I feel that I received adequate training within the Academy to address the needs and understand the differences across a diversity of victims and crime types.*

The results for this item revealed that 42.2% (n = 19) agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 28.9% (n = 13) were neutral and 28.9% (n = 13) disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement. *This may be discussed/reflected upon.*

23. *I have continued to receive formal training that is relevant and useful on providing support when interacting with victims, both on scene and off scene, since graduating from the Academy.*

The results for this item revealed that 63.0% (n = 29) agreed/strongly agreed, 15.2% (n = 7) were neutral and 21.7% (n = 10) strongly disagreed/disagreed. *This may be reflected upon.*

24. *When responding to victims on scene, I’ve been trained to immediately ensure the safety of victims, render first aid to all harmed individuals, and to request medical assistance as needed.*

The results for this item revealed that 93.4% (n = 42) agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 2.2% (n = 1) were neutral and 4.4% (n = 2) strongly disagreed (no one disagreed).

25. *When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to ensure emotionally distraught victims are not left alone and receive access to crisis intervention.*

The results for this item revealed that 73.9% (n = 34) agreed/strongly agreed, 15.2% (n = 7) were neutral and 10.9% (n = 5) strongly disagreed/disagreed. *This may be reflected upon.*

26. *When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to be perceptive and patient to the victim’s psychological state while obtaining evidence.*

The results for this item revealed that 88.9% (n = 40) agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 6.7% (n = 3) were neutral and 4.4% (n = 2) disagreed with this statement (no one strongly).

27. *When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to consider the method, manner, location, and timing of the victim interview to best meet the needs of the victim and gather meaningful information from him/her.*

The results for this item revealed that 78.3% (n = 36) agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 13.0% (n = 6) were neutral and 8.7% (n = 4) strongly disagreed/disagreed with this statement.

28. *When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to document in my report that the victim was provided with information and referrals regarding relevant victim services.*
The results for this item revealed that 84.4% (n = 38) agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 8.9% (n = 4) were neutral and 6.7% (n = 3) disagreed (no one strongly).

29. *I feel equipped to effectively advise victims of rights and services that might help them deal with their victimization.*

The results for this item revealed that 77.8% (n = 35) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 13.3% (n = 6) were neutral and 8.9% (n = 4) disagreed (no one strongly).

30. *I am knowledgeable about what services for victims are available in my jurisdiction to adequately inform victims.*

The results for this item revealed that 62.2% (n = 28) of the officers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 26.7% (n = 12) were neutral and 11.1% (n = 5) disagreed (no one strongly disagreed). *This may be discussed/reflected upon.*

31. *I am confident in my abilities to effectively respond to all types of crime victims, no matter their age, race, other characteristics, such as disability or mental health status.*

The results for this item revealed that 80.0% (n = 36) agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 15.6% (n = 7) were neutral and 4.4% (n = 2) strongly disagreed/disagreed.

32. *I have adequate time during calls for service and ensuing investigations to follow-up with victims of crime.*

The results for this item revealed that 24.4% (n = 11) agreed/strongly agreed, 31.1% (n = 14) were neutral, and 33.3% (n = 20) strongly disagreed/disagreed with this statement. *This is worth revisiting and discussing as the largest response group disagreed.*

33. *I am encouraged to follow-up with victims, in the aftermath of an incident/crime, outside of specific calls for service.*

The results for this item revealed that 37.8% (n = 17) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 28.9% (n = 13) were neutral and 33.3% (n = 15) strongly disagreed/disagreed. *This item should be discussed.*

4.1.3 Officer Perceptions of Victim Services

34. *In general, seeking mental health or other related kinds of services is a sign of weakness; if the person were stronger, they would not need to rely on others.*

The results for this item revealed that 83.7% (n = 36) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed, 7.0% (n = 3) were neutral, and 9.3% agreed (n = 4) although no one strongly agreed with the statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓*
35. I believe that victim services are primarily for victims of violent interpersonal crimes (e.g. physical or sexual assault).

The results for this item revealed that 65.1% (n = 28) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, 11.6% (n = 5) were neutral and 23.3% (n = 10) agreed (no one strongly) with this statement. **Myth Awareness Rating: ✔️ (please revisit/discuss)**

36. Victim specialists who work to raise awareness or advocate on behalf of victims often conflict with officers and the work they do.

The results for this item revealed that 79.1% (n = 34) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, 16.3% (n = 7) were neutral and 4.7% (n = 2) agreed, although no one strongly, with this statement. **Myth Awareness Rating: ✔️**

37. I think that police and victim services can work well together in responding to crime victims and their justice needs.

The results for this item revealed that 83.7% (n = 36) of the officers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Additionally, 14.0% (n = 6) were neutral while 2.3% (n = 1) strongly disagreed but no one disagreed. **Myth Awareness Rating: ✔️**

38. I have a working relationship and/or direct line of communication with victim services staff.

The results for this item revealed that 67.5% (n = 29) of the officers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 16.3% (n = 7) were neutral and 16.3% (n = 7) strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement. **Myth Awareness Rating: ✔️ (please revisit/discuss)**

4.1.4 Other  *(also, see Appendix)*

Additional findings include:

- About half the officers (51.2%, n = 22) reported receiving specific training on responding to crime victims other than what they learned while on the job; half reported they did not (48.8%, n = 21).

- Approximately one-third of the officers made no referrals to victim services for crime victims (32.6%, n = 14) in the past year while two-thirds of the officers (67.4%, n = 29) made one or more referrals *in the past month*; specifically, over one-third made one referral (37.2%, n = 16) and almost one-third engaged in multiple referrals (30.2%, n = 13). Around 83.7% (n = 36) engaged in referrals *in the past year* while around 16.3% (n = 7) made no referrals. Of those who did, 34.9% (n = 15) - the largest category - made 16+ referrals. This was followed by 1-3 referrals (16.3%, n = 7), 7-10 referrals (11.6%, n = 5), 11-15 referrals (11.6%, n = 5), and 4-6 referrals (9.3%, n = 4).

