False security or greater social inclusion? Exploring perceptions of CCTV use in public and private spaces accessed by the homeless

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Abstract

It has been well documented that owing to the vulnerability inherent in their situation and status, the homeless experience high rates of harassment and criminal victimization. And yet, the question of whether CCTV surveillance of public and private spaces – so frequently viewed by the middle classes as a positive source of potential security – might also be viewed by the homeless in similar ways. Within the present paper, I address this issue by considering the possibility that CCTV might be seen by some homeless men and women as offering: a) a measure of enhanced security for those living in the streets and in shelters, and; b) to the extent that security is conceived of as a social good, the receipt of which marks one as a citizen of the state, a means by which they can be reconstituted as something more than 'lesser citizens'. To test these ideas, I rely on data from interviews conducted with homeless service users, service providers for the homeless, and police personnel in three cities. What is revealed is a mixed set of beliefs as to the relative security and meaning of CCTV.

Keywords: Homeless; CCTV; surveillance; social inclusion; social exclusion

Introduction

Much of the literature found within the fields of sociology, criminology and urban studies examines the issue of surveillance of the homeless from perspectives that suggest that such oversight is not simply regulatory – aimed at the control of marginalized bodies in space – but that it must be understood as automatically and unquestionably repressive for the homeless population as a whole. An excellent example of this line of thought can be found in a recent article by Joe Doherty and his colleagues. On the basis of their review of

various measures implemented within several European cities, these authors state unequivocally that:

> the surveillance of public space – with electronic technology aiding and abetting border guards and security patrols – brings the 'calibration and classification' . . . long associated with homeless shelters and hostels to the street, squeezing the spaces in which the homeless can exercise their quotidian functions, denying them space where they have the freedom to '*be*' (Doherty et al. 2007: 308; see also Zedner 2003).

Yet, when such claims are made, too often little, if any, empirical support is offered in the form of the subjective feelings, beliefs and experiences of those who are said to be negatively affected by surveillance.

What we do know about the homeless is that owing to their vulnerability on the streets, this is a population that experiences high rates of harassment and criminal victimization (Huey 2007; Lee and Schreck 2005; Evans and Forsyth 2004; Hagan and McCarthy 1997). Their vulnerability to criminal victimization and lack of ability to access the forms of security that many of us take for granted, results in a frequently precarious existence. In light of this fact, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to the possibility of whether surveillance of public and private spaces might address issues related to their security. Within the present paper, I remedy this omission by exploring the possibility that CCTV surveillance systems might be understood as offering: a) a measure of security for those living in the streets and in shelters, and; b) to the extent that security is conceived of as a social good, the receipt of which marks one as a citizen of the state, a means by which the homeless can be reconstituted as something more than 'lesser citizens'.

To test these ideas, I rely on data from interviews conducted with homeless service users and service providers for the homeless in three cities: Edinburgh, Vancouver and Toronto. What this paper reveals is a significantly more complex landscape of thoughts and beliefs as to the meaning and uses of CCTV-based surveillance systems in spaces accessed by the homeless. This diverse array of views runs the gamut from homeless men and women who not only feel safer in spaces where they know that cameras are present, but who actively seek out such spaces, to those who question the utility of surveillance systems at all. Still others, more frequently service providers than their clients, agree with the position that human oversight of public and private spaces is, *de facto*, repressive for the homeless. In short, although the findings offered here are preliminary in nature, they do offer empirical support for the proposition that surveillance has a multitude of meanings for the homeless and cannot be understood solely by its repressive functions.

Method of inquiry

This paper is informed by data drawn from a larger study conducted in 2008 of available policing responses to the criminal victimization of the homeless in Edinburgh, Vancouver and Toronto.[1] In particular, I was interested in exploring the possibility of whether an outreach policing programme for the homeless in Edinburgh could or should be implemented in Canada. This programme, *Take Control*, attempts to provide homeless victims of crime with access to policing services through participating service providers, who take initial reports of victimization, relay these reports to the police on behalf of clients, and act as advocates for the homeless with the police. Although public and private CCTV systems were not the principal focus of this study, during the course of conducting interviews with homeless service users and both participating and non-participating service organizations in Edinburgh, several of the participants interviewed spoke of their perceptions of these systems within the context of discussing safety and security issues faced by the homeless. Intrigued by these observations, the interview guide was modified to include questions about CCTV. In particular, respondents were asked some variation of the following questions:

1. What are your thoughts on private CCTV systems (in shelters or other facilities for the homeless)? Do you see these cameras as increasing the safety and security of the people within the area? Why or why not?
2. What are your thoughts on public CCTV systems (in the streets or in other public spaces accessed by the homeless)? Do you think that these systems operate to enhance the security of the homeless? Or do you view them as just another way of controlling/regulating the homeless? Please explain.

