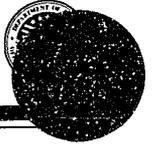


U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
National Institute of Justice



National Institute of Justice

R e s e a r c h R e p o r t

Crime and Policing in Rural and Small-Town America: An Overview of the Issues

154354

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- *Evaluate the effectiveness of criminal justice programs* and identify programs that promise to be successful if continued or repeated.
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Crime and Policing in Rural and Small-Town America: An Overview of the Issues

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A Final Summary Report Presented to the National Institute of Justice

September 1995

**U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs**

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**CRIME AND POLICING IN RURAL AND SMALL-TOWN AMERICA:
AN OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUES**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Police practices vary from one area to another, and studying the varieties of police behavior can yield important insights into the role of police in a community. These variations have been noted in regard to styles of policing, bureaucratic structure, patterns of crime, and the demands of local communities. Curiously, most studies of variations in police behavior have been conducted in urban settings. By comparison, rural and small-town policing has been relatively neglected. Similarly, studies of crime often focus on national patterns that imply a homogeneity across areas, which is patently absurd. And, like studies of police, studies of crime that do consider variations from one area to the next frequently focus on comparisons among urban areas, occasionally make rural-urban comparisons, but rarely examine differences among rural areas.

Neglecting rural policing and rural crime is justifiable if there is nothing about policing, crime, or the community in rural environments that precludes directly applying knowledge from urban areas. Although the literature on rural crime and justice is comparatively sparse, it is evident that rural environments are distinct from urban environments in ways that affect policing, crime, and public policy.

This report examines what is known about crime and policing in rural areas and small towns and how they are shaped by the rural environment. To place this discussion in a larger context, it is useful to consider broad reasons why a study of rural and small-town policing is important. There are several practical reasons for studying policing and rural crime:

- Rural crime is a problem and may be increasing.
- Rural areas are often used to produce drugs, such as marijuana and methamphetamines.
- Rural areas are used as transshipment points for such illegal goods as drugs, stolen auto parts, and illegal cash.
- Some have argued that urban crime networks, such as street gangs, are setting up "franchises" or "satellite operations" in rural areas.
- Rural areas have special crime problems, such as organized theft of livestock, equipment, and grain, for which urban police are poorly trained, yet which may be enormously costly to both the victim and society. In addition to the practical benefits of studying rural crime and justice is the potential for advancing our understanding of the police function in society. If crime and justice are vastly different in rural and urban areas, an understanding of those differences might improve our understanding of crime and policing more generally.

The volume of literature on rural crime and rural policing is scant, particularly when compared with the amount of published work based on urban departments. To complicate matters, what literature is available is scattered across a variety of disciplines. As this discussion will show, there are many references to rural crime and rural justice. Unfortunately, they are often only fragments of information or brief asides in discussions of other issues. Rural crime is worthy of further study, but for that study to be useful, it must tie together these scattered pieces of information. The synthesis that follows will do just that, beginning with what is known about the environment in which rural crime and rural justice take place.

II. THE STUDY

The information presented here is drawn from a larger study of rural and small-town crime and policing funded by the National Institute of Justice. The study involved collecting and reviewing relevant literature, conducting focus groups with rural sheriffs and municipal police, locating and cataloging data sets relevant to rural crime, and interviewing officials familiar with rural crime and rural policing. This paper is based primarily on the literature review, supplemented with information from interviews conducted to date, and with information provided by two focus groups. The purpose of this report is not to reach firm conclusions but to stimulate thinking and suggest patterns that merit further study.

The Literature Review

Rural and small-town crime issues can be found in the literature from a variety of fields and from sources that vary greatly in their concern with detail and accuracy. In addition, rural issues are often only some of many variables embedded in a larger discussion and not mentioned in either the title or the abstract. Thus, using keyword searches to quickly go through indexes will identify many sources but will miss many others.

Regarding the academic literature, we focused our search efforts on materials published since 1980. Indexes prior to 1980 were much less comprehensive. Further, much of the literature prior to 1980 had already been assembled by Hubbard and Horton (1980) in *Rural Crime and Criminal Justice: A Selected Bibliography*. A computerized search through the DIALOG Information Retrieval Service led to an examination of the following indexes and abstracts:

- *Criminal Justice Abstracts.*
- *Criminology and Penology Abstracts.*
- *Criminal Justice Periodical Index.*
- *Current Contents.*
- *Sociological Abstracts.*
- *Social Work Abstracts.*
- *Human Resources Abstracts.*
- *PAIS Bulletin: Public Affairs Information Service.*

In addition, we also kept abreast of developing literature by routinely examining the annual programs for the American Society of Criminology and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences and copies of appropriate presentations. Finally, we used what those involved in meta-analysis refer to as the "ancestry method" by which the references in identified publications are searched to identify other publications on the same topic.

This study was highly exploratory and was intended to go beyond the existing academic literature to include emerging issues and patterns, as well as those issues that had been neglected in the academic literature. This aspect of the study included searching newspapers

and magazines and directly contacting organizations and agencies that might have produced documents relevant to rural crime. These organizations include the National Crime Prevention Association, the Committee for Arson Control, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Center for Diseases Control and Prevention, the American Bar Association, Klanwatch, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and a number of organizations concerned with Native American law.

Interviews

More than 130 people from a variety of perspectives relevant to rural and small-town crime have been interviewed thus far, including sheriffs, municipal chiefs, State police, conservation officers, judges, attorneys, coroners, and other authorities in specific areas. Interviews are still being conducted, and completed interviews are still being analyzed. Most of the focus has been on sheriffs and municipal chiefs from a variety of rural areas throughout the country. The discussion that follows is based primarily on the literature review but includes information from a focus group of 6 rural sheriffs from around the country, and from interviews with sheriffs in rural counties (n=46) and police chiefs in small towns in rural areas (n=28). Of these 74 interviews, 13 (18 percent) were done face-to-face and the remainder were conducted by telephone. While we wanted to include jurisdictions of varying sizes, the focus was on the most rural jurisdictions. In jurisdictions where the chief was interviewed, the size of the community ranged from 900 to 50,000 people, with an average of 7,500 people. Departments ranged in size from 1 to 66 uniformed officers, with an average of 17 officers. Where county sheriffs were interviewed, departments ranged in size from 1 to 182 uniformed officers, with an average of 23 officers. This figure is a very rough approximation, since department size is difficult to compute for sheriffs, who sometimes have high numbers of part-time employees; moreover, jail staff sometimes include sworn officers, and in some counties there are a large number of reserves. The population of the counties served by these sheriffs ranged from 2,100 to 712,000 people, with only 8 of the 46 sheriffs working in a county of more than 50,000.

As an exploratory study, locating subjects for interviews focused on identifying individuals from the widest possible range of social and physical environments, rather than on average rural settings. Indeed, the differences across rural areas are so substantial that speaking of averages is probably misleading and is certainly of limited utility for policy. Rural Montana and rural Delaware, for example, probably have as many differences as similarities. To capture as much of this range as possible, we selected police officers from across the country, attempting to include every State and giving a particular focus to the 18 States identified as rural by the U.S. Government's General Accounting Office (GAO, 1990).

As an exploratory study we felt it important to use unstructured interviews. Appreciating rural variation, and always keeping it in mind, we were still interested in identifying common themes. Thus, we used the available literature and information gathered from a series of preliminary interviews to develop a list of questions to be covered in the course of the interviews, but we also encouraged subjects to explore other areas they thought were

important. Questions included crime concerns, police-citizen interactions, police practices, and the working relationship between police and other criminal justice agencies. The length of interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 2 hours but was typically about 40 minutes.

Summary

This document reviews what is known about rural crime and rural justice. The review is based on literature from a wide range of sources, most published since 1980. Information from these published sources is supplemented with information from focus groups and interviews with sheriffs and municipal police in rural areas and small towns. The purpose is to demonstrate the features of rural areas that shape crime and justice. In addition, this study is designed to stimulate thinking about rural crime and highlight issues that merit further attention. Our examination of rural crime and rural justice begins with the fundamental question, "What is rural?"

III. WHAT IS RURAL?

Basic to the study of rural and small-town crime and justice is an understanding of the term "rural." Like concepts such as "truth," "beauty," or "justice," everyone knows the term rural, but no one can define the term very precisely. As one sheriff told us, "Rural is like pornography; I can't precisely define it but I know it when I see it." As with pornography, our difficulty in precisely defining the term rural may complicate our applying it or measuring it in specific cases, but it does not render the term useless. We will argue that while a precise definition may be difficult, there is something to the idea of rural that distinguishes it in important ways from what is called urban. Further, this distinction has important implications for understanding the social dynamics of crime and for developing informed criminal justice policy that applies to a variety of settings.

How the term rural is defined is important for three reasons. First, in *conceptual* terms, our definition describes exactly what we are studying and indicates the terms by which we are thinking about it. Thus, it clarifies the content of our ideas. Second, our *operational* definition of rural shapes how it is measured and empirically counted. Thus, it determines the kind of data we collect on rural crime and shapes the findings we can reach with these data. And finally, the way rural is defined has a *practical* impact on who is targeted by policies addressing rural crime issues and what kinds of interventions are relevant. Thus, it can shape the policies developed from our research.

Despite its apparent simplicity in commonsense terms, there is nothing mechanical or straightforward about developing a working definition of rural. The following discussion initially outlines some of the basic conceptual questions involved in specifying what rural means. Next, it moves to a discussion of how rural can be measured empirically. Finally, we consider some of the key analytical issues regarding how the rural variable might be used to expand our knowledge of crime and policing in different areas.

Conceptual Issues

While rural is commonly treated as a single idea—both in research and in everyday conversations—careful reviews have pointed out its multidimensional nature (Bealer et al., 1965; Deavers, 1992; Miller and Luloff, 1981). Most uses of the term "rural" reflect a mixture of different ways in which a place (or a group of people) can be described as distinctively rural. Drawing on the discussion of Bealer et al. (1965), we can identify at least four basic dimensions of meaning: demographic, economic or occupational, social structural, and cultural.

Demographic. The most obvious sense of what rural means is the demographic dimension, referring simply to how many people are concentrated in an area, along with where they are located. Rural means areas of sparse populations, either in the small total number of people who live there or in their low density (i.e., ratio of people to available space). A related but

distinct idea is that rural places are also geographically isolated, physically removed from other population areas and from major urban centers. For example, outlying (less densely populated) areas of counties that contain a large city often are not counted as really rural, because they are near urban populations; instead, they are labeled sometimes as "metropolitan fringe" or "rurban" (Ball, 1977).

A third element of the demographic meaning of rural is location outside the political boundaries of an urban area. People and places located inside the city limits (or other formally designated metropolitan boundaries) are counted as urban, while everything located outside the city limits is labeled rural. The issue is not population size or density, but location relative to official urban boundary designations. An area may have few people yet not be considered rural, because it is within urban or metropolitan boundaries. Defining rural in demographic terms depicts it as an objective, numerical, physical attribute of a place or a population, referring only to where people live and how many of them live there—not to who they are or what they do.