- Referral determinations clustered together into the following themes:
The findings show that many officers take the initiative to connect crime victims with service, but there were a few who relied on the crime victims to request support. The findings demonstrate the need to include standard, routine practices whereby officers can explain services to those they encounter and, regardless of personal perceptions, extend the support. As noted by one officer, “Many people do not know what services are available and many times, just explaining what is out there for them allows them to become more open to it”. The onus of requesting services should therefore not be on victims; instead, a routine part of policing should be sharing information/resources with crime victims. Most officers said they were fine making referrals. “I tend to utilize victim services for as many things as possible”; “encouraged others to do the same”; and “still offer it” even when people appeared against it. Still, a few noted they were deterred (e.g. “uncooperative victim”; “victim denies services”; “victim’s expressed resistance/reluctance to be referred for services”; “if the victim is abusing the system for their financial gain”). Others said they might be deterred when services are difficult to reach/obtain as a result of limited staffing and not being open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Last, when asked for additional thoughts, officers commented on the positive ways by which victim services tied into their work. They said the following:

“I personally believe that the victim specialist program that is co-housed within our agency is one of the best programs I have seen / used throughout my career. The program, if used to the fullest extent by all law enforcement, could be the “tip of the spear” in getting victim based services to all victims of the various types of matters that we (police) deal with on a consistent basis. Hopefully this program continues on in some shape and form for the foreseeable future.”

“Our victim specialist has been an amazing asset to our department. I have utilized her for many different cases and have seen how her work positively helps victims. It is very beneficial to have someone with the ability to follow up and reach out especially when working a busy shift that doesn’t always allow for follow ups to occur. Overall, the victim specialist program is something that the department should continue to have. There’s not a negative thing that I can think of in regards to the program.”

“I have reached out to our victim specialist a handful of times and they are quick to respond back and get victims the services they need. I am also updated if services are given, which is nice to know because I can see the victim is getting the help they need.”

“I think victim services is a great but underused asset in the law enforcement community. I also think most communities lack enough services to meet the needs of victims in this ever changing world that has created more victims from ever evolving crimes.”
Overall, officers’ perceptions of victim services have been overwhelmingly positive and signal appreciation for the work they do in responding to and supporting crime victims.

4.2 Interviews

To further understand these perceptions, in-person interviews were conducted with a sample of officers using a semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix). The questionnaire asked a variety of questions relating to the three primary areas of interest (i.e., crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities in victim response, and victim services). Of those who agreed to participate (n = 6), 50% were male officers and 50% were female; 33.3% were patrol officers, 16.6% were detectives, while 50% held administrative positions such as sergeants, captains, or chiefs. A sample of the questions officers were asked are found in the sections that follow, along with officers’ respective responses.

4.2.1 Common Crime Victims Encountered by Officers

Who are some of the most common crime victims you encounter?

Of the six officers interviewed, common crime victims encountered included those involved in repeat domestic violence cases, children involved in sex abuse cases, juveniles within schools, the families of sexually abused children, and sexual assault victims. About two-thirds of the officers (66.6%, n = 4) noted that children are their most common crime victims, whether it be in child abuse or juvenile delinquency cases. One officer shared: “Children are the most innocent people and they’re true, true victims”. Additionally, about one-third of officers said domestic violence victims were the most common crime victims (33.3%, n = 2). One officer stated: “The majority of the victims we see are domestic violence related in which they are revictimized because they live in the same household”. Another officer said: “I feel like on patrol, it was more domestic victims, I feel like more than anything, that I would see if not daily then weekly”. The findings, however, varied by officer as some their position may impact who they encounter.

What kinds of issues/challenges do you think these (i.e., most common) crime victims have?

Of the six officers, 100% of officers (n = 6) agreed that crime victims face challenges or some sort of obstacles in their lives. About one-third (33.3%, n = 2) responded that many victims do not have the ability to leave their household where they are repeatedly victimized because of the relationships to the offender. One officer stated, “Usually, if they’re repeat victims, it’s usually a relative, cousin, friend, or a neighbor where they are stuck in this situation and it’s usually a constant vicious cycle”. Other officers said that financial burdens (16.6%, n=1), mental health issues (16.6%, n=1), and a lack of awareness of victim services (16.6%, n=1) account for the challenges crime victims experience. Different officers encounter different types of crime victims, depending on the part of the agency they are assigned to, yet all recognize that those they encounter face obstacles/challenges.

What issues/challenges do you have in responding to these (i.e., most common) crime victims?

About one-third of officers responded that there was either limited personnel or officers lacked the awareness of all available resources to provide to a victim (33.3%, n=2). One officer stated: “A lot of it has to do with manpower issues. While we are on a call with someone, we are constantly getting asked to go to other calls. We can't spend the time that we need to, to give the support that they need”. Another officer touches on lack of time: “For instance, if I get out of work at 4 pm and someone is having a crisis at 8 pm and I can’t give them a call back until the next morning or something like that it seems like I’m blowing them off where sometimes you’re just not available 24/7”. The remaining officers perceived challenges including: cases taking an emotional toll on their own mental health (16.6%, n=1), insufficient
training relating to crime victim interviews (16.6%, n=1), and a lack of ability to follow through (16.6%, n=1).

4.2.2 Officer Perceptions of Crime Victims (More Broadly)

How do crime victims vary in reactions to victimization, interactions/exchanges with police, and needs?

Officers reported that crime victims’ reactions vary based on the situation and severity of the crime. Roughly two-thirds of the officers (66.6%, n=4) expressed that, as they respond on scene, many crime victims are emotional or espouse negative reactions. One officer stated: “Some people are angry and they want to lash out at the officer that is trying to help them”, and a second officer added: “Repeat victims tend to be angry because they either can’t get the help they need or we can’t provide the help that they want.” “Sometimes they’ll get mad at us for being there or get mad at us for arresting somebody because they didn’t want that to happen…so their reaction sometimes isn’t good towards us”. In terms of financial crimes, officers reported that these victims’ reactions varied, but these victims generally held more positive attitudes toward police presence. Approximately half reported that victims of larceny or theft were willing to comply or grateful for the police as they arrived on scene (50.0%, n=3). One officer said: “A victim of larceny, that suspect victimizes that person and then takes off, so the victim is more willing to tell us what happened since that person is no longer around”, and another officer said, “People want us there because they want a resolution to their problem and they can’t do it without our help”. Based on police perspectives, crime victims were more willing to work with police when experiencing financial victimization yet more reluctant in cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, or child abuse. Whereas in larceny or theft cases, officers reported a positive reaction with the willingness to comply with law enforcement.