Once the Edinburgh phase was completed, questions about public and private CCTV systems were added to the list of questions posed for interviewees in the Canadian research sites.

For the Canadian phase of research, two major urban centres – Toronto and Vancouver – were selected and a non-probability sample developed consisting of the maximum number of service providers who work with homeless populations in these cities. Eighteen agencies that provide shelter, drop-in services, legal services and/or outreach service agreed to participate. Staff members took part in interviews and facilitated contact with clients, who were told in advance that we would be visiting the site and, in general terms, the purpose of the research. As participating organizations include agencies that work with various sub-sections of the homeless population, the sample drawn from includes men, women, persons of colour, those with addictions, the un-housed, as well as those transitioning to more stable accommodations. Unfortunately, one of the limitations of the present study is that, given the nature of the

Table I: *Interview respondents by city*

Interviewee category	Edinburgh	Toronto	Vancouver	Total n
Community service providers	6	14	15	35
Homeless service users	2	22	12	36
Totals per city (n)	8	36	27	71

original study, the views of those who do not access services are not represented here.

Semi-structured, open-ended qualitative interviews were conducted using an interview guide that covered topics related to the goals of the original research. These topics included: 1) victimization of the homeless; 2) reporting victimization to the police; 3) reasons for failures to report victimization, and 4) respondents' views as to the potential benefits and/or limitations of a Remote Reporting programme in their city. Respondents were also asked the additional questions related to CCTV identified above. Before beginning an interview, the participant was re-briefed as to the nature of the research and the subject areas to be covered. The average interview length was one hour. All interviews were held in private spaces (primarily in offices in a service organization) and interviewees were advised that their identities would remain confidential. All interviews were recorded with the knowledge and consent of informants and interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim.

To analyse the data, interview transcripts were printed, read and then manually coded according to major themes identified. To ensure reliability, as well as to identify emergent sub-themes, transcripts were re-read and manually re-coded two further times.

For the purposes of this paper, I have extracted 8 interviews conducted in Edinburgh containing relevant material. This dataset includes 6 interviews with homeless service providers and 2 interviews with service users. This material is supplemented with data drawn from each of the interviews conducted with 14 service providers and 22 service users in Toronto and 15 service providers and 12 service users in Vancouver (see Table I).

Security and citizenship

In order to explicate the relationship of the homeless individual to the state, and in turn the obligation of the state to afford its protection to the homeless man, woman and child, this paper draws explicitly upon theories of citizenship, and in particular, on the link between citizenship and security.

It has been argued that there are two primary ways by which citizenship can be understood: as a legal status and/or as means of denoting more

encompassing normative concepts such as social inclusion and substantive equality (Marshall [1950] 1996; Walsh and Klease 2003). In an attempt at bridging these two conceptualizations, Kathleen Arnold (2003) has suggested that we might conceive of citizenship in the following terms: as the freedom to exist, to exercise one's agency, to receive the protections of the state, and to participate in the political community. Some scholars have also recently argued that beyond rights and responsibilities, there is a psychological dimension to citizenship – citizens as 'situated identities' (Barnes, Auburn and Lea 2004). As Saskia Sassen (2002: 9–10) notes, 'citizenship actually describes a number of discrete but related aspects in the relation between the individual and the polity'.

One aspect that is worth attending to is the desire among members of the polity to receive the 'protections of the state' – that is, for security. Security is conceptualized here as a public good necessary to the workings of a healthy democracy and to the provision of other forms of public and private goods (Loader and Walker 2007; Loader 1997). Security has both subjective and objective dimensions (Crawford 2006) and, while necessary to the well functioning society, can be also be understood on an individual level as critical to the attainment of self-actualization. With the material and symbolic resources necessary to manage threats in one's environment, citizens are able to turn their attention to exercising agency in their quest for personal fulfillment or in pursuit of other goals (Ericson 2007). In a recent book on the 'civilizing effects' of security, Ian Loader and Neil Walker (2007: 8) have argued that security must thus be considered as

> a 'thick' public good, one whose production has irreducibly social dimensions, a good that helps to constitute the very idea of 'publicness'. Security, in other words, is simultaneously the producer and product of forms of trust and abstract solidarity between intimates and strangers that are prerequisite to democratic political communities.

