RURAL CRIME & POLICING

Literature Review

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Introduction

This document reviews the research literature on rural crime and policing to establish the state-of-the art in respect of knowledge about these issues, and in particular to identify 'what works' in terms of effective strategy and practice in this area. The purpose of the review is to start to outline an agenda for the new Centre for Rural Policing being established by the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable of Dyfed Powys Police.

Rural crime and rural policing have received comparatively less attention from an academic and policy perspective than urban crime. Developments in urban policing, crime prevention, methods and theories have tended to be transplanted into rural settings with little in the way of evidence-based assessment of their suitability and effectiveness when applied in these new environments.

The first part of the review explores definitions of 'urban' and 'rural' in relation to crime and policing, illuminating longstanding stereotypical views of a number of key rural constructs. This leads into a discussion of the differences between rural and urban crime, and the alleged narrowing of the gap in crime disparity.

The next section focuses upon crime prevalence, notably patterns and issues surrounding the implementation of national policies into rural settings.

Specific selected crime types will be discussed in order to enhance understanding of national prevention and policing policies, and their effectiveness in rural settings. Finally, within the crime focused section of this review, the emerging problem of wildlife crime will be addressed, reflecting its status as a uniquely rural crime. The salience of this issue being that it is an issue where frameworks and practices derived from urban policing struggle to be suitably adapted.

Part two of the review moves on to discuss the policing of rural communities and the linked work of crime prevention. This section will discuss policing frameworks, styles and impacts within rural communities and environments. The review concludes with a focused examination of the plural policing capacity within rural settings and the future outlook for rural policing in challenging financial times.

Defining The Rural and Urban

Considerable attention has been paid to unpacking crime and policing concerns within urban settings. Framed in this way, rural crime has been held up as 'the antithesis to urban crime' (Wiles, 1999). This reflects how the perceived idealised 'rural' concept, has unintentionally propagated a model where solutions to urban crime problems can be rendered in ways that make them supposedly equally applicable to rural environments. However, the lack of research, focus and clarity on 'rurality' within criminology and policing, means that the validity and reliability of such an approach is vague at best. Moreover, a growing amount of research into rural life and communities suggests that the idealised picture of such settings that tends to predominate, frequently neglects and 'glosses over' very real social problems and concerns.

In an attempt to conceptualise and define 'rural', Donnermayer (1997) suggests that rural communities and areas tend to possess several common features:

● A smaller and less dense population.

● A greater familiarity and more developed social circle and community. This is supported by Websdale (1995, p.102) who states that rural communities are more likely to "know each other's business, come into regular contact with each other, and share a larger core of values than is true of people in urban areas".

● Thirdly, rural communities are much less autonomous than before. This point emphasises how social change and its development have removed some of the original and unique features of rural culture, and have closed the gap between rural and urban settings.

These defining characteristics of rural communities and environments are attributed as a causal relationship in terms of explaining why crime rates are historically lower than in urban areas. The long held assumption of rural homogeneity has contributed to the lack of research and emphasis in this area. As Donnermeyer (1997) explains, it has been presumed that heterogeneity is a trait intrinsic to the urban milieu, and that homogeneity is a trait characteristic of people and groups within specific rural communities, and that all or almost all rural communities were similar. However, recent research has started to challenge and contest these 'easy' and formulaic descriptions. In particular, whilst most research concludes that crime is less frequent in rural areas and that greater informal social control in rural areas protect against high crime rates, rural crime is reported to be on the rise in the UK, for example the cost of livestock thefts rising 25%, theft of quad bikes rising 14% (NFU, 2013).

There has been some concern expressed that urban and rural crime rates are converging, but evidence relating to such claims are varied (Weisheitt, 2005). Some commentators have argued that with modern communication and transportation, the perceived rural / urban differences are shrinking through what has been termed ''massification'' (Weishseit, 2005).

"*Rural crime is reported to be on the rise in the UK.*"

The 'Rural' difference or not?

In their influential study, Shapland & Vagg (1998) conducted detailed research across a number of diverse areas within the Midlands, UK. Interestingly, they found that types of problems and crimes affecting residents and business people seemed to be similar in towns and villages. There were clearly quantitative differences between crime rates, but the types of crime committed followed broadly similar patterns. The researchers did not find pronounced disparities in residents' perceptions of their respective areas. As such, they concluded the difference between rural and urban areas to be matters of degree, rather than marks of any clear rural / urban divide.   Property offending did differ in its characteristics, with private residential property crime being more prevalent in urban areas, whilst commercial property crime was more evident in rural localities.