Economic. Beyond mere demographics, the idea of rural also has an economic meaning. It may imply something about how the people in the area make a living. We stereotypically think of rural as a place where people tend to "live off the land" (i.e., are close to nature) and depend directly on the exploitation of natural resources. In its traditional meaning, rural is treated as a synonym for agricultural (i.e., rural means an area where farming is done). Note that this defines rural in occupational terms, applying it to less technologically developed communities where the economy is simple, nonindustrial, and labor intensive. While this obviously refers to farming, it might also include mining, fishing, logging, or hunting as primary subsistence occupations.

While the identification with farming remains a central part of the common meaning of rural, technological and economic developments during this century have radically changed the role of agriculture in the U.S. economy. Today farming ranks well behind manufacturing and service provision as a source of employment and income in rural areas. Less than 10 percent of the rural labor force is significantly involved in farming, and less than 10 percent of the rural population actually live on farms. Thus, the common definition of rural, which simply equates it with farming, needs to be modified to remain relevant to contemporary conditions.

Rural as an economic classification also may be defined by the functional simplicity of an area—i.e., there is a single common industry within the community in which most residents are engaged, resulting in a simple division of labor and a low degree of economic specialization. Here rural implies a lack of variety in the ways people make a living and a low degree of functional differentiation in the community's social structure.

Social structural. Another common meaning of rural includes social structural considerations that reflect the distinctive character of social life and social order in rural communities. In social structural terms, the defining attributes of rural life are intimacy, informality, and homogeneity. By virtue of the smaller numbers of people in rural settings,

social connections are more immediate (face-to-face), more intense or primary (often based on kinship ties), and more complete (based on knowledge of personal biographies rather than formal role positions). Because of the greater familiarity, rural social order is maintained through informal mechanisms of social control (based on kinship and personal acquaintance) rather than through formal mechanisms and legal institutions.

Cultural. The fourth component of the common meaning of rural is cultural, referring to distinctive sets of attitudes, beliefs, values, knowledge systems, and behaviors that characterize the people living in rural areas. Rural culture has been pictured as traditional, slow to change, provincial, and fatalistic (Bealer et al., 1965, p. 264). Rural culture has also been characterized as relatively intolerant of diversity and unaccepting of outsiders. In short, rural is a world view, a way of thinking that is different from that common among urban dwellers. Viewing rural as a cultural phenomenon that goes beyond geographic or demographic conditions has much intuitive appeal. This is expressed in the common wisdom that "You can take the boy out of the country but you can't take the country out of the boy." However, defining rural in cultural terms complicates the attempt to do systematic research on rural events. First, it makes the idea of rural rather subjective and difficult to study objectively, because the idea of culture is notoriously difficult to quantify. Moreover, it limits by definition issues that might otherwise be regarded as matters for empirical investigation (e.g., variations in outlooks, attitudes, or lifestyles across rural and urban areas).

Given the many dimensions of rural and the confusion this can produce, what is the correct definition of the term? Unfortunately, there is no one correct definition of rural. Our aim is not to prescribe a correct meaning but to outline the forms of meaning already in use and to suggest how these may be compared. Researchers such as Deaver (1992) favor restricting the meaning of rural to a single dimension. Almost always this is the demographic dimension, because it is more objective and measurable; it also seems most conceptually basic and straightforward. Alternatively, we may define rural as a conceptual umbrella term referring to a set of multiple variables and dimensions that cannot be neatly reduced to a single category or number without losing much of its real meaning. In a broad summary review such as this, we are utilizing the latter approach to be as inclusive as possible. Whatever approach is selected, researchers need to spell out clearly how rural is defined in their study, along with how this relates to the data being collected and analyzed.

Besides the problem of multiple content dimensions, several additional analytical issues affect how rural is defined and studied. One is whether rural is defined in *positive* or *negative* terms. In the former, rural is defined by the presence of certain conditions in an area, such as farming as a major economic activity. In the latter, rural is implicitly defined as whatever is left after urban areas have been designated. The dominant research emphasis in recent decades on urban crime and metropolitan policing has generally resulted in widespread reliance on such negative definitions. Strictly speaking, such a definition by negation has little meaningful content of its own, constituting an amorphous "leftover" category that will be difficult to interpret and for which effective policy development will be impossible.

Moreover, the implied meaning of rural varies according to how urban is defined and measured. For example, the Census Bureau makes a distinction between urban (incorporated areas of at least 2,500 population) and metropolitan (counties containing an urban center with at least 50,000 population). Sometimes rural is negatively defined as "not urban" and in other instances as "not metropolitan," depending on which data are used in an analysis. What are seemingly equivalent (negative) definitions may lead to different classifications of the same community.

Another issue is whether rural should be conceptualized in *relative* terms or in *absolute* terms. Defining rural in terms of farming activity tends to ascribe to it a fixed, objective character. Alternatively, many descriptions of rural define its content as relative to specific social and historical contexts. This especially applies when rural is defined by contrast to urban areas, where whether an area is counted as rural depends on what is considered urban in that time and place. For example, in 1790 there were only 8 cities in the U.S. with more than 5,000 people, and the largest city (Philadelphia) had only 42,000 people. What was considered a large city in 1790 would hardly be classified that way today. Indeed, many recent studies (which count "small towns and cities" as part of the rural landscape) define rural to include communities of 5,000 to 50,000 people. Even in the last few decades, Census Bureau definitions of what counts as an urban place have been modified. The relativity may be based on social structural or cultural considerations, as may be seen when comparing the meaning of rural in different regions of the country. Many rural areas of Delaware and New Jersey would be considered urban by residents of Wyoming or Montana.

Another issue in determining what rural means is the level of description or reference. To what kinds of things does the term meaningfully apply? In the simplest terms, rural may be used to characterize single residences or persons, as in survey research that is individually administered. Usually, however, rural refers to a space rather than an individual. The most basic is a focus on rural simply as all *unincorporated areas* (i.e., areas outside of city limits). At the second level, rural can refer to *communities*, including not only incorporated areas but also small towns and villages. Third, for some purposes it is useful to focus on *rural counties*. A complicating factor is that sizes of counties as units of analysis vary tremendously between eastern and western States. Usually, this level involves distinguishing rural counties from urban and suburban counties. Fourth, it is possible to aggregate even further and focus on *rural States*, in which the entire State is classified as either rural or nonrural, based on population characteristics (population density or percentage in urban places) or economic factors (importance of farming, mining, and fishing, within the State's economy). Finally, some research is focused on *rural counties*, although this level is not a concern of most studies, which have a distinctly local focus, or for the present study. Each of these levels has been used when referring to the idea of rural. The meaning of rural, and its implications for crime and criminal justice, are very different across these levels. As Farmer et al. (1992) note, data collected at different levels of aggregation (e.g., local municipalities vs. counties) do not necessarily yield the same findings, especially as analyses become complex and multivariate.

Another conceptual issue in specifying what rural means is how to depict the distinction between rural and urban—as qualitative or quantitative. Is rural-urban a dichotomy describing two discrete categories of social settings with distinctly different social dynamics? This corresponds to most discussions of the rural ideas in recent policy-focused research, since policy decisions tend to be structured in terms of either-or alternatives. Or, is rural-urban more reasonably viewed as a continuum that varies between rural and urban extremes with lots of gradations representing varying degrees of rurality? This latter possibility corresponds to social science descriptions where rurality and urbanism are treated as more complex dimensions of community organization.

The translation of numbers into categories raises additional questions. How many categories are needed to capture the real differences between rural and urban—two (rural and urban); three (rural, urban, suburban); four (rural-farm, rural-nonfarm, urban, suburban); more (rural-open country, rural-village, nonmetropolitan small city, metropolitan fringe, metropolitan center)? The number chosen seems arbitrary and debatable, reflecting a compromise between convenience and validity rather than naturally occurring divisions.

The discussion above has focused on the variety of complications that enter into any effort to clarify what we mean by rural. Given these complications and the absence of any single standard, it is not surprising that researchers have adopted a wide range of strategies for measuring the concept. Our focus now shifts to a discussion of these strategies to illustrate some of the options available for measuring the concept.

Measurement Issues

Beyond the problem of spelling out what rural means conceptually is the task of measuring it. While most people have a strong and conceptually rich sense of what rural means, when it comes to measuring the idea and collecting data, practical constraints often require that the content of rural be greatly narrowed. As the preceding discussion suggests, the idea of rural can be defined in a variety of ways with widely varying results.

Operational definitions of rural in research on crime and criminal justice have taken several basic approaches. These include measurements by intuition, by demographic conditions, by occupational characteristics, by composite measures, and by self-ratings. The most common approach is not to explicitly define rural at all, but to rely on common intuitive understandings of the term. This presumes that the meaning of rural is so familiar and widely shared that it requires no specification or elaboration. Cases are chosen for analysis based on *prima facie* judgments about their rural character. In our review of 90 studies on rural crime, 62 percent gave no explicit (i.e., measurable) definition of the term rural. Moreover, the most widely cited collection of research studies and policy analyses of rural crime (Carter et al., 1982) includes no operational definition of rural, even though a number of chapters analyze statistical data on rural crime and report empirical rural-urban comparisons. The lack of a precise definition for rural in this collection reflects the clear presumption that its meaning is well understood in everyday language.

The intuitive or subjective approach to measuring rural draws heavily on occupational, social structural, and cultural factors for deciding when an area (or population) is really rural. Such factors seem obvious and intuitive but are very difficult to quantify. Often the reliance on intuitive or implicit definitions works well only for average cases which fit neatly into unambiguous ideal categories of rural-urban. It does not address the variations that may occur across rural settings about which there is less consensus. Such an implicit approach also hides the underlying principles or criteria by which rural conditions are recognized and understood. As a result, it limits the ability to generalize beyond the specific cases being studied, and in the process, limits both the knowledge and the policy applications that the research should generate.

Beyond intuitive judgment, the second approach to measuring rural makes use of demographic information, utilizing categories and criteria of rural-urban from the Federal census. This has the advantage of yielding data that are objective, official, standardized, quantitative, and readily available. However, because the Census Bureau's primary focus is on measuring degrees of urbanism, rural places are defined and measured in negative terms. In census data, the category of rural simply includes those areas or populations left over after urban categories have been counted. The rural-urban distinction from census data is primarily based on population size, which is numerical and unambiguous. However, it technically leads to two different definitions of rural. One refers to rural as *nonmetropolitan* areas, while the other refers to *nonurban* areas. In census terms, *metropolitan* refers to geographic areas containing an urbanized center of at least 50,000 persons plus contiguous areas having strong economic and social ties to that urban center. In contrast, *urban* refers to *incorporated places* containing at least 2,500 population. The metropolitan category applies to counties as units of data, while the urban category applies to municipalities (or census-designated equivalents). Thus, while both Census Bureau definitions of rural are based on a combination of geographical area and population size, the two are not identical. Some urban areas are located within nonmetropolitan counties, and metropolitan counties often contain nonurban areas. This means that the size of the rural population, as well as its location across geographic areas, will depend on which negative definition is used. Overall, approximately 25 percent of the U.S. population was nonurban in 1990, while less than 23 percent was nonmetropolitan. However, the disagreement is larger than the difference between these two percentages because the two groups have only partial overlap. At least 20 million persons categorized as rural residents by one definition were not counted as rural by the other. It is important to note that neither of the Census Bureau's definitions of rural include information about the social, economic, occupational, or cultural characteristics of areas.