Although security – in both physical and ontological senses – is crucial to the healthy functioning of individuals and polities, as Lucia Zedner has pointed out, it should not be understood as an unqualified good. In support of this contention, Zedner notes that security 'entails several substantial paradoxes' which suggest that there can be 'too much' of it (2003: 157). While Zedner lists six paradoxes that suggest that 'too much security' is problematic for any given society, of particular relevance is her claim that the pursuit of security is inimical to social equality.

When Zedner and other social scholars speak about the relationship between security and inequality, it is often within the context of discussing how the pursuit of security entails the targeting and exclusion of one group by another. Indeed, Zedner makes this position explicit: 'security is posited as a universal good but in fact presumes social exclusion' because some group or

other class of individuals is always identified as the threat from whom citizens require protection (Zedner 2003: 166).

> The consequent potential for social exclusion is exacerbated by the common tendency, both individual and collective, to overstate exposure to risk and hence to demand ever greater protections (Zedner 2003: 166).

While this is clearly the case, what is often not discussed in relation to the security-inequality equation is another way in which inequality is often manifested: the distribution of security across a given society is unequal – that is, some groups are inherently more vulnerable to threats because of social, economic or other marginalized status, and may also consequently receive less access to public and/or private means of protection.

In an article on the impact of consumer culture on the provision of security, Ian Loader (1997: 385) has argued that the consumer market for security services is 'currently reconfiguring in some significant ways . . . what it means to be "a citizen" '. The result, Loader suggests, may not only be a fragmentation of the public policing mandate – as some citizens choose to opt out of state services in favour of those offered by the private market – but that security will become less of a public good equally accessed and consumed. He worries that the result will be a two or three-tiered system of security provision with some segments of the population living in fortress communities, while others are unable to access much, if any, security at all. While there is some merit to Loader's concern – certainly the homeless lack the capacity for accessing the private security market – it has always been the case that the homeless and other urban poor have had unequal access to both *private* and *public* forms of security.

Systems of private security available to the homeless are those that are provided, if at all, through their contact with social service agencies. As I have documented elsewhere, site security is of critical importance to service providers not only in relation to meeting government requirements for the operation of facilities, but also for establishing safe environments for clients (Huey 2008). Thus, service facilities make use of access control features, CCTV cameras and staff surveillance as means of creating environments that are perceived as being secure (Huey 2008). Despite such measures, shelters and other service sites are hardly free of crime and other forms of predation (Huey 2008). Further, clients' ability to access such sites is another issue; beds may be full, services closed, and some clients may be unwelcome because of previous failures to comply with rules (Huey 2007, 2008).

The little research that has been conducted on the ability of the homeless to access public forms of security – in particular the services of the police – suggests that many of those who are living in the streets or a street-based life are unwilling to report victimization to the authorities (Huey 2007; Rosenfeld, Jacobs and Wright 2003; McCarthy, Hagan and Martin 2002). In a study of criminal victimization among Toronto's homeless population, Novac et al.

(2007: 3) note that a number of respondents in their sample advised that 'they could not rely on the police for protection, because they were known to be homeless, had a record of offences, or anticipated being treated badly'. In relation to the treatment of homeless individuals in those neighbourhoods frequently categorized as 'skid rows', (Huey and Kemple 2007: 2316) report that

> police afford little protection from abuse, exploitation or humiliation at the hands of either other residents or community outsiders [because] the police are viewed as representing dominant political and economic interests, and as the enforcers of the moral values and cultural standards of the middle classes.

As a respondent in this study noted in response to the question, 'would anybody be comfortable reporting to the police if they were a victim of crime?': 'Why? It's not like they're going to scour the town because one junkie ripped another junkie off' (Huey and Kemple 2007: 2311). In short, there remains a significant need to examine security issues as they relate to the homeless citizen.

CCTV: A source of security for the homeless?