Comparison of crime patterns has been emphasised in policy and practice oriented research, accompanied by efforts to standardise police responses to crime across different contexts and settings, including predominantly urban and rural territories. For example, the use of 'designing out of crime' in community settings to assist in reducing anti-social behaviour, damage and vandalism were at the fore of crime prevention and reduction strategies, the majority of which served no purpose or application to the rural setting. Another example being the pressure from both police and government on the vehicle industry to assist in reducing vehicle related crimes due to its impact on the National crime figures. The result a reduction in vehicle crime, however, rural vehicle crime had not affected the National figures and were unaffected by the overall response, vehicle crime in the rural setting is still of concern. What is neglected by such approaches is the extent to which the community impact of particular incidents might be altered by the context and setting in which they occur.   Consequently, shifting focus away from one that starts by defining 'rural crime' more towards understanding crime and its impacts at a local and intimate level, and then exploring spatial and temporal patterns that exist within particular area types, could prove beneficial to establishing

more effective service delivery.

Analysis of the literature that has been reviewed for this report reveals that a gap exists in relation to clear recording procedures for rural related incidents and crime. In a study conducted by Jones (2010), involving an examination of all four Welsh police forces' rural crime related data, marked inconsistencies in recording of rural related issues were highlighted. Jones (2010) concluded upon the basis of the information available, that police recorded crime statistics are sketchy and do not provide for comparative data. A similar perspective can be identified in Scottish research highlighting an inability to compare, and examine in detail, rural crime (Anderson, 1997). Interestingly, the crimes reported by the forces to Jones (2010) were varied and supported the earlier work conducted by Shapland & Vagg (1998) on degrees of crime in urban and rural settings. However, a key need exists for establishing better and more accurate ways of reporting, recording and categorising crime and disorder in rural areas. Being able to accurately map and forecast trends and patterns in the prevalence and distribution of crime is a fundamental prerequisite for an effective and efficient response. Concern about rising crime levels and their impacts is also reflected within research data on perceptions and fear of crime. A rural study conducted in Aberystwyth focused upon victimisation and trying to gauge its social impacts in rural areas (Koffman, 1996). The study was oriented by the premise that using official crime statistics to highlight rural crime problems inherently provides an incomplete picture of rural crime, as they tell us little about a local community's experience of crime, their level of fear, and relationships with police.   Some of the key findings reported by the author pertain to fear of crime in a semi-rural setting. The study suggested that a considerable number of offences go unreported, with over half of all incidents not brought to the attention of the police.   In addition, it was found that fear of crime among women was being driven by concern about the potential for violent and sexual related crimes. This points to the need for police and their partner agencies to focus upon

understanding not just how much crime there is and where it is happening, but also levels of vulnerability. Given that these kinds of factors are known to shape the impacts and consequences of crime, a key policy development area for the future would be in developing measures and metrics that enable these conditions to be mapped at a very local level.

The Koffman (1996) study also generated some interesting data on public perceptions of the police. Most respondents stated that the police do a fairly good job, with the least satisfied being those aged over fifty. The majority of the findings mirror those of the British Crime Survey for larger towns and cities within Wales during this period.

As Wiles (1999) emphasises, underneath the prevalent myths we can see the complexity of the social structures and relations which explain crime and criminality in different places. A focus upon recorded crime figures, accompanied by an over-riding concern with crime distributions, often omit the kinds of complexities and subtleties in rural social orders that will be explored in the following section.

Crime

The industrialisation of farming and associated technological advances in farm machinery, has made agricultural operations and their vast array of expensive equipment and supplies more attractive targets for theft by organised crime groups.

An international crime analysis completed by Donner-mayer (2007) revealed machinery and equipment theft as the greatest issue and concern for farmers. The analysis uncovered a specific ecology of farm vulnerability and risk, related to issues of space and time. Larger sized farms, operations near well-travelled road networks and those closer to large town or cities were more likely to experience a crime, especially theft (Barclay & Donnermayer, 2007, Mears et al 2007c). This pattern has also been evident within the UK. Farmers located in semi-urban areas, or near main roads were particularly vulnerable to crime in all areas, and urban-fringe farmers were often repeat victims. The lowest levels of crime were experienced by farmers living in remote locations, or in scattered communities (George Street research Ltd, 1999).

Rural theft as a crime type has tended not to register as an issue of particular concern within national and local crime figures. This neglect is partly due to the structure of national crime recording classifications, coupled with a lack of knowledge amongst police officers when recording thefts of farm vehicles. As a consequence of which, such crimes become lost and incorporated into mainstream 'urban' categorisations, diluting the apparent impact and extent of such crimes within rural environments.