Use of demographic statistics to measure rural places and populations necessarily involves two additional issues. One is the numerical criterion used to distinguish rural from urban. What number best captures the change from rural to urban? Even among agencies of the Federal Government, a variety of different official definitions of rural appear. As already noted, the Census Bureau uses two different numbers to define urban and metropolitan. The Farmer's Home Administration rural housing loan program includes cities up to 20,000

population in its rural category. In contrast, the Rural Electrification Act excludes places with more than 1,500 population from its rural category, while the community development block grant program counts cities as rural (nonurban) with populations up to 50,000 (Gilford, Nelson, and Ingram, 1981).

The other issue is the number of categories needed to reasonably distinguish rural and urban settings. The most extensive and systematic elaboration, developed by the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Butler, 1990) uses a combination of demographic and geographic information to yield 10 categories of ruralism-urbanism. It classifies counties by both their urban population size as well as their proximity to major urban centers, which allows for a much more detailed classification of places from completely rural to highly urban. For nonmetropolitan areas, this approach considers whether they are *adjacent* to a metropolitan county, including both physical proximity and whether the county provides significant employment to that adjacent area. Thus, the USDA-ERS system takes into account suburbs, "bedroom communities," outlying small towns, nonurbanized fringe areas, and remote "completely rural" areas. However, like most elaborations of rural-urban, this system remains urban-focused, providing more and finer gradations among urban places. It distinguishes only two categories of rural (adjacent and nonadjacent to metropolitan areas) versus eight categories of urban. This system does not include economic, occupation, social, or cultural considerations, however, being based only on census-provided demographic data.

A third approach to measuring rural places is based on occupational or economic information. Where rural is conceptualized in terms of farm country, the ruralness of areas is often measured by the prevalence of farming as a major economic activity or by other agricultural events as indicators of farming. This approach might also include data on indicators of other primary extractive industries, such as mining, fishing, or logging; however, these are much less frequently used, given the common identification between rural areas and farming. As noted earlier, this rural-farming equation is increasingly incorrect and inappropriate, limiting its usefulness as a general measurement strategy. Note, however, that occupational may sometimes be combined with demographic data to provide the useful subdivision of rural-farm and rural-nonfarm.

A fourth approach seeks to incorporate cultural, social, and lifestyle factors into the measurement of rural (Miller and Luloff, 1981). While no researchers define or measure rural solely by such factors (which are notoriously hard to measure objectively), some researchers have developed *composite* measurements of rurality (Lowe and Peek, 1974; Willits and Bealer, 1967). These combine demographic data with additional sociological information on the attitudes, values, and social practices of populations in areas. While appealing for theoretical reasons, this form of measurement is more much difficult to carry out, since the necessary data are not readily available or systematically collected. Moreover, research results have been inconclusive as to whether it actually works better than simple demographic indicators in differentiating among rural areas or between rural and urban populations.

A final method for measuring rurality make use of self-identifications. In contrast to census-data definitions, questionnaire surveys frequently ask respondents to self-categorize their communities, based on their perceptions of its demographic and social characteristics. For example, a common survey question asks respondents to indicate whether they live in an urban, suburban, small town, or rural area; or they may be asked to make a more detailed and quantitative description (e.g., reporting the estimated population of their community). Many national surveys use this format (e.g., surveys of delinquent behavior among high school students, household surveys of drug use or of domestic violence among the general adult population). In practice, the criteria applied here probably lead to classifications that are not far from the Census Bureau's definition. However, they are by nature more subjective and unverifiable.

Mostly, the study of rural has focused on counties, communities, or more localized places as the unit of analysis. Although not as commonly used, another strategy is to identify rural States. The GAO, for example, defines rural States as those with fewer than 50 people per square mile and identifies 18 States that meet this criterion (GAO, 1990). Rather than defining States as either rural or urban, another strategy is to order States from the most rural to the most urban, based on their population density (Photiadis and Simoni, 1983). The two-category system used by the GAO is the simpler of the two approaches and is undoubtedly easier to apply when considering national policies and programs for rural areas. For example, if the Federal Government were to fund anti-crime programs for rural areas, it would be useful to have a single (and simple) cutoff that would separate rural areas from others. However, simplicity and ease of application come at a price. It is a system based on a State's *overall* population density, without regard for how that population is spread out across the State. In reality many States have *both* rural and urban regions. For example, under the GAO's definition Utah is a rural State because in 1990 its population density was 21 people per square mile. However, 87 percent of Utah's population live in *urban* areas. In contrast, Vermont is classified as nonrural, even though only 32 percent of its citizens live in urban areas.

Perhaps the best illustration of the inherent difficulties in declaring States as rural or nonrural based on population density is California. With an average of 191 people per square mile in 1990, California is clearly a nonrural State under the GAO definition. And yet, as the following description shows, California has both rural and urban elements:

California is an urban state that defines its own scale. Some 95 percent of the state's 30 million persons live in metropolitan areas, yet it is the leading agricultural producer in the United States. . . . However, behind the urban front is a significant, although frequently overlooked, rural backwater that has 2.2 million persons. Were a rural California to be a state by itself, its population would be larger than 18 other states, and it would have four congressional representatives (Bradshaw, 1992).

Although making a simple urban-rural distinction may be useful for policy purposes, using gradations of rural may make more sense for analytical (i.e., research) purposes. In this case, the focus may be not only on whether an area is rural but also on the extent of rurality.

Analytical Issues

Deciding what is meant by rural requires thinking through the many meanings of the term and settling on a system for measuring it. In addition, those who would study rural issues must sort through a series of issues related to how the idea will be used in the analysis. These analytical issues include:

Rural as a quantitative variable versus a typological category. In quantitative terms, rural refers to a continuum of social contexts that ranges most rural to most urban. The rurality of communities can be measured by their location along this scale. In typological terms, rural refers to a discrete category of social places that is distinctly and qualitatively different from the category of urban places. Rural represents a dichotomous either-or classification of places, rather than a scalable quantity of some attribute.

Rural as a scope condition versus a causal variable. The former means that analysis of social processes (e.g., of crime and criminal justice) must be done separately for rural and urban settings. The causal models that apply to people in rural settings only hold in that context; they do not work in urban places; and the converse is true as well. This means that separate models or explanations must be developed and tested in rural and settings. The latter view means the inclusion of rurality as one more variable in a multivariate model, which can be estimated and tested along with the other causal variables. The effects of rurality are additive with the other social variables in a single common model that applies across both rural and urban settings.

General versus localized analysis. Emphasis on the substantial heterogeneity of rural settings can mean that different communities (or types of communities) must be studied and explained separately, adopting a more idiographic, case-study approach that preserves the individual uniqueness of different rural settings or regions. Alternatively, much research, especially that aimed at formulation of national policies and programs, deals with rural as a more homogenous category of settings. Emphasis on the basic commonalities of rural settings means that rural events can be analyzed as more general and uniform processes. Data from different locations and regions can be pooled together to develop more reliable and broadly applicable explanations of rural trends.

Rural as a single variable versus many different variables. The first implies that the rurality of a place can be sensibly summarized in a single number or classification. The second argues that each place must be indexed by a number of different variables, each one reflecting a different facet of the concept of rural (e.g., population density, social isolation, economic modes of production, networks of social ties, cultural values, identities and memberships, divisions of labor, role structures, cultural values, and technology). While it

might appear that the solution is to combine these dimensions into a single indicator of rural, it is unclear how this could be done. Even if the substantial problems of measuring each dimension were overcome, it is unclear how much weight should be attached to each. For example, it has already been suggested that the occupational dimension is probably less important than the cultural, but *how much* less?

Rural as a dependent versus an independent variable. Demographic measures (such as population density) are generally treated *only* as independent variables. That is, we assume that density may shape behavior (such as crime) and not that behavior shapes density. In contrast, cultural definitions are equally well suited to be handled as either dependent or independent variables. For example, rural culture may shape the occurrence of violent crime. In this example, rural culture is treated as an independent variable. At the same time, there are dozens of popular books exploring how a particularly heinous crime rattles the value system and beliefs of small town residents. In this case rural culture is treated as a dependent variable, as having been influenced by something else.

Finally, the dimension of rural selected both shapes and is shaped by the research methods used. For example, understanding rural culture and patterns of interaction may require either case studies or observational research. In contrast, survey research and official records may be the best way to study the occupational and demographic dimensions. And, a focus on multiple dimensions may require multiple methods.

These analytical issues must be taken into account in any research on rural crime and rural justice. While they may be of lesser immediate concern to policymakers and program implementers, considering them can provide both groups with valuable insights. Appreciating these analytical issues makes it easier to evaluate research used in policy and program decisions and to determine what research is most needed in the future.

Problematic Assumptions

Research on rural crime has uniformly reflected several misguided assumptions about rural life and social control that seem especially problematic. These have limited our efforts to understand what rural crime actually involves and how it differs from the more familiar processes of urban crime. These assumptions are the following:

Magnitude assumption. This is the presumption that the differences between rural and urban processes are essentially a matter of sizes, numbers, or amounts. This reflects a belief that social control varies in *quantity* but not in *quality* across urban and rural areas. Urban areas are composed of more people, more interactions, more strangers, fewer kinship connections, more problems, and fewer informal controls—but the same basic variables apply to each area. In these terms, the rural-urban distinction reflects differences of degree rather than differences of kind. While this assumption is conveniently consistent with the linear statistical models and data analytic procedures that are currently popular in criminological research, it seems highly presumptuous, if not simply wrong. We cannot simply assume that

rural areas are "urban processes written small," at least without more empirical evidence to indicate it is reasonable to do this.

Homogeneity assumption. This is the common presumption that rural areas are very similar in their social conditions and dynamics and can thus be treated as the undifferentiated hinterland (i.e., what is true of one rural area will be generally true of them all). This represents a kind of "urban myopia" that seems to characterize much criminological research, expressing an urban stereotype of rural areas captured in the phrase, "Once you leave the city, sticks is sticks." While it appears that enormous variations exist across rural areas, there has been little to document these variations and their implications for crime and criminal justice policy.

Implicit definition assumption. This is the assumption that rural and urban are simple and familiar categories that need little explication, elaboration, or definition. It assumes that everyone knows what rural means and that everyone defines it in pretty much the same terms. It also assumes that the operational definitions used in collecting and reporting crime statistics correspond closely with the common conceptual definitions of rural and urban. In reality, what constitutes rural and how it is to be measured has never been resolved in a consistent manner.

Summary

In conducting interviews for this study, the question we were most commonly asked is our definition of rural. It is a question to which we have no simple answer. In fact, rural police officials with whom we spoke were themselves usually vague about the term. The purpose of this discussion is not to develop a single correct definition of rural that can become a standard for all circumstances. To the contrary, it is hoped that the discussion illustrates that a single definition is not only impossible but undesirable. The correct definition of rural will vary from one situation to the next, depending on why it is used, what data are available for measuring the idea, to whom it is applied, and the way in which the idea of rural will be used in the analysis. For example, policymakers may prefer the two-category distinction of rural versus nonrural in establishing programs to fund rural crime initiatives. In contrast, two categories may be too few for the researcher who is determining crime patterns across varying degrees of rurality.