Since the 1950s, when closed circuit television cameras were used to monitor retail spaces and traffic flows in various sites throughout the West (Hempel and Töpfer 2002), their use in public and private spaces has proliferated significantly. In many respects, Britain remains the paradigmatic example of the 'CCTV state' (Hier 2004). However, cities across the globe have also increasingly turned to the use of public CCTV systems to respond to local crime and disorder problems (Hempel and Töpfer 2002; Botello 2007; Hier et al. 2007; Norris, McCahill and Wood 2004), while still others are developing plans to implement such systems (Haggerty, Huey and Ericson 2008). CCTV systems are commonly found in public buildings ranging from hospitals and schools to mass transit sites, sports venues to government offices (Hempel and Töpfer 2002; McCahill and Norris 2002).

CCTV systems are also ubiquitous throughout the private sector. Cameras are routinely sited within a variety of retail spaces, from corner stores to shopping malls (Hempel and Töpfer 2002), and signs outside of business and residential complexes and other forms of mass-property, frequently warn visitors that they are 'under surveillance' (Ericson 2007; Gill, Bryan and Allen 2007). And, within the private security market, home-use CCTV systems are widely available to would-be consumers seeking an array of monitoring systems (Ericson 2007; Loader 1997).

One of the most debated aspects of CCTV use is the question of whether such systems actually provide a true measure of security from criminal threat.

Writing in 1998, Short and Ditton state that this question had yet to be satisfactorily answered. Some ten years later, a clear-cut answer has failed to emerge. Some scholars have reported finding that CCTV reduces certain forms of crime both within and outside of areas immediately under surveillance (Poyner 1988, 1991; Short and Ditton 1996). However, these findings are challenged by other work that suggests that CCTV has little or no effect upon crime overall (Squires 1998), that its effects are undermined by control room problems (Smith 2004) or that it is only effective within certain cultures and/or under specific conditions (Welsh and Farrington 2004; Gill and Spriggs 2005). Still other scholars suggest that any observable reductions in crime are produced through a displacement effect (Skinns 1998; Parker 2001). In a meta-analysis of twenty-two evaluative studies on CCTV, Welsh and Farrington (2002: 41) stated that CCTV 'had a significant desirable effect on crime, although the overall reduction in crime was a rather small four per cent'.

And yet, the rise in both the use of CCTV and its applications is strongly suggestive of a belief among consumers, members of the public and government agencies that CCTV works, even if it only works to provide a *sense* of security coupled with marginal crime prevention effects (Zurawski 2007; Dixon, Levine and McAuley 2003). Within this section, I address two questions: 1) is there evidence to suggest that public or private CCTV cameras provide actual security for homeless service users (in the form of preventing crimes or other forms of victimization), and; 2) is there evidence to suggest that homeless service users *feel* more secure in spaces that are under surveillance – that is, do they experience a sense of ontological security?

In Edinburgh and Toronto, homeless service users may be subject to video surveillance in both public and private spaces, as many of the facilities that serve the homeless employ surveillance systems internally, and police-monitored CCTV cameras can be found throughout each city's centre. In Vancouver, the homeless are no less monitored within the doors of shelters and other facilities and, while not subject to police cameras outside these spaces, are under the nearly constant gaze of an array of privately owned cameras throughout the city's downtown core (Haggerty, Huey and Ericson 2008).

Interviews with homeless service users and service providers reveal an array of views as to whether these systems provide homeless clients with a measure of security from crime and other threats. However, only three members of either group offered concrete examples where cameras had had an actual security effect. We find one of those notable exceptions in the comments of a shelter worker in Toronto, who suggested that external building cameras operated by the shelter provide a notable form of crime deterrence:

> A lot of times the guys will lose their bags outside . . . or, their belongings. Also, a lot of times guys were framed for hitting or punching other guys . . . but, they know now that we have cameras here . . . and, they know we

can gather evidence and pictures for the police . . . so, it does [provide security for clients].

Another exception was noted in the response of a homeless male service user in Toronto when asked whether he would deliberately seek out public places that are under surveillance.

Q: Would you choose places because you felt safer that the cameras were there?

A: To a point. I guess it depends where. I guess in general, when you are dealing with street people, it is probably to your advantage to have cameras in case something happens. I heard that at City Hall, one guy was knifed while he was sleeping. A bunch of others were threatened with knives. Ultimately, they were able to arrest the guys because they had cameras.

For the most part, however, interviewees – particularly service providers in facilities that operate CCTV systems – shared the perspective of a shelter worker in Toronto who responded as follows to an attempt to clarify her views:

Q: So, it's more about perception of security than the actual security?