Frustrations of this kind have led to some farming organi-zations creating their own crime register throughout the UK in an attempt to highlight the 'true' extent of the issue. Insurance and related statistics estimate that in 2012 rural crime cost the UK £43.2 million pounds (NFU, 2012). Within the top ten most common categories for

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'theft crimes'; five out of the ten related to machinery and vehicles - ranging from tractors to quad bikes and other related farm vehicles. The British Commercial Victimisa-tion Survey (2013) also reports that repeat victimisation of theft related crime is higher within a rural setting. An important element of this picture is that whilst the absolute number of thefts may be smaller than for rural vehicle crime figures, when comparing costs of farm vehicles with other vehicles, in conjunction with the consequences for business continuity and associated economic impacts, the social and economic harm associated with such incidents may be far higher.

Developing this understanding of crime in rural areas based

not just in terms of 'pure' numbers, but also relative impacts and harms, we can also look at the issue of fuel theft. The majority of fuel thefts involve individuals who fail to pay for fuel at petrol stations. This issue is not unique to rural communities, but, with the rise in fuel costs, fuel theft is an increasing concern for rural businesses, with fuel theft reported to have increased over 500% in the last year (Farmers Guardian, 2014). There is increasing concern being raised that these types of acquisitive crime

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FUEL THEFT

+500%

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in rural settings may be the work of organised crime groups.

This trajectory of development notwithstanding, rural settings are also vulnerable to less organised forms of offending such as vandalism, arson and varied forms of theft. Significantly, these incidents are rarely easily visible within orthodox crime statistics and the methodologies employed to capture and count them. That this is so, reiterates that a key learning point from this review is the need for better ways of recording rural crimes that both provide a more accurate picture of what is happening, but also enable a sense of their relative impact.

Domestic Violence, Drugs & Racism

Rural domestic violence, like rural racism, is for the most part an 'invisible' problem (Chakraborti and Garland 2003). McCarry and Williamson (2009) contend that there is a tendency to overlook the plight of rural victims and to overstate the similarities between the problems of rural women and those of their urban counterparts, leading to serious misunderstanding, policy neglect and injustice.

Many of the key problems and issues that have been identified with domestic violence and agency responses to it in more urban areas are also present within rural communities. But there are a series of factors that effectively compound and amplify these issues when we are focused upon rural settings. Most notably, these compounding factors include a lack of specialist services and further isolation due to distance (Coy et al, 2009). These effects are further amplified for BME women, as their ethnicity is commonly a factor in preventing them from accessing statutory services where available (Rai&Thiara 1997). The issue is especially complex for immigrant populations, where family ties are severed and unfamiliarity prevails (Gill &Rehman 2004).

Currently the literature surrounding rural domestic violence for all groups of women is limited. There is a clear need for further research in this area, especially within the UK. This should include a focus upon reducing isolation and testing the potential for more effective reporting mechanisms.

A less well documented but increasingly interesting crime within rural settings is hate crime. There are many international debates on going in relation to such crimes and the key debates can be split into two main themes. First, the abuse of migrants and non-traditional populations within rural communities. Second, the potential for new populations to import hate crime against other minority groups within rural settings. This is based upon the idea that they will bring pre-existing racist views into an area with them, acting these out in this setting. As such, both 'inter-community' and 'intra-community' tensions and conflicts in rural areas are themes acquiring increased scholarly interest. Community conflicts between young and older people, between race differences and minority ethnic groups is increasingly common (Garland & Chakraborti, 2004), with the lack of reporting and under developed relationships with migrant populations compounding the need to explore and develop an evidence base within this area. Echoing these findings is the discrimination experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities, and more specifically how this form of discrimination is a barrier to them seeking advice from services (James 2010). These experiences were referred to in interviews during discussion of why Gypsies and Travellers were reluctant to go outside of their communities for help and to services they did not know. In research conducted in Devon, James & Southern

(2007) report that four out of ten respondents said they had been discriminated against in the provision of services and six out of ten repeatedly said that they had experienced racism.

Of all of the issues relating to crime and disorder in rural communities, the most rapidly emerging in political terms is linked to both migrant populations and Human Trafficking. The majority of those trafficked are exploited within labour markets and for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Rural communities are not exempt from trafficking concerns. Labour market exploitation is commonly linked to rural and agricultural work both on land and at sea. This trend has also been documented within the US (Talbot, 2011) where it has been found that both labour and sexual exploitation issues exist within rural communities in different guises.