4.2.3 Officer Challenges Relating to Crime Victims

Are there certain calls you are tired of responding to or get frustrated with? What do you think can be done in these circumstances/cases?

Officers reported that they generally do not experience frustration with calls they respond to. However, some expressed that they have come across situations that have proved challenging, such as those involving repeated calls for the same kind of act or emotionally involved calls such as domestic violence disputes and drug overdoses. One officer said: “Sometimes it feels like it’s you responding to the same thing. If we get the same call three times in a night, you know sometimes that happens, and you just keep responding to that same thing, I feel like that part of the frustration”. Of the six officers, two-thirds (66.6%, n = 2) said they experienced frustration with domestic violence, drug overdose, and juvenile/school-related incidents while one-third (33.3%, n = 2) did not name any particular situations as frustrating. Of those experiencing this, the officers mentioned the feeling was not about responding to the calls per se, but rather due to other aspects of these cases. One officer said: “It’s not so much being tired of responding, but it's more about the victims understanding that they do not have to stay with their abuser, there are resources available to them”. However, it is important to note that staying in an abusive situation is a symptom of experiencing abuse (e.g. learned helplessness), and so is social isolation. As such, these crime victims need extra support and information. One officer also observed, “Sometimes there is a lack of housing and sometimes the female has children and she doesn’t want to get her children up and out of the house. There are so many factors that go into it that it's hard to explain to people why we go to the same domestics with the same people”.

4.2.4 Perceptions of Counseling & Familiarity with Victim Services

What are your perceptions on counseling and related social services?
All six officers interviewed believed counseling can be beneficial to crime victims (100%, n=6). Various officers believe that counseling should be de-stigmatized due to its effectiveness. One officer stated, “It’s definitely worth a try because anyone that you can help is worth it”. A second officer added: “Definitely I am for it. I try to offer it whenever I feel the need to or whenever someone asks for help. I know, I’ve had a few calls where I try to get housing or I’ve had to make a few calls just so people aren’t homeless or are having a tough time”. Although many officers believe counseling is highly beneficial for crime victims, it was challenging to draw their own perceptions on counseling for themselves as well as other officers. One-third of the officers commented on the stigma surrounding officers in counseling (33.3%, n=2). As one officer noted: “Counseling for officers has been stigmatized for a very long time and with the stuff that we see on a daily basis, this should not be the stigma and I think we should be utilizing those services ourselves”. A second officer voiced: “I feel like it’s taboo to get counseling or any help because we’re all afraid that if you say something wrong you are going to lose your job”. Findings from this question conclude that all officers see counseling in a positive light, yet when it comes to themselves, there were obstacles to seeking such support.

*Have you connected crime victims with victim advocates (a referral)?; if so, tell us about that*

Five of the six officers made referrals to crime victims for victim advocate or victim services (83.3%, n=5). One officer stated: “Yeah with all of our child sex abuse cases we are always working with an advocate. We’ll do an interview at the CAC”. Another officer said: “There is only so much we can do as officers. If we run out of our immediately available options, then that’s when I think it is a great time to call in an advocate”. All six officers said they would make a referral on scene if needed. One officer expressed: “That would be the same mindset for me with the victim advocate, you know anyone that I feel could use the service should be at least offered it and if they don’t take it that’s fine but that’s their choice”. Many officers choose to utilize the victim advocate or make a direct referral to an available victim service in the community. One of the officers never made a referral yet believed victims should be followed up with immediately and could then be referred as well (16.6%, n=1). Overall, officers appeared to have a sense of familiarity with victim services and making referrals to victims on scene.

*From your perspective, what are advantages to working with victim specialists/victim services?*

A common theme that arose throughout the interviews would be that the victim advocate was able to provide all forms of victim services. Two-thirds of officers mentioned an advantage is that the victim advocate is specialized in knowing about local resources, which alleviated a lot of pressure when they encounter crime victims (66.6%, n=3). One officer expressed: “They could take some of that weight off and contact them and be able to follow up with them”. Another officer added: “She understands how we respond to calls and how limited we are; therefore, it allows her to pick up where we left off opposed to sending someone to a specialist who is not here”. A third officer stated: “I think sometimes these victim advocates give reassurance and it makes our job more effective”. Of the other officers remaining, many of them described the victim advocate as having a positive, working relationship with the police department (66.6%, n=3). Overall, all officers found that working with the victim advocate was a positive and enlightening experience that enhanced their ability to provide the right services to victims.

*4.2.5 Other (see 7.5 in the Appendix)*

*4.3 Patterns from the Mixed-Method Approach*

When examining the response distributions for each statement/item, the results point overall to positive processes in play in APD. For example, when items were desired to fall more heavily left on
attitudinal responses (meaning, that the group would largely fall towards the strongly disagree/disagree options), we found that most officers responded accordingly, with only a few straying from the ideal areas. Likewise, when responses should have fallen right on the distribution (towards agree/strongly agree), we found most officers responded accordingly. These patterns (marked in green when appropriate) reflect group social norms that are in line with realities, which may facilitate positive encounters with crime victims. There were only a few instances where this was not the case for groups (marked in red when applicable or with notes):

- For Officers’ Perceptions of Crime Victims, Question #12 (on homeless individuals being crime victims more than crime offenders), #13 (alcohol as the main culprit of violence), #14 (those with mental health issues experience victimization more than those without), and #15 (perpetrators having histories of victimization)
- For Officers’ Perceptions of Roles/Responsibilities, Question #21 (adequate training in the academy on support when interaction on/off scene with victims), and #32 (having adequate time during calls and investigations to follow up with victims)
- Officers’ Perceptions of Victim Services had the expected distributions.

In each of the three sections, there were also questions where a notable portion may have responded in a way that diverged from the sought-after or desired response (marked in orange when relevant). These items should be revisited. They may point, to a lesser extent, to another set of group norms or it may be indicative of individual perceptions that reflect myths, misunderstanding, bias, etc. For instance, results for Questions #1 (relating to crime victims’ reluctance to report details to police), #2 (crime victims’ inability to recall details), #3 (crime victims’ cultural variation in reactions), #5 (person injured during an attempt to buy drugs is a victim), #6 (victims of financial crime face limited consequences), #7 (victims of intimate partner abuse provoke their partners’ violence), and #17 (victims receive ample support after a crime) showed the largest percentage had an awareness of these issues and how crime victims may react to trauma, but there were still a number of officers (over 10%) who selected undesirable responses.