Rather than a concrete measurable idea, the concept of rural might best be described as a "sensitizing concept." Some years ago, Herbert Blumer made the distinction between definitive or precisely measurable concepts and sensitizing concepts:

A definitive concept [has] . . . a clear definition in terms of attributes or fixed benchmarks. . . . A sensitizing concept lacks such specification of attributes or benchmarks Instead, it gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look.

Hundreds of our concepts—like culture, institutions, social structure, mores, and personality—are not definitive concepts but are sensitizing in nature. They lack precise reference and have no bench marks which allow a clean-cut identification of a specific instance and of its content. Instead, they rest on a general sense of what is relevant (Blumer, 1953, p. 7).

Understanding rural as a sensitizing concept is also a good reminder that the study of rural crime should not become so focused on defining rural that it becomes bogged down. The most reasonable strategy is for studies to select a definition that (1) makes intuitive sense, (2) is relatively easy to use, and (3) allows for comparisons with other research. In addition, researchers should, whenever possible, make their definition explicit. Our own study requires that the issue be approached from a number of directions, including a review of the relevant literature, interviews with rural police, and the reanalysis of existing data that include information about rural areas. Consequently, we have approached the issue with considerable flexibility, allowing for a wide range of definitions when using the work of others. Similarly, when selecting rural sheriffs and police chiefs to interview, we have consciously included areas that cover a wide range of definitions of rural. This is done both to reflect a sensitivity to the range of definitions used and to help us better understand the consequences of using various definitions.

IV. THE RURAL SETTING OF CRIME AND JUSTICE

It is impossible to understand rural and small-town crime and justice without also understanding the rural environment. Unfortunately, policies and programs to deal with rural crime are often based on the assumption that what works in an urban area will also work in rural and small-town America. A 1977 conference on justice in rural areas reached a conclusion that still seems appropriate today:

Generally, the participants believed that key decisionmakers lack knowledge about the critical features and the great diversity of the rural environment. . . . Lacking its own data base, rural America often gets urban solutions for rural problems. . . . The conference participants expressed concern time and again for what they perceived to be widespread imposition of the urban way of doing things on rural areas, and for the fact that too often the planning for rural areas takes place in urban centers (Cronk, 1977, pp. 12-13).

More recently, Sampson (1986) found consistent and substantial rural-urban differences in national victimization data and noted that rural crime rates are not only lower but may be the result of different factors. For example, poverty was related to crime only in urban areas, whereas in rural areas the percentage of dwellings that were multiple-family structures was a more important predictor of crime rates. He concluded that:

. . . to the extent that criminal justice programs and theoretical responses are based on the underlying assumption that the structural determinants of crime in suburban and rural areas are the same as those in central cities, then such policies and theoretical models may be misguided (p. 21).

In describing cultural and geographical features of the rural environment, this section will demonstrate why it is a mistake to apply urban definitions and urban policies to rural crime and rural justice. Crime and criminal justice do not exist in a vacuum. The rural setting has several features that shape both crime and policing.

Geographic Isolation

The effects of geography alone pose serious problems for rural justice, having an impact on such things as response time and the speed with which support services can be provided. Mayhew and Levinger (1977), for example, contradict UCR data (discussed below) and suggest that the homicide rate in rural areas is higher and that this "could easily be explained by the differential access to medical treatment in rural and urban areas, even if the actual violence is the same in both, or even higher in cities (p. 457)." Similarly, rural officers can expect a longer wait for backup. Geographic isolation can be a particular problem for the many rural officers who patrol alone and whose interactions with suspects have no witnesses. The large geographic areas covered by some rural police also make responding to calls more expensive and more time consuming than in urban areas. As a New Mexico State trooper

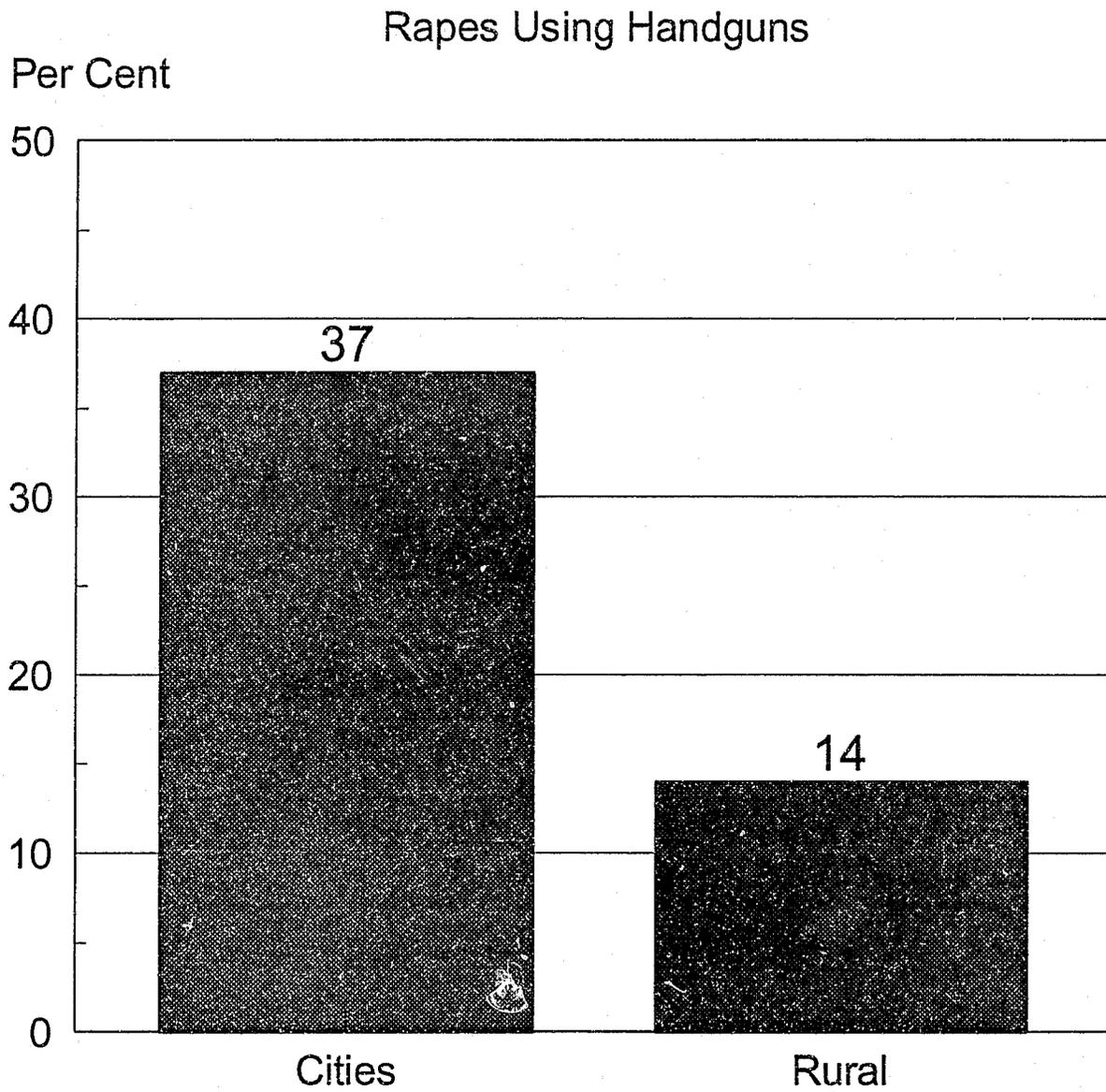
reported, "When I was in Vietnam, a medic was never more than 10 minutes away. Here you can wait by a wreck on the highway for 45 minutes before help gets there (Applebome, 1987, p. 11)."

Geography is also likely to have different meanings in different parts of the country. A common unit of study for rural issues is the county, which is also a convenient unit regarding police agencies and the courts. As one moves from East to West, however, counties tend to be much larger in square miles. "The size of most counties was determined in the horse-and-buggy era; they tend to be about the right size to allow anyone within their boundaries to get to the county seat and back within a day or within several hours by horse (Lorch, 1989, p. 223)." As a result of how counties were formed, they vary substantially in size. Arizona, for example, has only 15 counties that average more than 7,500 square miles each—about the size of the State of New Jersey. By comparison, Georgia has 159 counties that average only 370 square miles each. Counties also differ in terrain, population density, and climate. For example, periodically hikers are lost in the mountains of Montana for a week or two before they find other people. Some Alaskan villages are so remote they are even difficult to reach by airplane (Marenin and Copus, 1991). In contrast, one would be hard pressed to find similar circumstances in the "wilds" of Delaware or New Jersey. Clearly, rural officers in different parts of the country are likely to confront very different problems.

Availability of Guns

The presence of guns is another area in which rural and urban populations differ, a difference that raises questions about assumptions often made regarding the link between guns and crime. Summarizing much of the literature on guns, Wright, Rossi, and Daly (1983) observed that gun ownership was much more prevalent in rural areas. In large cities about 27 percent of residents own some kind of gun, but in rural areas more than 75 percent of citizens are gun owners (p. 106). While many of the rural gun owners are hunters who use rifles, the percentage of citizens owning handguns is also higher in rural areas than in central cities (23 percent vs. 15 percent). It is sometimes assumed that the availability of guns is directly related to gun-related violence, but the case of rural areas shows that the relationship is far more complex. Ironically, rural residents may be the most likely to own guns, but they are also *least* likely to use guns in the commission of crimes. Bordua and Lizotte (1979) found that crime was lowest in counties with the highest rates of legal firearm ownership. Similarly, a 1990 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that the rate of crimes committed with handguns was more than three times as great in urban areas—5.9 per 100,000 in central cities versus 1.7 per 100,000 in nonmetropolitan areas (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1990). Similarly, the National Crime Survey (NCS) reports that in cities 37 percent of rapes are committed with a handgun, compared with only 14 percent of rapes in rural areas (Bachman, 1992b). (See Figure 1.) Urban and rural areas are more similar regarding the use of handguns in robberies, but rural percentages are still lower (35 percent vs. 30 percent).

Figure 1.



Source: Constructed from data presented in Bachman, 1992b.

To say that guns are less involved in rural crimes is not to say they are less relevant for rural police. For some kinds of rural crime they may represent a particular problem. For example, the problem of rural isolation is compounded for some rural police, such as conservation officers, who routinely confront people who are legitimately armed (e.g., hunters). Walsh and Donovan's (1984) study of Pennsylvania conservation officers found that "72.7 percent have had a deadly weapon pointed at them in the performance of their duty. Further, 25.2 percent report being assaulted in the performance of their duty but for some undisclosed reason did not report this to management (p. 335)."

Economic Factors

High rates of poverty have long been associated with high rates of crime, but studies of the link between poverty and crime are almost always conducted in urban areas. It is possible that the link between poverty and crime is different in rural and urban areas. For example, Sampson's (1986) analysis of national victimization survey data found that poverty was associated with victimization, but *only in central cities*.