Rural drug concerns display unique constraints and opportunities. A Hereford and Cornwall project on drug use in rural communities highlighted the policing of drug use to be on the periphery of drug users concern, and that welfare organisations were far more their requirement (Barton, 2005). Drug production in the USA with its vast rural settings has proven problematic. Where the ease of mobility and limited surveillance has produced the ideal concealment of drug production (Weisheit, 2008). The markedly different demographic, geographic and agricultural profiles of farming within countries such as Australia and the USA, do not lend themselves to making comprehensive generalisations to the UK. That said, it could be an interesting area to explore on the grounds that the ways police recorded crime data is currently structured, it may not be immediately obvious whether there is a similar problem or not.

Wildlife Crime

Most of the crimes discussed to this point take place in both rural and urban settings. Wildlife crime is deemed to be more of a truly rural concern. Wildlife crime and specifically poaching are of growing concern globally. In the UK it has been estimated that 44% of all wildlife crime reports from across the UK provided to the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NCWU, 2014) relate to 'poaching intelligence', including the poaching of deer, fish and game and hare coursing.   Poaching is being increasingly infiltrated by violent, organised gangs due to the profits of large-scale slaughter.   This not only has an impact on the wildlife but also on the legitimacy of food entering our food chain. Increasingly 'meat scandals' are becoming evident both globally and locally, reports involving Welsh farmers in the horsemeat scandal (Wales Online, 2003) and following the selling of unfit meats, by a Welsh Farmer to food establishments, (South Wales Argus, 2013). In response, forces have initiated some very effective anti-poaching operations. An example of this is Lincolnshire police's Operation Galileo which saw 186 people dealt with in the courts in 2012 for the selling of illegal meat, and 'Operation Fox' an investigation into a large-scale fraud involving the passing of condemned poultry meat back into the human food chain, (NWSU, 2012). It appears that this form of crime is on the increase. In 2007 the Food Standards Agency set up a food-fraud database; that year it received 49 reports of food fraud compared to 1,538 in 2013 (FSA, 2013)

It is clear that crime within both rural and urban settings poses unique challenges and patterns. Understanding the emerging trends, and their origins at a local and regional level is paramount.

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National programmes are of benefit to promote public awareness and concern, and to ensure best practice delivery to all. However, it is evident from the literature that further analysis and bespoke solutions to rural specific crimes is required.

Rural Policing – 'Style & Strategy'

Policing practice varies enormously between and within particular locations and contexts. Mawby (2011) delineates three principal policing models: local policing in the USA; centralized policing within France and Canada; and regional policing in the UK and Australia. Mawby states, contrary to rural mythology, that rural policing rarely takes place in homogenous communities, concluding that it is "more important for officers to be representative of justice than to be representative of the population" (Mawby, 2011, 62). Equally, while it may be possible to identify a model of policing that is most appropriate for an area, it would be naive to advocate some mythological rural police system as a panacea to today's police problems. This oversimplifies rural society and limits debate about rural crime (Donnermayer 2007).The 'localistic' model of policing does not necessarily translate to an idealized form of community policing as officers may be encouraged to favour particular social groups and sectional interests. In addition, given the major restructuring of rural communities through increased migration and broader changes across policing, identifying and developing new ways to deliver policing services is crucial.

There is limited research literature available that documents the uniqueness of policing rural areas. Fenwick et al (2011), in their in-depth Scottish study, address the gap in the literature and conducted focus groups with officers in Scotland who policed rural areas concentrating on two key questions. These focused upon the unique demands of different rural areas and what unique approaches to policing have been developed in response? Interestingly, the findings revealed that rural policing has a fundamentally different nature to urban policing, requiring active community engagement to be effective. The impact of resource availability and level of crime results in lower ranking officers often completing work that in other settings would be assigned to officers of a higher rank and/or from specialist units.

The key findings from the research were:

● The importance of negotiating what works and establishing legitimacy, consent and providing a high degree of direct accountability.

● Being in the community or being of the community; distinguishing the need for a long term and meaningful relationship within the community.

● Rural Policing as community engagement: with a far greater reliance upon communication, involvement and mediation.

● Volume Vs breadth; understanding the impact and breadth of rural crime compared with the recorded statistics.

● Balancing priorities with diminishing resources; involvement at a community level in local forums and planning, as well as the visibility of the uniform.

● Rural practice shaped by rural realities; for example technology, landscape, religious practices, geography and infrastructure.