Relating to officers’ duties, Question #22 (adequate training within the academy to understand/address diverse needs of crime victims), #23 (continuation of formal training relevant/useful to serving crime victims since graduating from the academy), #25 (trained to make sure emotionally distraught victims are not left alone and receive access to crisis intervention), #30 (knowledgeable about services in the jurisdiction), #33 (encouraged to follow up with victims). For perceptions on victim services, Question #35 (victim services are primarily for victims of violent interpersonal crimes) and #38 (having a working relationship with victim service staff). Please see Appendix for tables and charts containing full response options. Other analyses were conducted to see if perceptions varied among respondents based on one’s background (e.g., by gender, racial/ethnic group, etc.), albeit those are not included in the current report.

Because team discussions resulted in a desire to know more about themes emerging from items in various distinct areas, we considered patterns observed for questions relating to gender-based violence, financial and technology crimes, and other crime victimizations. In terms of gender-based violence, findings showed that around 60% of officers did not think victims of intimate partner violence provoked their partners’ violence, 75% did not blame women for staying in abusive relationships, 70% did not think being the bigger/stronger person in a same-sex relationship determined the abuser, 70% did not think women lie about rape or misinterpret what happened. Still, such data shows that there are percentages of officers who indicated they were neutral or subscribed to myths/misconceptions that may impact service delivery. For financial and technology crimes, almost 50% disagreed that these victims face limited consequences other than money loss compared to other crimes, and 75% agreed that technology-facilitated violence is real and should be addressed.
Areas that revealed problematic patterns warranting discussion include questions relating to persons who are homeless/unhoused, have mental health/behavioral issues, and have perpetrated violence (i.e., about 25% of officers responded that unhoused persons were more likely to be victims than offenders, slightly more than 25% responded that persons who have mental health issues are more likely to be victims than offenders, and around 40% agreed that perpetrators commonly have histories of earlier victimization). Also, about one-fifth disagreed with the statement that alcohol causes crime (however, it is a facilitator and not a causal agent). Additionally, while about half of the officers in this study recognized that crime victims do not exaggerate the extent they have been harmed, over one-third were neutral and about one-tenth thought many did. Close to half the officers did not believe crime victims received ample support in the aftermath of crime, but over 40% were neutral and almost 15% thought they did.

As for interview results, they show that officers commonly encounter and interact with vulnerable persons, such as victims/survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, etc. These officers recognize some of the many obstacles such crime victims have. It is also important for officers to recognize that being connecting to services, although beneficial, may not resolve one’s situation (as there may be issues with access, availability, engagement, etc.). More specialized training relating to these - and other - crime victims can also help increase empathy/reduce frustrations experienced by officers and increase support for crime victims.

5. Discussion

This study sought to address the following research questions:

- **RQ1**: “Do officers subscribe to victim-related myths/misconceptions?”
- **RQ2**: “Do officers believe they have a role/responsibility in victim response?”
- **RQ3**: “What are officers’ thoughts on collaborating with victim services?”

Overall, the results paint a positive picture relating to officers’ perceptions of crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities, and victim services, with some areas for improvement. Still, there were times when group norms or individual responses deviated from desirable responses. As such, these warrant attention. It appears that APD has group norms that reflect general understandings of crime victim realities, roles/responsibilities relating to victim response, and victim services, yet some myths/misconceptions were present, and officers felt there could be more preparation/training relating to serving crime victims and processing their cases. The findings point, generally, to informed understandings, which seems to correlate with officers’ high use of referrals to crime victims for victim services - about 83.7% of the officers engaged in service referrals for crime victims in the past year and around 67.4% made a referral in the past month. This is consistent with other high estimates in the research (e.g. Goodsen et al., 2022), and such referral connections have increased crime victims’ engagement with programs as well as justice processes according to agency data. Officers seemed open to working with victim services and recognized the value for crime victims.

5.1 Implications for Practice

The findings suggest that collaborative processes are working well in APD and appear promising in addressing crime victims’ justice needs. However, there is room for improvement. To maintain inclusive and collaborative community partnerships, we recommend addressing the concerns previously
highlighted while also underscoring departmental philosophies and practices that **place high priority on crime victims** and allow officers to spend more time on their investigations, follow-ups, etc. As recommended by IACP, the department’s mission should (and it does - see 7.6 in the Appendix) contain information inclusive of crime victims to assist in promoting a culture where this victim response is as important as offender-related pursuits.

Other recommendations include: **Training** for officers relating to crime victims, especially those belonging to at-risk, vulnerable, and special populations (e.g. persons who are unhoused, have mental health issues, intergenerational trauma/cycle of violence, domestic violence, etc.), and victim-offender dynamics. Additionally, since a small yet notable percentages of officers subscribed to myths relating to trauma (i.e., how it may impact one’s willingness to move forward, memory, etc.) and violence (e.g. domestic violence, sexual assault, financial, and other crimes; also, some causes of crime), we recommend continued education and ongoing discussions relating to these issues. This includes training/education inside and outside of the academy that is inclusive of community members (e.g. researchers, practitioners, educators, etc.) who serve crime victims and/or specialize in aspects of victimology (note: while the academy may include a component from the District Attorney’s Victims Unit, adding victim advocates from domestic/sexual violence agencies, researchers like criminologists, victimologists, and other experts who serve crime victims more broadly, etc. could enhance understandings that improve practices. Increasing such opportunities for officers could allow them to feel better supported and prepared for work with crime victims and have them recognize benefits of multi-agency collaboration.

Additionally, we encourage APD to promote information on community services/resources in a way that is easily accessed by officers who can share applicable service information to crime victims who they encounter – and we recommend that officers also ask these crime victims about accessibility to such services (e.g. does the crime victim have a cell phone? transportation? concerns?). To this end, it is strongly recommended that APD create, make widely accessible, and promote a community **resource sheet** for officers so they can disseminate appropriate and timely information to those they encounter. Another recommendation for the agency is to include an orientation for new officers relating to local services/support (e.g. mental health, substance abuse, etc.) and invite representatives from these places to connect with officers so they not only know who to connect with when on calls but also so they can build meaningful relationships with these practitioners. Additionally, we recommend that the academy integrates information relating to community policing through collaborative processes and understanding myths/realities relating to victimization and offending. We also encourage using lethality and other risk assessments for common crimes like domestic violence.