A: Yeah.

As shown in Table II, in answer to the question of whether homeless individuals feel more secure in spaces subject to CCTV surveillance, the majority of respondents interviewed in each of the three cities were of the view that CCTV cameras provide ontological security – that is the presence of cameras in facilities that serve the homeless makes clients *feel* safer. For example, a manager of a drop-in centre in Edinburgh wanted additional cameras in his facility on the ground that

Table II: *Respondent views as to whether the presence of private security cameras (within shelters and other homeless service facilities) makes homeless citizens* feel *safer?*

Interviewee category by city	Safer	Not safer	Unsure/do not know	Total n
Edinburgh				
Community service providers	5		1	6
Homeless service users		2		2
Vancouver				
Community service providers	11	3	1	15
Homeless service users	8	3	1	12
Toronto				
Community service providers	7	3	4	14
Homeless service users	13	9		22
Total (n)	44	20	7	71

> [CCTV] would really add to the security of the place . . . knowing my service users, knowing who is potentially dangerous, watching them and policing it properly so that people feel safe.

A manager at another facility in Edinburgh related the following story to illustrate what he perceived to be the importance of CCTV in fostering feelings of security among clients:

> when we had our office round on Albany Street, we had a waiting area in the front, a little kind of a foyer. One homeless guy really berated me for not having CCTV in that area because it was unsafe.

The belief that CCTV systems make private spaces more secure was also echoed in interviews with homeless service users. In a departure from the academic view of internal surveillance of shelters and other facilities as 'repressive' (Doherty et al. 2007; Arnold 2004), eighteen of the homeless participants interviewed stated that they felt safer in surveilled service facilities. For instance, in response to a question as to whether CCTV cameras in the shelter in which he was staying make him feel safer, a Toronto man replied, 'Sure it does'. Similarly, a male shelter user in Vancouver noted,

> I'm happy for it [CCTV] because there are young families in here, and kids. If you have nothing to hide, you shouldn't mind those cameras being on you, especially in this kind of environment. You have drug addicts, criminals, families and new immigrants. And that's a lot of different personalities to put in one area.

Other respondents advised that they actively sought out certain facilities because of the presence of cameras.

> Oh you can guarantee that if there were no cameras here I wouldn't be here. I know how many people come straight from jail to here. You know, I am not a woman who's going to get in an elevator with a guy unless I know I'm being watched. (Homeless woman, Vancouver)

While many cited feeling safer in the presence of cameras, almost half of the respondents interviewed stated that knowing that cameras were present within facilities had no such effect upon them. For example, in response to a question as to whether CCTV cameras made one individual in a Vancouver shelter feel safer, we drew the following response: 'cameras don't make no difference'. When asked why, he advised that he saw them as having little deterrent value: 'some of these clowns don't give a shit. Cameras or no cameras'. This view – that cameras would not deter a motivated offender – was echoed by several others. In fact, one respondent suggested that the presence of cameras may actually incite violence because 'some people like showing off'.

Table III: *Respondent views as to whether the presence of security cameras in public makes homeless citizens* feel *safer?*

Interviewee category by city	Safer	Not safer	unsure/do not know	Total n
Edinburgh				
Community service providers	4		2	6
Homeless service users		2		2
Vancouver				
Community service providers	6	8	1	15
Homeless service users	6	4	2	12
Toronto				
Community service providers	4	7	3	14
Homeless service users	9	13		22
Total (n)	29	34	8	71

Of the seven participants who were unsure whether cameras inside facilities lead service users to feel safer, six were community service providers, who were ambivalent about their use or appeared hesitant to answer the question (see Table III). The latter response is exemplified by a service provider in Toronto, who stated that she didn't feel 'qualified to answer that question'. The one homeless respondent in Vancouver who answered that he 'did not know', gave similar responses to other questions related to CCTV and generally appeared uninterested in the subject.

Twenty-nine of those interviewed were also of the view that CCTV cameras in public spaces may make the homeless feel safer. For instance, a service provider in Vancouver noted,

> Here's an odd thing: one of the reasons why we do get campers down here is that they feel safer on this block. If they weren't actually getting rousted [by security guards] as a result of being near cameras, there would be many homeless people who would flock to them because they would think, 'Well, there's cameras here, nobody's going to . . .'.