Curiously, crime is less frequent in rural areas, although poverty is a common problem in rural America. Weinberg (1987), for example, has observed that of the 159 high-poverty counties in the United States in 1979, only 6 contained a city with a population of 25,000 or more. Further, Garkovich (1991) reports that the 1986 poverty rate in rural areas was 50 percent higher than in urban areas. While urban researchers express alarm over the rise of a "permanent underclass," this deep socioeconomic and cultural isolation "has been the experience of generations of the rural poor, especially in the South, where rigid social stratification has kept them out of the mainstream (Tickamyer and Duncan, 1990)." Unemployment is generally higher in rural areas, and for those who are employed, wages are substantially lower. In recent decades the eroding economic base of many rural areas has encouraged high levels of outmigration by young educated and skilled workers (Garkovich, 1989), which makes future economic development more difficult.

It is startling that the numerous studies of poverty and crime have so seriously neglected rural areas. Aside from rural-urban comparisons, some research has focused on the relationship between economic factors and crime among rural areas. Arthur (1991) found that such economic factors as unemployment, poverty level, and dependence on government assistance were related to both violent and property crime rates in rural counties, though the relationship was stronger for property crime.

The economic problems facing rural areas, of course, can be expected to not only affect the nature and extent of crime but the resources available to rural law enforcement as well. Where tax bases are small, rural police departments are likely to be seriously understaffed and to do without important resources. One of the authors of this review interviewed a local sheriff whose desk consisted of an old door stretched across two half-height filing cabinets and who had a total of three officers (including himself) to patrol a large county 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

While poverty is common in many rural areas, some rural areas have experienced economic development. This is perhaps most evident in "collar counties" that surround some major urban areas. An analysis of census data show that the *highest* poverty levels are in rural nonmetropolitan areas, while the *lowest* poverty levels are in rural locations within metropolitan areas (Fuguitt, Brown, and Beale, 1989). In addition, pockets of rural growth can be based on a variety of factors, such as tourism, retirement communities, industry, natural resources, or government services (Bradshaw and Blakely, 1982). A study of population shifts over time shows a steady outmigration of young people from rural areas, combined with an influx of senior citizens, leading the population of rural America to be older, on average, than that of the country as a whole (Johnson, 1993). It also appears that two types of rural county were most likely to experience population growth in the 1980's: those whose economies were based on tourism and those serving a large number of retirees (Johnson, 1993).

Aside from the increase in crime that commonly accompanies rapid growth (Freudenburg and Jones, 1991), the basis of economic development may lead to unique crime problems. For example, a growing tourism industry not only requires local police to deal with victims or offenders who are transient, but the demands on police and the resources to pay for police services may fluctuate throughout the year, and from one year to the next. One police chief told us that his community's permanent population was about 4,000 people, but during the height of tourist season the population could reach as high as 70,000 people.

Finally, there is a body of research that concludes that rural areas experiencing rapid growth will also experience a disproportionately large increase in crime. In a meta-analysis of empirical studies, Freudenburg and Jones (1991), report that 21 of 23 studies found that in rural communities with rapid population growth, crime grew even faster; in fact, crime increased at 3 to 4 times the speed at which the population increased. They speculate that "the accumulated findings may best be explained by narrowly focusing on changes in community social structure that accompany rapid growth and result in impairment of informal social controls, particularly the declines in a community's density of acquaintanceship (p. 619)."

Race and Ethnicity

Studies of the link between race and crime are common and almost exclusively draw on urban samples. There is no reason to assume that race and crime issues are similar across rural and urban areas, particularly since the minority population is not evenly distributed across rural and urban America. Before addressing the issue of race and crime, it will be useful to first look at rural-urban differences in the distribution of minorities in the United States.

Race in rural areas. U.S. Census data show that rural areas are substantially more homogeneous than are central cities on both race and ethnicity. While the U.S. population as a whole is 80 percent white, the population in central cities is 66 percent white. This

contrasts sharply with the population in rural areas, which is 89 percent white. As with many other issues, these national averages mask large interstate variations. While space precludes an analysis of each State, Table 1 shows those States with the greatest and the least marked rural-urban differences in the percentage of the population that is white. It is worth noting that the difference between these two groups is mainly due to differences in the proportion of minorities in central cities and not because of variations across rural areas.

It is also true that the national trend for minorities to be underrepresented in rural areas is not true for all States. In fact, there are seven States in which minorities are more represented in rural areas than in urban areas: Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, and South Dakota. In these States the high minority population in rural areas represents large Native American (or Eskimo) populations. Native Americans are the only minority group in America that is routinely more represented in rural areas than in central cities.

TABLE 1: States With the Highest and the Lowest Rural-Central City Differences in Percentage of the Population That Is White, 1990.

	STATE	Percent White Central Cities	Percent White Rural Areas	Difference (RA-CC)
HIGHEST DIFFERENCE	Delaware	42%	85%	43 Points
	Illinois	56%	98%	42 Points
	Michigan	50%	97%	47 Points
	New York	56%	97%	41 Points
LOWEST DIFFERENCE	Maine	97%	99%	2 Points
	Utah	90%	93%	3 Points
	Vermont	97%	99%	2 Points
	Wyoming	93%	94%	1 Point

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, (1990), Table 4.

Ethnicity in rural areas. The Census Bureau makes a distinction between race and ethnicity. In particular, Hispanics are considered an *ethnic* group, and not a racial category. In terms of race, Hispanic residents are categorized as white. While this distinction between race and ethnicity may not be recognized and used by most of the public, any discussion based on census data must, of necessity, use Census Bureau categories. The census data show that Hispanic citizens are much more represented in urban areas (14.8 percent) than in rural areas (2.6 percent). Further, only three States have a higher percentage of Hispanics in

rural areas than in urban areas (Hawaii, Idaho, and Washington). In none of these States do Hispanics constitute more than 8 percent of the population. Several States do have rather large percentages of Hispanic residents in rural areas, including New Mexico (34 percent), Texas (16 percent), Arizona (14 percent), California (13 percent), and Colorado (11 percent).

Race, ethnicity, and crime. Although seldom explored, it appears that the links between race and crime differ across rural, suburban, and urban areas. Bachman's (1992b) examination of National Crime Survey (NCS) data reveal that blacks had higher victimization rates than whites for violent crimes in urban areas. In rural areas the violent crime victimization rate for whites was higher than that for blacks. For such property crimes as burglary and household larceny, blacks had higher rates of victimization across community sizes.

Using NCS data, Laub (1983b) estimated personal crime offending rates for communities of varying sizes. He found that while crime rates did generally increase with community size, there were threshold sizes above which increases were small or nonexistent. For whites, this threshold was 2,500 residents or more, while for blacks the threshold community size was 10,000 or more. Interestingly, race differences across community sizes varied by age. For juveniles ages 12 to 17, metro-nonmetro differences in offending rates are greater for blacks than for whites. Correspondingly, black-white differences in offending rates for juveniles are greater in central cities than outside central cities. For adults, these differences practically disappear.

Jensen, Stauss, and Harris (1977) used several data sources to study crimes by American Indians. They found that crime rates for Indians were higher than for white, black, or Asian Americans. They also found that white-Indian differences were smaller in rural than in urban areas. Indian crime rates in urban areas were four times those of whites, while in rural areas Indian crime was only about 2 1/2 times that of whites.

Finally, while urban studies of the street-level drug trade reflect a high representation of minorities, Weisheit's (1992) study of rural marijuana cultivators found that blacks were almost completely absent. This was true even though entering marijuana cultivation required few resources and few specialized skills.

Although the minority population may be smaller in rural areas, it is unclear why their *rates* relative to whites should be lower in rural areas, or why minorities have such a small role in marijuana cultivation. This pattern should be explored further, for it raises questions about assumed links between race and crime.

While there is little research on the link between race and crime in rural areas, the link between ethnicity and crime in rural areas has been completely ignored. Further, while racial and ethnic minorities tend to be underrepresented in rural areas, there are counties with large minority populations. Studying the link between race/ethnicity and crime in rural areas may prove useful for understanding the link between these social characteristics and crime in other settings.

Social Climate

Precisely measuring and describing a local culture is extremely difficult. There are, however, several features of rural culture that distinguish it from urban culture and have implications for rural policing and rural crime. Among these features of rural culture are *informal control*, *a mistrust of government*, and *a reluctance to share internal problems*.

Informal control. It is commonly believed that rural areas are more governed by informal social control than are urban areas, and there is some empirical evidence to support this proposition. Lysterly and Skipper (1981), for example, found rural delinquency was less common than urban delinquency and concluded that "certain structural conditions in rural areas tend to foster conformity among the juvenile population (p. 39)." Similarly, Gardner and Shoemaker (1989), found that social bonding was a more important factor in protecting against rural delinquency than against urban delinquency. Smith (1980), found that in rural areas shoplifting and employee theft were rarely reported to the police. Instead, most cases were handled informally. He quotes one rural criminal justice official as saying:

I simply can't get people to tell me things. I hear about them two or three weeks later, and when I ask them why they didn't come to me about it, they say, "Oh, I took care of it myself." We simply can't get people to take advantage of the services of this office (p. 52).

Kowalski and Duffield's (1990) study of homicide concluded that "the traditional bond of group cohesion assumed to be associated with the rural environment and its residents continues to have an inhibiting effect on homicide for counties in the United States (p. 76)." A focus on informal control should not be confused with a tolerance of crime in rural areas. To the contrary, rural areas are often less tolerant of crime and of deviance in general (Wilson, 1991). For example, a national survey published by the Insurance Research Council (1993) found that rural citizens were less tolerant of insurance fraud than were urban residents. When given the statement, "It is all right to increase the amount of your insurance claim by a small amount to make up for the insurance premiums you have paid when you had no claims," 46 percent of large city residents agreed, compared with only 12 percent of rural residents. Similarly, only 3 percent of rural residents agreed that "It is acceptable to receive treatment after an injury had healed." In contrast, 25 percent of large city residents agreed with the statement.

Informal control is facilitated by the fact that many residents of rural communities, including the local police, know each other socially. One factor that contributes to this is the relative stability of the local population. Rural citizens less frequently change addresses, often staying in the same county, or even the same house for several generations. In comparing urban and rural poverty, Auletta (1982) makes the following observation about Preston County, West Virginia:

Unlike the cities of the North, where ghetto residents constantly shift addresses, almost 70 percent of Preston County's 25,000 residents have lived in the same house all their lives; another 20 percent of the people there have moved, but within the county. Upward mobility is relatively rare, . . . the average mother receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) has been on welfare more than six years (p. 159).

What mobility does occur in these rural areas is often outmigration of younger skilled workers. All of these factors have implications for rural policing. The low levels of mobility and low population density means that rural law enforcement officers, such as sheriffs, are likely to personally know most offenders and their families. If a victim can identify a thief, for example, the sheriff is likely to know where to find the offender and to already know quite a bit about the offender and his or her family. Given this, a greater reliance on informal control in rural areas should be of no surprise.