Overall, the study found that rural policing makes unique demands on officers, and fulfils a unique function in strengthening communities and inter-professional linkages. Another aspect closely associated with policing style is how national policy guides police response requirements that can alter police actions. This is clearly illustrated in France where the adoption of a statistics based management regimen designed to maximize and flex adjustments in police resource requirements adversely affected rural policing capabilities. In simple terms, positions where workload was considered light were eliminated in order to facilitate a focus upon higher work load areas. This resulted in riots, and the need for local authorities to substitute the local policing needs by creating new public services to regulate community life (Monjardet, 1996). This resonates with some complex UK performance arrangements. For example it is not at all clear that the performance management procedures such as COMPSTAT are in accord with defining issues and problems of policing rural areas. The less formal and more localised requirements and concerns are often not evident in generalistic crime data. Additionally, and in conflict with policy and practice requirements in certain areas such as domestic violence and drug misuse services to support overarching national policies are lacking.

Multi-lateralised Policing

'Multilateralised' policing (Mawby, 2011) is a concept that allows us to identify a number of alternative commissioners or providers of policing.

The adoption of Police Community Support Officers and the attempted reinvigoration of the role of special constable has increased the policing capability and resource pool to some degree. However, there is an uneven distribution of this resource across forces within the UK. Historically, there have been more special constables within rural areas than in urban ones. However, current figures reveal, that numbers are steadily in decline. Wales reported the greatest decline in Special Constables in 2012 and the overall UK figures declined by a further 5% in 2013 (Home Office, 2012 & Home Office 2014). Increasing this pool would be of benefit to harnessing local knowledge and increased resources, however, this could lead to unintended consequences of the public perception of 'policing on the cheap'.

Looking beyond the responsibilities of formal policing agencies, it is clear that an important role in rural policing is played by organisations such as Neighbourhood Watch, Farm Watch and Online Watch Link (OWL).

The perception of plural policing within rural communities is also a careful balance as surveys have shown that the greater reliance on special constables and neighbourhood schemes can be interpreted as a lack of commitment from government by placing , what is perceived by many as,' second rate' policing services within rural communities

(Cornish Crime Survey 2004; Mawby, 2007 & 2009). In addition, publicly voiced concerns about ineffective partnerships with 'nobody in charge' and the lack of agency's taking responsibility for action and managing problems has been problematic (Goodwin 1998).

Balancing the different needs of a variety of stakeholders is difficult. Evidence suggests establishing a community policing engagement methodology with local specialists and insider relationship to assist in messaging and gaining the required response is essential to the policing of rural communities (Fenwick 2012).

Looking beyond the responsibilities of formal policing agencies, it is clear that an important role in rural policing is played by organisations such as Neighbourhood Watch, Farm Watch and Online Watch Link (OWL). The capabilities and capacity of such responses vary and a coherent approach to capture the benefits of each is required. In addition to which, the use of new communication technology platforms and their functioning within rural communities requires further exploration, as it is something of a gap in the literature. It is recorded that over 47% of farmers now use social media to communicate (NFU 2013) and that much of the social organisation of rural life is facilitated through such methods, albeit there are obvious hindrances to this such as Wi-Fi coverage and internet availability. The need to formalise and evaluate the need for and usage of social media within more isolated areas is required to inform current rural crime and policing strategies.

Conclusion

The criminological tradition has offered little of theoretical significance in its analysis of crime in rural areas. Attempts to explain the distinctions in crime rates and also in rural perceptions of crime have too frequently fallen back on global explanations, and have failed to present a more incisive view which is attuned to rural-urban differences.

The main aim of this paper has been to present a preliminary exploration of issues pertinent to better understanding rural policing and tackling rural crime. Placing rural crime under the spotlight has highlighted several key gaps with regards to crime prevention, statistical crime analysis and the need to harness the opportunities that are evident within the multi-lateralised policing capabilities and networks to best fit local communities. Critically, our analysis has identified several specific areas where further empirical and/or conceptual work is required. These knowledge gaps could be good starting points for the work programme of the Centre of Excellence on Rural Policing; inasmuch as they constitute areas where value could be added and an original contribution to knowledge made.

Based upon our review of the available research literature, the areas where we recommend work could be usefully commissioned are to:

- Explore a range of ways to gauge and understand perceptions of the police in rural communities and the impact of crime.

- Study the ways police record rural crime data and intelligence and its geographical and temporal mapping possibilities.

- Investigate the range of support provided for and police response to domestic violence and sexual violence.

- Develop relationships with migrant populations and understanding their policing needs.

- Document the use of Specialist Officers and the Special Constabulary in rural communities.

- Better harness and coordinate the use of Watch Schemes to support local policing requirements.

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