Most crime victims do not receive the services they need (Campbell et al., 2001). Because social reactions to crime victims’ victimization can help or conversely hinder recovery (Ullman, 1996), it is essential for officers who encounter crime victims to treat these individuals in ways that reflect understanding, empathy, and remove personal bias. **Trauma-informed and victim/survivor-centered approaches** can lower secondary victimization and enhance officer responses to crime victims, thereby increasing satisfaction with police services. As such, this should be part of officers’ toolkits. Officers’ service referrals can lead to crime victims’ engagement with services that help them process events and can be beneficial in the aftermath of crime. Additionally, because officers themselves can be crime
victims or face negative events as part of their position, we encourage practices that destigmatize officer use of mental health support services. As noted in interviews, some officers expressed that officers could benefit from counseling and other services, yet they also noted that seeking support may come with social costs. As such, the department may consider ways to build bridges to wellbeing in their organizational culture.

Given the number of crime victims in this community, we recommend increasing the number of **victim service specialists** to offer further support and, if possible, do so around the clock. Having multiple victim advocates can be advantageous as there is a strong need to serve crime victims and officers appear to value this. Last, because persons served in the community represent diverse groups, we also encourage efforts to **increase diversity** in the department and victim service agencies. This may encourage crime victims from underrepresented or marginalized groups to come forward and obtain culturally relevant care/support and care that bridges gaps between those who are crime victims and those who obtain services.

### 5.2 Conclusion

**In all, the partnership between law enforcement and victim services shows promise in increasing justice outcomes for crime victims - and so we strongly recommend its continuation.** We strongly encourage the partnership to engage in grant seeking/funding activities. This could help expand personnel serving crime victims and result in research assessing victim satisfaction with victim services or other outcomes. Further, beyond the data presented in this study, we have data from the Victim Service Specialist relating to crime victims and the services they sought, engaged with, and more, which we may analyze for patterns/trends. This data can help APD and CCS in knowing about who is being served by the specialist, what kinds of support they are requesting and using, what kinds of justice processes they have engaged with, and more (and, to this end, the researcher developed a workshop for CCS to learn how to collect/analyze data). Last, APD’s incident-based reports can help us understand whether the specialist is reaching crime victims from various backgrounds (e.g. type of crime, demographics, etc.) or whether there may be gaps in service delivery that need to be addressed.
6. Reference Page


[https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/68880NCJRS.pdf](https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/68880NCJRS.pdf)


7. Appendix
7.1 Survey

PART ONE: LAW ENFORCEMENT SURVEY

OUTLINE

PART A: OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME VICTIMS
  Crime Victim Myths (most surveys on GV - IPV, SA)
  Victim Trauma Presentation?
  Victim Blaming?

PART B: OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF ROLES/ RESPONSIBILITIES
  Perceptions of Roles/Responsibilities in victim response

PART C: OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF VICTIM SERVICES
  Perceptions of Victim/Social Services

LAW ENFORCEMENT SURVEY:

Introduction: This is an anonymous 10-minute survey to help us learn more about your perceptions as an officer relating to crime victims, your roles/responsibilities with these victims, and victims services. This data here is to help us learn about your experiences, challenges, and recommendations. Any reports generated from the data will focus on reporting overall group perceptions, meaning that no one person is ever singled out for his/her/their responses, and your responses will be kept confidential. No one in your department will have access to individual responses. We ask that you respond to all questions, although you may skip any that you are not comfortable with. We hope you will participate in this survey as it will help us to understand your perspectives and we value your input.

If you agree, please click the "OK" button, then "Next" to start the survey.

General Information

Where do you work?
  County/Sheriff’s Office
  City/Local Police Department
  Other (please specify)

What is your current position title/rank? [Write in]

How many years of service do you have? [Write in]

Perceptions (of Crime Victims)
This section will ask about perceptions/beliefs about persons you encounter. For each statement, please select the item that best reflects how you feel.

1. A crime victim’s reluctance to give a detailed account of the crime to an officer is an indicator of the accuracy of their statement.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

2. A crime victim’s inability to recall details about the event is reason to question the accuracy of his/her statement.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

3. Crime victims’ reactions differ between people with different cultural backgrounds
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

4. The type of relationship a crime victim and perpetrator have (e.g. intimate, peer, stranger) influences the victim’s emotional expressions and behavior
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

5. A person injured during an attempt to buy drugs is a victim
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

6. Victims of financial crimes face limited consequences compared to other crimes - mainly loss of money, but rarely other harms.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

7. Victims of intimate partner violence often provoke their partners’ violence.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

8. Women who stay in abusive relationships are to blame for their own victimization because if it really were bad, they would leave.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

9. When a man is accused of rape, it is more often than not due to a woman who misinterprets or lies about what happened, or seeks retaliation for some kind of relationship failure.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
10. Technology-facilitated violence (e.g. cyberbullying, cyberstalking, etc.) is not real violence and those experiencing it should ignore it.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

11. In same-sex relationships, the more masculine, bigger and/or stronger partner is typically the abuser.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

12. Homeless individuals perpetrate crime more often than they are victims of it

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

13. Alcohol is often the culprit underlying most violence

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

14. Individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health issues are more likely to be victims compared to those who are not experiencing these issues.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

15. Perpetrators of crime also commonly have histories of victimization.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

16. Many crime victims exaggerate the extent to which they have been harmed.

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

17. After a crime, victims receive ample support (e.g., therapy, counseling, shelters, etc.)

   Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

Perceptions (of Roles/Responsibilities)

This section will ask about perceptions/beliefs relating to your position. For each statement, please select the item that best reflects how you feel.

18. As an officer, my job is to respond to calls for serving and ensure safety of the public/citizens through investigating crimes and apprehending offenders; it is not to help crime victims with the needs they may have.
19. As an officer, I believe that it is my responsibility to connect crime victims with community support/resources that can assist them.

20. Too many social problems like mental health, substance abuse, and other social service needs are often hefted onto the police

21. I feel that I received adequate training while in the Academy on providing support when interacting with victims, both on and off scene.