The term "density of acquaintanceship" has been used to describe the extent to which people in a community know one another. In general, smaller communities have higher density of acquaintanceships. Freudenburg (1986) studied four small towns in Colorado. Three of the towns had populations ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 people and were high in density of acquaintanceship. A fourth town had grown rapidly from 5,000 to 10,000 people and was now much lower in density of acquaintanceship. He found that residents of communities higher in density of acquaintanceships less often reported being the victims of crime. They were also half as likely to believe it was necessary to lock their doors when they left home for a few hours or less, and they were five times less likely to believe it necessary to lock their doors when they were gone for a day or more. Similarly, high school students in high density acquaintanceship communities were half as likely to report having felt physically threatened in their school.

Density of acquaintanceship can influence crime in several ways. It can increase the watchfulness of citizens, make it more likely they will feel a responsibility to act, and may make it easier to identify suspects. As Freudenburg observed:

In a smaller community, a high density of acquaintanceship can allow the watchfulness to extend to the entire community: if a resident sees a person entering a house even in another section of town, there is a relatively high likelihood that the resident will know whether the person entering the house has any right to do so, and if not, that the resident will take appropriate action. . . . When more of the faces in town are strange . . . a lawbreaker probably will find it easier to escape detection, and capture. He becomes a "white male, about 5 feet, 10 inches tall, between the ages of 16 and 19," instead of "Ruth Johnson's nephew, Frank." (1986, p. 32).

A high density of acquaintanceship can also provide for monitoring and correcting early misbehavior and delinquency. As one youth in Freudenburg's study complained, "A guy

can't get away with anything around here. It seems as though, whenever I do anything wrong, my old man's found out about it before I even get home (1986, p. 46)."

Mistrust of government. A greater reliance on informal social control is also consistent with a greater suspicion of government, particularly State and Federal Government, which are seen as insensitive to local needs. This suspicion of a strong central government is also reflected by the attitudes of rural residents, who are generally less supportive than urban residents of government programs that provide welfare, housing, unemployment benefits, higher education, and Medicaid (Swanson, Cohen and Swanson, 1979). This rural attitude is why proponents of rural development warn against public policies dictated by a strong central government (Littrell and Littrell, 1991; Seroka and Subramaniam, 1991). Similar concerns have been expressed by rural sheriffs. In California, for example, a contingent of 200 Army soldiers, National Guardsmen and Federal agents spent 2 weeks clearing out marijuana growing operations in the King Range National Conservation Area in northern California. As a result of their efforts, 1,200 plants were destroyed, but not everyone was satisfied.

"This is so frustrating when the Federal Government comes in and spends enough money that would keep my operation going for three or four years," said Sheriff David Renner of Humboldt County. His team of five deputies, cooperating with the State's seven-year-old Campaign Against Marijuana Planting, destroyed over 3,000 plants in one day this week.

"If the Feds have the money for this kind of operation," Sheriff Renner said, "they ought to give it to local law enforcement that is more effective and is truly responsible to local citizens. Their results speak for themselves and they are not good (Bishop, 1990, August 10)."

Regarding the rural American West, Flynn and Gerhardt (1989) have observed that "the West's frontier roots still make it hostile to anything smelling of central authority, and the federal government reeks of it (p. 10)."

This does not mean that local authorities cannot work effectively with State and national police. The rise of multijurisdictional task forces demonstrate that local authorities can work very effectively with others (Schlegel and McGarrell, 1991). The larger point is that State and Federal authorities need to appreciate rural culture to make these relationships work effectively.

Patterns of civil litigation also reflect the greater tendency of rural areas to solve disputes through informal channels and a reluctance to rely on formal government. In his study of variations in the rate of civil litigation among Illinois counties, Daniels (1982) found that rurality was the single best predictor of civil litigation rates. He concluded that "higher civil litigation rates tend to be characteristic of more urbanized, somewhat more culturally modern and slightly more industrialized counties, and that lower rates tend to be characteristic of

more rural, agricultural, and somewhat more culturally traditional counties (p. 209)." That is, rural citizens were less likely to resolve disputes by turning to the formal court process.

Reluctance to share internal problems. One problem with studying rural areas and gaining insights into rural crime and criminal justice is the tendency of residents in some rural communities to keep community problems to themselves. This attitude, combined with a greater reliance on informal control, also sets the stage for a greater mistrust of government. In his study of marijuana growers, Weisheit (1991) cites a rural police officer who observed that:

People in rural areas tend to be pretty conservative generally and don't want government coming in, or an outsider coming in, or foreigners coming in. They want the status quo and that's it. And when they develop a cancer from within they don't want it going out. They don't want people telling about it and they don't want people rocking the boat. They are the same people who will ostracize members of their society who get caught doing this [marijuana growing] (Weisheit, 1991, p. 13).

Informal control, keeping things in, and showing a greater suspicion of government may also help account for rural-urban differences in the willingness of local communities to fully cooperate with reporting to the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports* (UCR). It is not surprising that for 1992, reporting to the UCR program differed by population density, with reports covering 97 percent of citizens living in Metropolitan Statistical Areas but only 86 percent of those living in rural areas (*Uniform Crime Reports*, 1992). Similarly, Laub (1981) has found that while the overall likelihood of reporting crime to the police is similar for rural and urban citizens, those in urban areas fail to report because they think nothing can be done, while those in rural areas fail to report because they consider the crime a private concern, even when the offender is a stranger. As a New Mexico State police officer observed, "In a lot of these [rural] areas, there's really no law enforcement—no police, no sheriff, no State police station. People prefer to handle their own affairs and disputes by themselves (Applebome, 1987, p. 11)." The officer's comment should be taken as more figurative than literal, although there are remote areas of Alaska where the statement could be taken literally. The statement does reflect two dimensions of the issue that are distinct but tend to reinforce each other. First, rural citizens may less often choose to deal with a problem formally because they see it as a local problem. Second, in some rural areas formal police authority is in fact physically distant, and is not an immediate option.

Summary

It is important to remember that rural areas vary enormously in both the extent to which they are physically isolated and in their social environments. This description of rural culture has been, of necessity, a caricature. Particular rural areas will exhibit more or less the same features, and in varying combinations. As a group, however, these features suggest important differences between rural and urban areas, differences that have implications for

rural crime and the response to rural crime. Two illustrations of the unique workings of crime in rural areas can be found in the role of poverty and the role of guns in crime. While rural areas contain some of the deepest pockets of poverty in the United States, crime in rural America is substantially less frequent than in urban areas. And, while gun ownership is much higher in rural areas than in cities, the percentage of crimes involving guns is lower in rural areas. Poverty and guns may be connected to crime, but looking at rural areas suggests the relationship may be more complex than would be assumed by considering only urban settings.

There are several features of rural life that distinguish it from urban life and that may shape crime and justice. Most obvious is the issue of physical space and geographic isolation. Rural areas are also characterized by homogeneity, as illustrated by the relatively low level of racial diversity. That is, while there may be substantial variation from one rural area to another, people within a given rural area tend to be relatively homogenous on a variety of social characteristics. Rural areas are also characterized by a reliance on informal control, a mistrust of government—particularly the Federal Government—and a reluctance to share internal problems with others outside of the community. All of these would seem to have implications for crime, policing, and justice in rural areas. It will be argued throughout the following discussion that rural crime, policing, and justice have features that distinguish them from their urban counterparts, and these features are all a consequence of the unique character of the rural environment. Having described several key features of the rural environment, the focus now shifts to the patterns of rural crime.

V. RURAL AND SMALL-TOWN CRIME

Information about rural crime can be drawn from a number of diverse areas. In this section, some of the better-known sources of information are used to demonstrate areas of concern, suggest topics which merit further study, and identify emerging issues relevant to policing in rural areas. The discussion begins by examining fear of crime in rural areas, and then shifts to a description of the patterns of rural crime. Changes in rural crime over time are then considered, followed by a discussion of special issues and emerging problems.

Fear of Crime

Fear of crime has implications for policing in several ways. It may affect community support for policies and budgets related to policing, and it may be important in mobilizing citizens to report crime, cooperate with investigations, and to participate in anti-crime programs. Fear of crime is among the rural crime issues most frequently studied. Studies conducted in the 1970's generally concluded that urban residents were far more fearful of crime than were rural residents (e.g., Baumer, 1978; Boggs, 1971; Clemente and Kleiman, 1976; 1977; Conklin, 1971; 1976; DuBow et al., 1979; Erskine, 1974; Lebowitz, 1975). Studies in the 1980's and 1990's were more mixed in their conclusions. Some found rural citizens less fearful (e.g., Ollenburger, 1981; Smith and Huff, 1982; Belyea and Zingraff, 1988). Others found only minor rural-urban differences (Lee, 1982; Bankston et al., 1987). Still another approach is used in the American Housing Survey, which asks citizens a more general question about what bothers them about their neighborhood. In 1991, 15 percent of central city residents specifically mentioned crime, compared with less than 2 percent of rural residents (DeFrances and Smith, 1994).

Lee's (1982) work demonstrates the problem of simply transporting methodologies developed for an urban population to a rural setting. He showed, for example, that while general urban-rural concerns about victimization were similar, the two groups had very different perceptions about victimization on nearby streets, a question frequently used as the sole indicator of fear in early studies. Lee argued that because of the physical environment this question was largely irrelevant for the rural population, whose fears were manifest in other types of crime. When other victimization concerns were considered, rural-urban differences faded.

One response to the concern about crime is to develop a prevention program, such as neighborhood watch. It has been found that similar factors motivate both rural and urban citizens to participate in crime prevention programs (Smith and Lab, 1991). It has also been suggested that the interpersonal bonds and patterns of social interaction in rural areas are positive factors that can facilitate the development of rural crime prevention programs (Donnermeyer and Mullen, 1987). Consistent with this, Mullen and Donnermeyer (1985) found that among rural citizens one of the most important factors related to fear of crime was the extent to which they viewed their neighbors as trustworthy and watchful against crime.

A study of popular images of rurality by Willits, Bealer, and Timbers (1990), though not specifically a study of fear, does provide interesting insights into perceptions of crime across rural and urban areas. In their survey of the public they found overwhelming agreement with the statement, "There is less crime and violence in rural areas than in other areas." More than two-thirds of rural, suburban, and urban residents agreed with the statement. The authors also observed that crime was a topic that brought out anti-urban sentiments. For example, most respondents, including those from urban areas, agreed with the statement "Crime and violence characterize city life in America."

Taken as a whole, these studies suggest the importance of considering the social and physical environment of rural areas before applying urban definitions to the crime problem and before conducting research on rural crime (see also Weisheit, 1993). It also appears that aside from violent street crime, rural citizens share many of the same concerns about crime as their urban counterparts. Unfortunately, research on rural crime seldom draws on knowledge about the unique features of rural culture and geography that are essential to understanding how to study fear in rural areas, how to interpret results, and how to develop programs responsive to community concerns.

Rural Versus Urban Crime

In addition to considering fear of crime, several studies have examined rural crime itself, using either self-reports or official records. Many of these studies make rural-urban comparisons (Carter, 1982; Laub, 1983a; 1983b; Gardner and Shoemaker, 1989; Lysterly and Skipper, 1981). Most research concludes that crime is less frequent in rural areas, and it is often speculated that greater informal controls in rural areas protect against high crime rates (Smith, 1980).