A service provider in Edinburgh was unequivocal: 'I firmly believe CCTV enhances the safety and security of not only homeless persons, but all members of public'. In discussing the public CCTV system in Edinburgh's city centre, a service provider with another organization advised that 'most of the homeless people I've spoken to anyway, they want CCTV because it makes the streets safe for them'. In response to a question as to whether she had ever deliberately sought out public or semi-public spaces under surveillance in order to feel safer, an elderly homeless female service user in Toronto related the following instance,

> My eyesight is very poor. I was once waiting for somebody at the Eaton's Centre. I stood by the cameras just for the reason that if anything had happened to me, I knew it would be on camera.

One male shelter resident in Toronto complained of the lack of public cameras in the neighbourhood, 'They should have cameras on our street. It's the worst street!'

Support for the notion that public forms of CCTV provide an ontological security effect was not, however, universal across service providers or service users. Indeed, the majority of interviewees were skeptical about the possibility that public CCTV might prevent crime. A service provider in Toronto stated that she did not feel that public cameras increase safety for her clients on the ground that 'people who are perpetrators will do it anyway. Discreetly'. This view was similarly expressed by homeless service users in both Toronto and Vancouver. For example, a shelter user stated, 'If someone is gonna do something, they're gonna do it'. In Vancouver – which has no public surveillance system as of this time of writing – several respondents had a related concern in relation to the utility of cameras in public spaces: they worried that privately owned cameras were not being monitored. As one individual stated, 'I don't know if they're being monitored, if they're being watched, or if somebody's going to come immediately to my rescue'.

Of the eight participants who stated that they were unsure or did not know whether security cameras in public spaces lead homeless individuals to feel safer, the majority were service providers, who again either felt that they did not have sufficient insight to answer the question, or who were ambivalent about camera use in public space. Ambivalence was particularly the case for Toronto service providers, who noted that the city's public system was relatively new and thus its effects unknown.

When the figures for Tables II and III are combined, it appears that a majority of respondents across each of the three cities believe that the presence of security cameras cause homeless citizens to feel safer. However, closer scrutiny reveals that respondents were more likely to cite ontological security effects in relation to cameras within service facilities than with cameras sited in public spaces, and many respondents advised that regardless of where a camera is sited, that it provides no security effects at all. Other participants were simply unsure as to their utility. In short, respondents' views were highly varied and contingent upon different factors, thus no clear-cut answers emerge. Further study to flesh out similarities and differences in attitude and beliefs among the homeless concerning real and potential security effects of CCTV is clearly necessary.

CCTV-based security: Greater inclusion or just another form of marginalization?

As stated in the introduction of this paper, academic views of CCTV have often been based on the assumption that such systems provide false security to

the consumer classes (Atkinson 2003). This perceived sense of security is said to be at the expense of youth, drug users, the homeless and other classes of the urban poor, who are easily cast as criminal threats and thus become the targets of CCTV surveillance (Atkinson 2003; Botello 2007). Certainly, research has provided empirical support for the view that CCTV and other surveillance systems rely on discriminatory attitudes to create exclusionary effects (McCahill 2002; Norris and Armstrong 1999). For example, Lomell (2004: 351) reports that CCTV operators in two sites in Oslo routinely targeted 'visibly poor people', who were 'identified by their ragged or unfashionable clothing, lack of hygiene, or gaunt look'. Targeted 'suspects' were frequently told to leave the site by security who were dispatched to 'intervene' (2004). In their study of the use of a public CCTV system in Aberystwyth, Williams and Johnstone (2000: 194) noted that

> the local police have used the cameras to remove from the streets aspects of behaviour along with individuals deemed out of time and place in order to create a pacified ambience for 'normal' people.

The result of the camera's discriminatory gaze, these scholars state,

> is likely to lead to more concentrated levels of official stigmatisation, and ultimately police intervention, for those groups which are already socially and economically marginalised (2000: 193).

What is seldom considered within the research literature is the possibility that CCTV may also lead to a sense of greater social inclusion for the homeless citizen by affording them a measure of potential security (whether it be real or perceived security) and/or creating instances where the homeless victim of crime may assert their right to access justice or be afforded equal treatment under the law. To address this omission, in this section I examine data in relation to two questions: 1) is there empirical support for the suggestion that public or private CCTV cameras might offer some homeless citizens a sense of greater social inclusion, or the possibility of greater inclusion because of real or perceived security effects? and; 2) is there evidence to support the established view that CCTV surveillance is simply another form of repression?