22. I feel that I received adequate training within the Academy to address the needs and understand the differences across a diversity of victims and crime types.

23. I have continued to receive formal training that is relevant and useful on providing support when interacting with victims, both on scene and off scene, since graduating from the Academy.

24. When responding to victims on scene, I’ve been trained to immediately ensure the safety of victims, render first aid to all harmed individuals, and to request medical assistance as needed.

25. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to ensure emotionally distraught victims are not left alone and receive access to crisis intervention.

26. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to be perceptive and patient to the victim’s psychological state while obtaining evidence.

27. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to consider the method, manner, location, and timing of the victim interview to best meet the needs of the victim and gather meaningful information from him/her.
28. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to document in my report that the victim was provided with information and referrals regarding relevant victim services.

29. I feel equipped to effectively advise victims of rights and services that might help them deal with their victimization.

30. I am knowledgeable about what services for victims are available in my jurisdiction to adequately inform victims.

31. I feel confident in my abilities to effectively respond to all types of crime victims, no matter their age, race, other characteristics, such as disability or mental health status.

32. I have adequate time during calls for service and ensuing investigations to follow-up with victims of crime.

33. I am encouraged to follow-up with victims, in the aftermath of an incident/crime, outside of specific calls for service.

Perceptions (of Victim Services)

This section will ask about perceptions/beliefs about victim services. For each statement, please select the item that best reflects how you feel.

34. In general, seeking mental health or other related kinds of services is a sign of weakness; if the person were stronger, they would not need to rely on others.
35. I believe that victim services are primarily for victims of violent interpersonal crimes (e.g. physical or sexual assault).

   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

36. Victim specialists who work to raise awareness or advocate on behalf of victims often conflict with officers and the work they do.

   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

37. I think that police and victim services can work well together in responding to crime victims and their justice needs.

   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

38. I have a working relationship and/or direct line of communication with victim services staff.

   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

**Other Questions**

In the past month, how many times have you referred crime victims to victim services/specialists in the community? [Write in number or use scale below]

   0/Never  1-3 times  Once per week  Several times a week  About everyday

In the past year, how many times have you referred crime victims to victim services/specialists in the community? [Write in number or use scale below]

   0/Never  1-3 times  4-6 times  7-10 times  11/15 times  16+ times

Have you ever received specific training on responding to crime victims other than what you learned while on the job?

   No  Yes

If you have referred crime victims to victim services, what criteria do you use to determine whether to make this connection? [WRITE IN]

Does anything deter you from making referrals to victim services?: [WRITE IN]

**Basic Demographic Information**

Are you male or female?
Male          Female          Rather not say

Which best describes your level of education?

High school   Associates degree/some college   College degree (B.A./B.S.)   Graduate School

What background best describes you?

White/Caucasian (Non-Hispanic)   Black/African-American (Non-Hispanic)   Hispanic/Latinx   Other

Additional information

Is there anything else you would like us to know?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Thank you!

Thank you for your time and participation in this survey. Your participation is valuable and helps us to learn more about overall group perceptions. You may also be contacted about participating in an in-person interview to learn more about your perceptions. Thanks again!
7.2 Interview

PART TWO: INTERVIEW

Date of Interview: 
Time: 

Outline for Interview 

I. Introductions  
II. Purpose 
III. Description of Research 
IV. Consent 
V. Interview Questions 
VI. Thank officer for their participation 

INTERVIEW (START) 

I. Introductions  (take a moment to introduce yourself, and ask them to tell you a little bit about themselves) [write information officer shares here] 

How long have you been in law enforcement? _______ years of service 

What is your age? 

Do you have experience elsewhere? _____ Yes _____ No 

II. Purpose  (the purpose of this project is to learn more about officer perceptions/experiences relating to persons you encounter, roles/responsibilities, and advantages/disadvantages of some services that might be used to respond to those who have been victimized or harmed in some way) 

III. Description of Research (we are sampling officers to learn more about the three areas (i.e., perceptions/experiences of 1) persons encountered, 2) officer roles/responsibilities, and 3) crime victim services. 

IV. Consent  (do you agree to participate in the study? Verbal affirmation is needed - “Yes”). 

V. Interview Questions (see below for semi-structured interview questions) 

Tell us about an average day on the job - number calls for service, interactions, etc.? 

As an officer, what do you view to be your main responsibilities/priorities?

What are some common calls for service you see/respond to? (e.g., accidents, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc.)

When you respond to crime victims (broadly speaking, persons who have been harmed), what does this look like? Who are you with, what do you do, and does your approach differ from crime to crime?

Who are some of the most common crime victims you encounter? Are there some kinds of crime victims you see more frequently than others? (Is this due to a high prevalence/number of these crime victimizations among different people or repeat victimizations from the same people?).

Do you refer these victims to victim/social services on scene? Why? Why not?

What kinds of issues or challenges do you think these crime victims have?

What issues or challenges do you have in responding to these victims?

Why do you think these victimizations occur?
In your opinion, could anything be done to reduce or prevent these victimizations?

Are there certain calls that you are tired of responding to or get frustrated with? What do you think can be done in these circumstances/cases?

Do you believe that certain crime victims are a priority, and do you have enough time to investigate these cases? Explain

Based on your experience, how do crime victims you encounter vary in reactions to their victimization, interactions/exchanges with police, and needs based on the victimization type? For example, could you share insights relating to how victims of domestic violence or sexual assault differ from those who are victims of larceny/theft in terms of reactions, interactions with police, and/or needs/requests (what they want help with)?

Policing is hard work and there may be times when responding to crime/crime victims is especially challenging – for instance, it can be traumatic to respond to the scene and see the aftermath of a crime but not know what happens following. How do you process this?

Are officers in your department recognized or rewarded for making arrests in Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or other kinds of cases?
What are your perceptions on counseling and related social services?

What do you think a victim advocate does? What might you expect from them if you were to call them?

Do you think victims advocates and/or victim services might integrate into the work you are doing, and how?

From your perspective, what are some advantages to working with victim specialists/victim services?

From your perspective, what are some disadvantages to working with victim specialists/victim services?