Some rural-urban comparisons have tried to account for these differences by looking for correlates (i.e., factors that would seem to go along with the lower rates in rural areas). Kowalski and Duffield (1990), for example, conducted a county-level study of homicide and rurality and found that rural counties had lower rates and that counties with lower homicide rates were also those with lower divorce rates, lower poverty levels, less religious diversity, and lower percentages of minorities. They concluded that "In rural areas, individualism is reduced, group identification is strengthened, and the potential for violence is diminished (p. 86)." They also noted that rurality is a multidimensional phenomenon and that separate dimensions may impact crime rates differently. Wilkinson (1984) also used county-level data but came to a very different conclusion, finding that homicide rates were higher in rural areas. He accounted for this by noting that in a geographically dispersed population, social interactions are more frequent among family members and close acquaintances, and both are groups at a relatively higher risk for homicide. Wilkinson also observed that when compared with large cities, homicide rates were higher in rural areas but lower in small cities. Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of crime-specific analyses and of using care in defining the term rural. Simply treating everything outside major metropolitan areas as rural can mask important patterns.

The belief that crime is less frequent in rural areas is supported by recent UCR data (see Table 2) that presents crime by type and population group. Of particular interest is a comparison between crime in cities of 250,000 or more and that in rural counties. Studies of police departments commonly focus on departments serving cities of 250,000 or more people. In contrast to large cities, rural counties are outside of Metropolitan Statistical Areas and cover areas not under the jurisdiction of city police departments.

The data in Table 2 reveals several interesting patterns:

- Rates for urban areas are higher than for rural areas for *every* offense, including homicide.
- The gap between rural and urban crime is greater for violent than for property crime.
- For property crime the rank order of offenses is roughly similar for urban and rural areas. That is, larceny is the most common crime and motor vehicle theft the least common in each area.
- For violent crime, the rank order is thrown off by the very large rural-urban difference in robbery.
- Even for crimes with the most similar rates across areas, such as rape, the urban rate is much higher.
- The greatest difference is for robbery, which occurs almost 50 times more often per 100,000 citizens in urban areas.

TABLE 2: Crime Rates for Cities 250,000 or More Versus Those for Rural Counties, 1992.

CRIME TYPE	CITIES 250,000+	RURAL COUNTIES	CITY:RURAL RATIO
Violent Crime			
-Total	1,802.1	226.2	8.0:1
-Murder	24.8	5.3	4.7:1
-Rape	67.8	27.3	2.5:1
-Robbery	839.5	17.0	49.4:1
-Aggr. Assault	870.0	176.7	4.9:1
Property Crime			
-Total	7,722.2	1,927.6	4.0:1
-Burglary	1,795.8	701.4	2.6:1
-Larceny	4,335.0	1,109.6	3.9:1
-Vehicle Theft	1,591.5	116.6	13.7:1

Note: Arson Is not Reported by Population Group
 Source: *Uniform Crime Reports*, 1992 (Table 16).

Official counts of crime are useful indicators but suffer from a number of shortcomings. Not all crimes are reported to the authorities, not all reported crimes are recorded, and not all recorded crimes are forwarded to the UCR. One alternative is to ask citizens whether they have been the victims of crime. One of the most frequently used data sources for studying victimization is the National Crime Survey (NCS), an annual survey begun in 1973 which utilizes a randomly drawn national sample and includes information about the size of the respondent's community.

Substantial rural-urban differences are found from national household victimization surveys. The 1990 survey of households touched by crime, for example, reported the percentage of households indicating any form of victimization in urban, suburban, and rural areas was 30 percent, 23 percent and 17 percent, respectively. Bachman (1992a; 1992b) noted that between 1973 and 1990 victimization was consistently highest in central cities and lowest in nonmetropolitan areas, and this was true whether the study focused on individuals or households. This pattern of differences appears to hold true for both violent and property crime. In his study of victimization, Smith (1980) found that about 25 percent of victimizations of rural residents took place while they were away from their communities,

while this was true for only 10 percent of urban residents. He concluded that "rural residents are particularly vulnerable to personal theft crimes when visiting urban areas (p. 51)." This also means that the usual rural-urban comparisons of victimization rates probably *understate* the difference in victimization between the two areas.

Instead of comparing rural and urban areas, some studies have considered rural crime alone (e.g., Smith and Huff, 1982; Miller, Hoiberg, and Ganey, 1982; Donnermeyer and Phillips, 1982). This research generally focuses on patterns across rural areas and correlates of rural crime. Arthur (1991), for example, examines property and violent crime in 13 rural Georgia counties. He found that unemployment, poverty, public aid, and race were related to both property and violent crime rates, and the relationship was particularly strong for property crime. Bankston and Allen (1980) compared homicides among 10 social areas in rural Louisiana and found that both socioeconomic and cultural factors shaped homicide rates. Significantly, the relative importance of each varied from one social area to another, suggesting the importance of appreciating variations among rural areas. Thus, a good understanding of rural crime requires not only appreciating how it differs from urban crime but also how rural crime and rural justice vary across rural communities.

Trends in Rural Crime

There has been concern for some time that rural and urban crime rates are converging, and the issue has raised considerable debate. Some have argued that with modern communication and transportation, rural-urban differences are shrinking through what Fischer (1980) has called "massification."

Carter (1982) used UCR data and found that between 1960 and 1979 the percentage increase for index crimes in rural areas was greater than in urban areas. Similarly, Swanson (1981) found that between 1969 and 1978 the percentage increase for rural crime was greater than for urban crime. However, because rural rates are much lower and the size of percentage change depends heavily on the size of the rate at Time 1, conclusions based on percentage change should be accepted with caution. In fact, using Carter's table, the difference between the rates in rural and urban areas actually *increased* over time. In 1960 there were 95 more violent crimes per 100,000 citizens in urban areas than in rural areas. By 1979 there were 411 more violent crimes per 100,000 citizens in urban areas than in rural areas.

Table 3 uses UCR data from 1980 through 1992 to make rural-urban comparisons over time for both violent and property offenses. Several things about this table are worth noting:

- In both large cities and rural counties violent crime rose between 1980 and 1992.
- Between 1980 and 1992, property crime fluctuated but was somewhat higher in urban areas and somewhat lower in rural areas.
- The ratio (gap) of city to rural violent crimes fluctuated between 1980 and 1992 but changed little overall.

- The ratio (gap) of city to rural property crimes went up somewhat between 1980 and 1992.
- The ratios for both violent and property crime were relatively stable between 1986 and 1992.
- In every year the gap between rural and urban areas was greater for violent crime than for property crime.

TABLE 3: Crime Rates for Cities 250,000 or More Versus Those for Rural Counties, 1980-1992.

YEAR	VIOLENT CRIME			PROPERTY CRIME		
	Cities 250,00+	Rural Counties	City:Rural Ratio	Cities 250,000+	Rural Counties	City:Rural Ratio
1980	1,414.2	185.9	7.6:1	7,987.9	2,215.8	3.6:1
1981	1,440.9	179.4	8.0:1	8,030.4	2,119.1	3.8:1
1982	1,353.9	184.2	7.4:1	7,851.0	2,041.2	3.9:1
1983	1,294.0	165.0	7.8:1	7,345.4	1,824.8	4.0:1
1984	1,288.3	159.8	8.1:1	7,307.5	1,740.5	4.2:1
1985	1,344.5	176.9	7.6:1	7,606.1	1,743.8	4.4:1
1986	1,645.5	192.8	8.5:1	7,993.8	1,791.1	4.5:1
1987	1,603.8	193.9	8.3:1	8,062.7	1,887.5	4.3:1
1988	1,540.4	180.7	8.5:1	8,271.3	1,882.3	4.4:1
1989	1,641.1	198.2	8.3:1	8,425.0	1,923.3	4.4:1
1990	1,813.0	209.0	8.7:1	8,361.4	1,923.1	4.4:1
1991	1,890.3	213.6	8.9:1	8,223.0	1,978.0	4.2:1
1992	1,802.1	226.2	8.0:1	7,722.2	1,927.6	4.0:1

Source: *Uniform Crime Reports*, 1980 through 1992.

Table 3 should not be considered the final word on the matter. There are two important areas not covered in the table. One problem is that it does not include crimes that may be of particular concern as emerging issues in rural areas, such as gang activity and drug trafficking. Nonindex offenses are simply not reported in the UCR by population density. Other rural-specific offenses, such as rustling and the theft of grain or farm machinery are not separated from other, more general, crime categories. Some of these specific topics will be addressed in the next section.

A second problem with Table 3 is that it does not present changes for specific index offenses. When examining specific index offense rates over time, one finds the greatest changes for violent crime are for robbery. In 1980, the rate for robbery in urban areas was 35 times that in rural areas. By 1992, robbery was almost 50 times more frequent in urban areas, and most of the increased difference was a product of increasing urban rates and modestly decreasing robbery rates in rural areas (see Table 4). A lesser increase was observed for aggravated assault rates, which were 3.7 times more frequent in urban areas in 1980 but 4.9 times more frequent in urban areas by 1992. The urban-rural gap narrowed very slightly for rape rates and widened very slightly for murder.

TABLE 4: Offense-Specific Index Crime Rates for Rural Counties, 1980-1992.

YEAR	VIOLENT CRIME				PROPERTY CRIME		
	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	MV Theft
1980	7.4	16.0	23.0	139.5	871.8	1,202.6	141.4
1981	7.0	15.7	22.1	134.6	836.7	1,157.7	124.7
1982	6.8	15.4	20.4	141.6	788.3	1,132.9	119.9
1983	5.8	15.3	16.9	127.0	693.7	1,027.6	103.6
1984	5.2	17.5	14.9	122.3	651.3	987.1	102.2
1985	5.6	18.5	15.0	137.7	668.2	967.2	108.4
1986	5.4	20.1	15.6	145.4	697.7	978.4	115.1
1987	5.7	19.6	15.6	146.7	728.1	1,040.9	118.5
1988	5.4	19.6	14.8	140.9	711.1	1,051.8	119.4
1989	5.4	22.8	16.4	153.6	719.9	1,077.4	126.0
1990	5.7	23.7	15.8	163.8	708.1	1,087.6	127.4
1991	5.6	25.4	17.0	165.6	741.0	1,114.0	123.0
1992	5.3	27.3	17.0	176.7	701.4	1,109.6	116.6

Source: *Uniform Crime Reports*, 1980 through 1992.

For property crimes, the greatest change in the gap between urban and rural rates was for motor vehicle theft, which was 7.7 times more frequent in urban areas in 1980 but 13.7 times more frequent in 1992. Burglary and larceny changed little.

The National Crime Survey (NCS), conducted each year since 1973, also permits considering changes over time by community size. Figure 2 is based on NCS data and shows that rural crime is persistently lower than urban crime. Rural crime changed less over time than did urban crime, declining steadily from 1973 through 1990. Urban crime peaked in 1978 and declined substantially until 1986 when it rose again slightly.