The idea that video surveillance might contribute to greater social inclusion of the homeless was first presented to me during an interview with an Edinburgh service provider, who explicitly linked the concept of citizenship to a homeless person's being seen as a victim of crime:

> I think [CCTV's] kind of key to [homeless] people feeling like they are citizens. I think prior to the CCTV, it would be kind of easy to make assumptions about what's gone on, but CCTV makes it quite visible when an attack occurs. The person who has been sitting begging and just somebody's just laid into them, it's now visible . . . so they can now use that as evidence

to make sure that the person gets the kind of justice that they wouldn't have
got before.

For this service provider, a critical element of social inclusion is the ability to
access justice. Where the marginal status of the homeless person operates as a
significant roadblock to accessing justice, the eye of the camera is seen as
offering a remedy: its gaze dispassionately captures and records a body of
evidence that can be used to support the homeless person's claims. The view
that CCTV footage would lend credibility to a homeless person's story was
subsequently reflected in the comments of a homeless man in Vancouver, who
not only thought that a public CCTV system would lend credence to a victim's
complaints, but also that it would ultimately serve a crime deterrent effect:

> Being 'victimized' and 'heard' . . . I think there is a lot of wrong being done
> out there. If you can lessen that, I'm all for it, even if that means a couple
> extra cameras.

As can be seen in Table IV below, such views were shared by twenty-four of
the respondents sampled, who also thought that security cameras offered a
sense of being socially included as a citizen worthy of security and/or justice.

For others, though, cameras are less about individual security and more
about policing a space for 'bad behaviour'. Indeed, twenty six respondents
were of the view that security cameras are a means of repressing the home-
less. As a homeless male shelter resident in Toronto explained, closed-circuit
TV cameras within the shelter are 'for the staff to find you doing something
bad'. On the street, they are sometimes seen as something to be avoided. 'If
I'm drinking out on in the street', one man in Toronto advised, 'I look
around for them and if I see them, then I'm going somewhere else'. A service

Table IV: *Respondent views as to whether security cameras increase or decrease homeless citizens'
sense of being socially included/socially excluded*

Interviewee category by city	Included	Excluded	Depends on how they are used	Unsure/do not know	Total n
Edinburgh					
Community service providers	4	1		1	6
Homeless service users		2			2
Vancouver					
Community service providers	4	6		5	15
Homeless service users	6	1	3	2	12
Toronto					
Community service providers	4	7	1	2	14
Homeless service users	6	9	1	6	22
Totals per city (n)	24	26	5	16	71

provider in Toronto echoed a concern heard from others about their new public surveillance system: that cameras would be used to 'push away the undesirables'.

In relation to the view that CCTV can foster a greater sense of social inclusion by offering support for homeless people's claims in situations of harassment or other abuse, several of those interviewed stated that cameras had no such positive effects. A man interviewed in Edinburgh advised that while sleeping rough one night, he had been beaten up by a group of drunken young males and that the entire incident had been captured on a police-monitored CCTV camera. When asked about the police response to the incident, he stated that he had been arrested for vagrancy and that no charges had been laid against the offending males. For this individual, CCTV is of no benefit to him, being instead a technology that the police use against the homeless'. In other instances, a more apt argument might be to suggest that the presence of a CCTV camera has a null effect. The following story told by a homeless respondent illustrates this point:

> I had gotten a flat [in a housing estate] and I was getting harassed in the stairs. But nobody would speak to the police about it, because if you're found out to be telling the police you're marked . . . [the police] didn't even give me service. They just said they investigated it, they said they checked the CCTV, which they didn't, because I know they were broken. They came back to me and blatantly said 'we checked the CCTV' I said, oh yeah? Which one was that? And they pointed to it . . . I said 'that's been broken . . . can't you see the wires hanging out at the back of it?' They said 'ohhh'.

A community service provider in Vancouver took exception to the view that CCTV – at least within the public context – fosters social inclusion on the following ground:

> So the idea of saying that a homeless person has no evidence that anything happened to them, right, despite their bodily wounds, their missing . . . their missing effects, or whatever else, unless they are recorded, is already to suggest that this is exactly as we're saying here – a subcategory of citizenship.