Have you connected crime victims with victim advocates (e.g. a referral)?; if so, can you tell us about that - How do you decide whether or not to connect with a victim advocate? Under what circumstances would you call an advocate to help a victim? Do you only refer them if they ask for a victim advocate/services or do you inform them of the availability of victim advocates/services? Do you do this more often for victims of certain crimes?

Are you comfortable talking to sexual and family violence victims about social services in the community (and do you know of local resources)? Do you view this as part of your job?
Do you think victim services work best when they are separate/independent from law enforcement or when they work collaboratively? (If separately, why? If collaboratively, what does the ideal look like – respond together at the scene, during referral, or …?)

Might victim services alleviate some of the challenges you encounter with crime victims or help with work law enforcement has to do (e.g. informing victims of rights, death notifications, etc.)?

Are there some crime victims that victim advocates might be better for than others? Explain

Is there anything else you’d like to tell us?

Did you complete the online survey? Why/why not?

VI. Thank officer for their participation

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION.
### 7.3 Tables

#### Table 1. Officer Perceptions of Crime Victims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME VICTIMS</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREED</th>
<th>DISAGREED</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A crime victim’s reluctance to give a detailed account of the crime to an officer is an indicator of the accuracy of their statement.</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
<td>38.30%</td>
<td>36.17%</td>
<td>14.89%</td>
<td>6.38%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A crime victim’s inability to recall details about the event is reason to question the accuracy of his/her statement.</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
<td>31.91%</td>
<td>31.91%</td>
<td>27.66%</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime victims’ reactions differ between people with different cultural backgrounds.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>10.64%</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
<td>46.81%</td>
<td>17.02%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The type of relationship a crime victim and perpetrator have (e.g. intimate, peer, stranger) influences the victim’s emotional expressions and behavior.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>8.51%</td>
<td>65.96%</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person injured during an attempt to buy drugs is a victim.</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
<td>14.89%</td>
<td>21.28%</td>
<td>55.32%</td>
<td>6.38%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of financial crimes face limited consequences compared to other crimes - mainly loss of money, but rarely other harms.</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
<td>43.48%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of intimate partner violence, regardless of their background, often provoke their partners’ violence.</td>
<td>17.02%</td>
<td>42.55%</td>
<td>27.66%</td>
<td>6.38%</td>
<td>6.38%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who stay in abusive relationships are to blame for their own victimization because if it really were bad, they would leave.</td>
<td>31.91%</td>
<td>42.55%</td>
<td>19.15%</td>
<td>6.38%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a man is accused of rape, it is more often than not due to a woman who misinterprets or lies about what happened, or seeks retaliation for some kind of relationship failure.</td>
<td>12.77%</td>
<td>57.45%</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology-facilitated violence (e.g. cyberbullying, cyberstalking, etc.) is not real violence and those experiencing it should ignore it.</td>
<td>17.02%</td>
<td>57.45%</td>
<td>17.02%</td>
<td>6.38%</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In same-sex relationships, the more masculine, bigger and/or stronger partner is typically the abuser.</td>
<td>14.89%</td>
<td>55.32%</td>
<td>27.66%</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless individuals perpetrate crime more often than they are victims of it.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
<td>40.43%</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
<td>8.51%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alcohol is often the culprit underlying most violence.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2.13%</th>
<th>19.15%</th>
<th>42.55%</th>
<th>31.91%</th>
<th>4.26%</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
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<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health issues are more likely to be victims compared to those without these issues.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0.00%</th>
<th>34.04%</th>
<th>36.17%</th>
<th>27.66%</th>
<th>2.13%</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perpetrators of crime also commonly have histories of victimization.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0.00%</th>
<th>17.02%</th>
<th>42.55%</th>
<th>40.43%</th>
<th>0.00%</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many crime victims exaggerate the extent to which they have been harmed.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0.00%</th>
<th>53.19%</th>
<th>38.30%</th>
<th>6.38%</th>
<th>2.13%</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After a crime, victims receive ample support (e.g., therapy, counseling, shelters, etc.).  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4.26%</th>
<th>40.43%</th>
<th>42.55%</th>
<th>10.64%</th>
<th>2.13%</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Officer Perceptions of Officer Roles/Responsibilities in Victim Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCEPTIONS OF ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE (%)</th>
<th>DISAGREE (%)</th>
<th>NEUTRAL (%)</th>
<th>AGREE (%)</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As an officer, my job is to respond to calls for service and ensure safety of the public/citizens through investigating crimes and apprehending offenders; it is not to help crime victims with the needs they may have.</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>63.04%</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an officer, I believe that it is my responsibility to connect crime victims with community support/resources that can assist them.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>78.26%</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many social problems like mental health, substance abuse, and other social service needs are often thrown onto the police.</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>39.13%</td>
<td>39.13%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received adequate training while in the Academy on providing support when interacting with victims, both on and off scene.</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>30.43%</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>30.43%</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The training I received within the Academy helped me to address needs and understand differences across a diversity of victims and crime types.</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>28.89%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>8.89%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have continued to receive formal training that is relevant and useful on providing support when interacting with victims, both on scene and off scene, since graduating from the Academy.</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>19.57%</td>
<td>15.22%</td>
<td>56.52%</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When responding to victims on scene, I’ve been trained to immediately ensure the safety of victims, render first aid to all harmed individuals, and to request medical assistance as needed.</td>
<td>4.44%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>2.22%</td>
<td>57.78%</td>
<td>35.56%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to ensure emotionally distraught victims are not left alone and receive access to crisis intervention.</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>15.22%</td>
<td>63.04%</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to be perceptive and patient to the victim’s psychological state while obtaining evidence.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4.44%</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>8.89%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to consider the method, manner, location, and timing of the victim interview to best meet the needs of the victim and gather meaningful information from him/her.</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>65.22%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to document in my report that the victim was provided with information and referrals relating to relevant victim services.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>8.89%</td>
<td>62.22%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>8.89%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel equipped to effectively advise victims of rights and services that might help them deal with their victimization.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am knowledgeable about what services for victims are available in my jurisdiction to adequately inform victims.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in my abilities to effectively respond to all types of crime victims, no matter their age, race, other characteristics, such as disability or mental health status.</td>
<td>2.22%</td>
<td>2.22%</td>
<td>15.56%</td>
<td>57.78%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have adequate time during calls for service and ensuing investigations to follow-up with victims of crime.</td>
<td>26.67%</td>
<td>17.78%</td>
<td>31.11%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>4.44%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am encouraged to follow-up with victims, in the aftermath of an incident/crime, outside of specific calls for service.</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>26.67%</td>
<td>28.89%</td>
<td>35.56%</td>
<td>2.22%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Officer Perceptions of Victim Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCEPTIONS VICTIM SERVICES</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In general, seeking mental health or other related kinds of services is a sign of weakness; if the person were stronger, they would not need to rely on others.</td>
<td>30.23% 13</td>
<td>53.49%</td>
<td>6.98%</td>
<td>9.30%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that victim services are primarily for victims of violent interpersonal crimes (e.g. physical or sexual assault).</td>
<td>16.28% 7</td>
<td>48.84%</td>
<td>11.63%</td>
<td>23.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim specialists who work to raise awareness or advocate on behalf of victims often conflict with officers and the work they do.</td>
<td>20.93% 9</td>
<td>58.14%</td>
<td>16.28%</td>
<td>4.65%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that police and victim services can work well together in responding to crime victims and their justice needs.</td>
<td>2.33% 1</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>13.95%</td>
<td>55.81%</td>
<td>27.91%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a working relationship and/or direct line of communication with victim services staff.</td>
<td>2.33% 1</td>
<td>13.95%</td>
<td>16.28%</td>
<td>44.19%</td>
<td>23.26%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.4 Charts
Image 2. Officer Perceptions of Officer Roles/Responsibilities

Q: For each statement, please select the response that best reflects how you feel.
Image 3. Officer Perceptions of Victim Services

Q6 For each statement, please select the response that best reflects how you feel.
7.5 Other (Additional Findings)

Additional findings from the online survey included:

Referral determinations - Officers noted determinations for service referrals were made by: “Common ground”; “there’s common ground”; “distress”; “emotional status of victim/ severity of crime/ incident”; “type of crime committed”; “type of crime and victim emotion”; “someone in need of help with no other options”; “If I see a need for a service, I would make the connection”; “Mental state of the victim, disabilities and how to victim acts around their abuser”; “The situation the victim is facing in terms of lodging, and necessary essentials, their emotional state, level of crime committed against them and their desire to be connected to a specialist”; “victim’s conditions and circumstances”; “is the victim expressing concerns for safety or having questions about how to proceed or services available to help them”; “Individuals expressing a need for assistance with a troubling relationship, a loss of money, parents dealing with a crime involving their child and relatives needing assistance after a DOA”; “If the victim expresses a need for help, the severity of the crime, the age of the victim, etc.”; “I think many times you can tell if a person is open to it or not but I offer it the same to anyone who could benefit from it; “Based on how the victim is feeling and if they want to talk about what happened. Certain scenarios we are mandated to refer them to these services on calls such as DV”; “domestic incidents/mental health related calls”; “domestic”; “domestic”; “If the totality of the call indicates that a VI would benefit from speaking with the victim advocate”; “if a victim wants help”; “if a victim wants help”; “if a victim wants it”; “if the victim is willing to accept assistance”; “the victims desire for services and willingness to receive services”; “victim cooperation”; “the victim willingness for help”; “the victim”; “I always offer services and leave it up to the victim if they wish to be provided with those services”; “history of mental health incidents”; “prior experience”; and “available resources.”

Additional findings from the in-person interviews:

Relating to the partnerships with victim services - A common theme that played a role in each interview was the perception that law enforcement works best when they work collaboratively with victim services. We posed the question: “Do you think victim services work best when they are separate/independent from law enforcement or when they work collaboratively? (If separately, why? If collaboratively, what does the ideal look like - respond together at the scene, during referral, or ...?)” All six officers collectively agreed that law enforcement and victim services work best when they are working together (100%, n=6). One officer mentioned: “If we are working against one another, the victim will see that and give mixed messages, that is why it is so important to work together”. Another officer added: “...since our victim advocate, … is in the same space as us, if she has a question she understands and has more working knowledge with us”. A third officer expressed: “I feel like the victims take the help when it’s standing right in front of them rather than having to follow up and call someone later on”.

Other questions/responses from the interview transcripts may be available upon request.
7.6 Organizational Mission

Auburn Police Department’s (APD) mission is to enhance the quality of life in the City of Auburn by working cooperatively with the citizenry to enforce the laws, preserve the peace, and provide for a safe environment. There are seven values that the Auburn Police Department holds which are human dignity, respect, excellence, compassion, integrity, teamwork and accountability.

APD remains committed to expanding collaborative relationships with community organizations addressing the needs of crime victims as evidenced by various partnerships with community agencies. APD and CCS have shared a successful collaborative relationship for over fifty years on a wide range of projects including services for adult and child sexual assault and domestic violence survivors, children victimized by substance abuse, adult and juvenile offenders, the homeless population, and those who suffer from behavioral health issues. In 1988, the agencies were founding members of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) and worked to eliminate barriers, develop programming and foster collaboration in the areas of child sexual/physical assault culminating in the opening of the Child Advocacy Center in 2009. In 2018, the agencies leveraged their partnership and resources to secure funding to develop the County’s first Child Fatality Review Team as well as OVC funding to develop and implement a MDT response to and services for children victimized by substance abuse.

In 2021, CCS, APD and Auburn Enlarged School District Cayuga County’s first Handle with Care Program (HWC). The HWC Program is a model where if law enforcement encounter a child at a traumatic scene, the law enforcement agency sends a notification to the child’s school with three words, Handle with Care. This alerts the school that this child has had an interaction with law enforcement the night before (without providing any other details) and should be handled with care. This model promotes collaboration among law enforcement, schools and mental health professionals.

The Victim Specialist Program began in 2019 and was incorporated into APD’s policies on (Policy 343) in September 2020. The policy addresses the Agency’s response to crime victims and outlines a process for connecting victims to the Victim Specialist. The policy emphasizes how APD first responds to a victim is critical in determining how victims cope, initially with the immediate crisis, and later, with their recovery from the crime. It is their policy is to recognize and address the needs and rights of crime victims during each contact; support, provide access to resources, and assist victims as they continue to interact with the criminal justice system; and act as a liaison to appropriate victim assistance and service agencies beginning with our Victim Specialist.

The Victim Specialist has been invited to attend line up to train officers on the role of the VS and what they can provide.