It is worth noting that almost one third of participants were unsure as to what impact, if any, cameras might have on a homeless individual's sense of feeling socially included or excluded. Five of those participants stated that their views are contingent on how a particular camera or camera system is operated and for what purposes. Others stated that they were unsure as to whether cameras have any discernable effect at all, or felt unqualified or unable to answer the question.

In relation to the questions posed at the outset of this section, we see that again no clear-cut answers emerge. Respondent answers reveal a mix of beliefs as to whether security effects ascribed to CCTV surveillance afford homeless

citizens a greater sense of social inclusion, are experienced as repression, are highly contingent on how they are used, or have little or no discernable effect because of one's marginalized status. Again, these findings suggest a need for future study.

Concluding remarks

Although some commentators (Doherty et al. 2007; Zedner 2003) have drawn the conclusion that CCTV surveillance is experienced by the homeless largely as a form of repression, in essence what the preceding study suggests is that the subjective experience of the camera's gaze may be a more complex, variable phenomenon for the homeless citizen than has been depicted to date. Indeed, what this initial foray into the field reveals is that attitudes towards CCTV surveillance and its real or potential security effects are as diverse among the homeless and homeless service providers, as they are among the general population (Gill, Bryan and Allen 2007).

While it is the case that little concrete evidence was offered by respondents to support the view that cameras provide *actual* security effects, many of those interviewed stated directly that they consciously seek out public and private places where cameras are sited because the presence of the camera makes them *feel* safer. However, not all respondents believe that the camera's presence prevents victimization, and whereas some see the camera's eye as representing a means of asserting citizenship claims centred on accessing justice, a slight majority of respondents view the camera's presence as little more than an intrusion into the lives of the homeless. Still another third of those interviewed remain unsure of what effects, if any, cameras have on their lives or on the lives of their clients.

As I have previously noted, the findings presented here are of a preliminary nature; however, they remain important. Little research to date has included the views of those most directly affected by public and private forms of surveillance – that is, the homeless. That the homeless are not well represented in surveillance research represents something of a paradox. They are among those most likely to be observed on CCTV – that is, made 'visible' – and, as indicated by a raft of studies in this area, they are among the least likely to be consulted for their views – that is, rendered 'invisible'. To the extent that the views of the homeless speak to fundamental issues at the heart of surveillance research – 'does CCTV work?', 'how does it work?', 'whom does it work for?' – members of this population should not be ignored.

A further paradox rests in the fact that the homeless are also among the most likely to be victimized by crime and yet, as a vulnerable population, they are frequently ignored in evaluation studies of surveillance and other anti-crime technologies. In his study of the relationship between street homelessness and crime, Scott Ballintyne (1999: 74) noted that

> Rough-sleepers are hidden victims of crime with a frequency which would not be tolerated amongst the wider population. Victim support services are not a central feature of the homelessness landscape. Victimisation is at the same time a benchmark and a consequence of rough-sleepers' social exclusion. Frequent personal victimisation helps maintain and extend the social exclusion which goes hand in hand with street homelessness.

Some ten years later, little has changed and the 'social death' (Ruddick 2002) experienced by the homeless is still manifest in a marked lack of safety in both public and private places. Within this paper I used the concept of citizenship to explicate the relationship of the homeless individual to the polity, arguing that security is an important feature of citizenship, the receipt of which marks one as a full citizen. Unequal access to security, or the inability to access this 'good' at all, can therefore only be interpreted as indicative of a lack of standing as a full citizen. Although much academic attention has focused on the relationship between social exclusion and various forms of economic, political, social and other hardships faced by the homeless, too little consideration has been paid to basic issues of safety and security for this population. Indeed, when the issue of security is discussed in relation to this population, such discussions usually centre on one of two concerns: 1) how do we protect ourselves from the homeless individual who is cast as a criminal 'other' (i.e. Kelling and Coles 1996)? or 2) how do we protect the homeless from those security measures or technologies that are seen as targeting, excluding and/or punishing? (i.e. Feldman 2004). Although very different concerns, neither is useful in relation to the issue of how we might begin providing more equal access to security in order to reduce the risk of victimization within such vulnerable communities.

In short, it is not enough that we simply consider potential benefits of a proposed security technology or the extent to which such benefits may outweigh any deleterious impacts to the homeless. Nor is it enough that we consult with members of this community in order to incorporate their views on existing or proposed security practises. What is required is further work aimed at developing modes of providing security that takes into account the subjective experiences and beliefs of those most in need of it.

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Note

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