Fischer (1980) used data on violent crime in selected California counties to argue that the gap between rural and urban crime was less important than the relative patterns of change over time. He demonstrated that changes over time in urban counties were followed by changes in rural counties and concluded that "cultural change is continually generated in major urban centers, diffuses to smaller cities and then to the rural hinterland (p. 416)." Cultural cycles, whether they be of violent crime, fashion, or inventions, begin in urban areas and ripple out through the countryside. This argument is consistent with contemporary observations about the rise of drug trafficking and gangs in rural areas, an issue that will be addressed in the next section.

Special Issues

The focus on rural-urban comparisons has also meant a focus on particular categories of crime, often the street crimes listed in the UCR. Many issues relevant to rural policing, such as gang activity, do not neatly fit these categories or are emerging issues that have not been explored in the professional literature. What follows is a sampling of these topics, often based on reports in the popular press. Because many of these discussions are based on anecdotal evidence, the information should be interpreted with caution. However, these are areas that merit scholarly research and that may be of increasing concern to rural police.

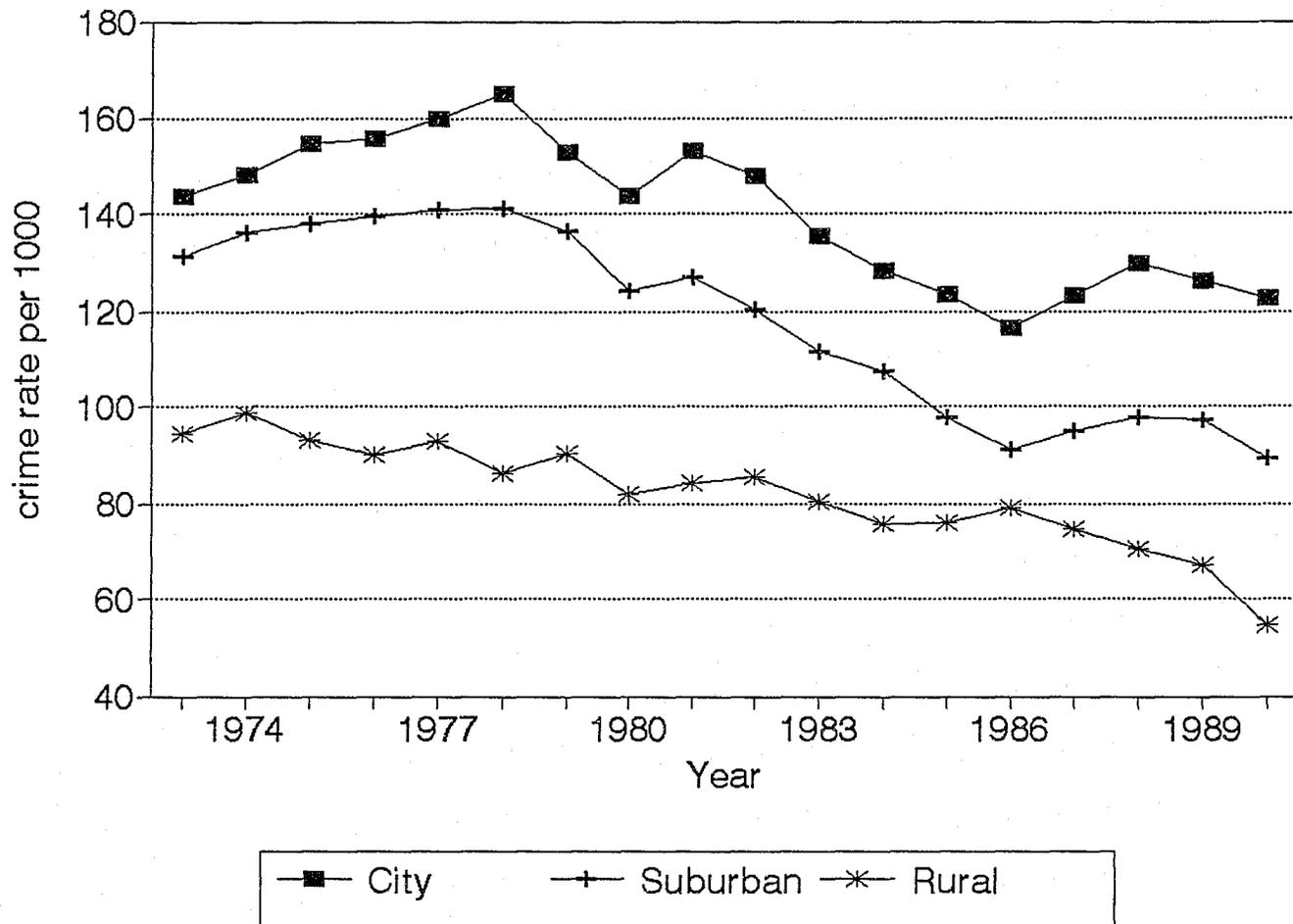
Gangs. Stereotypically, gangs are a problem involving inner-city (often minority) youth. For example, Huff's (1990) collection of contemporary gang research includes no discussion of gangs in suburban and rural areas. In the popular press, however, there are numerous discussions of how urban street gangs diffuse out to the countryside (e.g., Weingarten and Coates, 1989b; Coates and Blau, 1989; Rangel, 1991; Mount, 1992). Many of these discussions see drug trafficking as the driving force behind the spread of gangs to rural areas, a move facilitated by an improved interstate highway system.

While the popular press currently focuses on urban street gangs in rural areas, biker gangs have a long history of criminal activity in rural settings (Abadinsky, 1989). Unfortunately, bikers are notoriously difficult to study (Wolf, 1991), so relatively few details of their activities are documented in the professional literature.

Where street gangs are found in rural areas, it is usually through migration from urban areas. Based on interviews with 30 rural police, Donnermeyer (1994) suggested 4 ways in which gangs move into the rural setting:

FIGURE 2.

Annual Rates of Personal Victimization per 1000 Persons over 12 years of age



Source: Constructed from data presented in Bachman, 1992a; 1992b.

- *Displacement.* This occurs when urban police put too much pressure on urban gangs and members drift away from the city to set up their operations.
- *Branch office.* Sometimes an urban gang targets a small town, either because the town is located on an important transportation hub or because the selling price of drugs in the small town is much higher than in urban areas. When this occurs, individuals from the gang move into an area for the express purpose of selling drugs and conducting other illegal activities. While recruiting locals into the gang may occur, such recruitment is of secondary interest.

We might speculate that displacement and the establishment of branch offices probably follow a pattern of fanning out from urban to suburban and then to rural areas. There are other ways, however, in which gangs might move more directly from the urban to the rural setting. These include the franchise and social learning.

- *The franchise.* This occurs when small-town drug dealers seek to expand their business and increase their profits by linking up with an urban drug dealing gang.
- *Social learning.* This occurs when a rural juvenile offender is incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility or jail with more hardened urban youth. These urban youth teach the rural juvenile the details of drug dealing and provide opportunities for business connections. Many rural and small-town areas have no detention facilities, and most States prohibit locking juveniles in adult jails, even for short periods. Consequently, it may be necessary to transport juveniles to centralized detention facilities. Illinois is a good illustration. While the State has 102 counties, it has only 16 juvenile detention facilities. Thus, police in most counties will transport juveniles to facilities in other counties.

Donnermeyer's categories were not directly tested in our interviews, but they are consistent with what we were told by rural and small-town police. However, our interviews did suggest an additional scenario by which urban gangs move into rural areas.

- *Urban flight.* Sometimes urban families move into rural areas, either to get away from the city in general or with the specific intention of getting their kids away from gang influences. In other cases the juvenile is an urban gang member sent to live with relatives in a rural community to remove him or her from gang influences. While this may spell the end of gang activity for some gang-involved youth, others simply try to establish a gang foothold in their new environment. This situation can also facilitate establishing a franchise or branch office.

The lack of evidence makes it difficult to say anything with confidence about gangs in rural areas, and it is too early to tell if gangs in rural areas will develop into a significant problem.

It is also unclear how rural gang activity can be measured; however, the combination of gangs, drugs, and crime in rural areas is an important development that bears monitoring.

Alcohol and drugs. Another issue is the problem of substance use, including alcohol and illegal drugs. This issue has two dimensions, *use* by rural citizens and *criminal trafficking* organizations in rural areas. The professional literature has discussed the issue of drug use, while the issue of rural trafficking organizations has more often been addressed in the popular press. Alcohol, among the most popular of the mind-altering drugs, is of particular concern in rural areas. Each year more people are arrested for Driving Under the Influence (DUI) than for any other single offense, and DUI is more common in rural areas (Jacobs, 1989; Weisheit and Klofas, 1992). According to the UCR (see Table 5), the rate of arrest for DUI in cities of 10,000 is more than double that in cities of 250,000 or more, and the rates for both suburban and rural counties are much higher than in the largest cities.

TABLE 5: Rate of Arrest for DUI by Population Size

AREA	RATE PER 100,000
Cities Of 250,000 Or More	385.4
Cities Under 10,000	930.8
Suburban Counties	677.0
Rural Counties	929.1

Source: *Uniform Crime Reports*, 1992. (Table 31)

Studies of young people commonly find alcohol use is more frequent in rural areas. Even if urban and rural rates of alcohol use by young people were similar, the rural setting would be cause for greater concern.

Similar rates of alcohol use, however, may be more of a problem for rural than for urban youth because rural youth must spend more time on the roads. The distances that must be traveled from homes to school and other entertainment events, or even to visit friends, are generally much greater for rural youth than for urban youth. The lack of availability of public transportation means that these youth spend a significant amount of time in cars. Most social use of alcohol by these rural teens is followed by driving or at least riding in a car where the driver has been drinking. The relative lack of traffic on rural roadways and the distances to be traversed often lead to driving at high rates of speed. With many rural roads in poor condition, poorly marked for hazards, and poorly lit, these youth are already at higher risk of accidents leading to injury or death (Peters, Oetting, & Edwards, 1992, pp. 25-26).

Regarding illegal drugs, one of the most common ways to compare rural and urban areas is to use self-report surveys. McIntosh et al. (1979) found that rural youth began using both legal and illegal drugs at a younger age, but a higher percentage of urban youth were users. Swaim et al. (1986) compared adolescent drug use in three rural communities with that in an urban community. They concluded that the differences in drug use *among* rural communities may have been greater than differences *between* rural and urban areas. They emphasized the importance of local variation and suggested that local policies and programs for rural areas *not* be based on aggregate national data. Finally, in *School Crime: A National Crime Victimization Survey Report*, students ages 12 through 19 in central city, suburban, and rural areas were asked about the availability of drugs. There were no differences across these areas in the reported availability of drugs in their schools, but students in rural areas were more likely to report having attended drug education classes. And, in contrast to reports on drugs, students in rural schools were more likely to report that alcohol was available in their schools (Bastian and Taylor, 1991).

In his summary and analysis of 65 research studies of drug use by rural youth, Donnermeyer (1992) concluded that for alcohol, rural and urban rates were similar. The use of marijuana in urban areas was higher, but these differences were shrinking over time. Rural youth generally reported greater use of inhalants and stimulants but less use of cocaine and crack cocaine. Finally, Donnermeyer noted the relative paucity of research on rural drug issues, in particular the lack of information about how rural youth gain access to drugs.

An indirect way of comparing rural and urban drug use is to use arrest statistics. Belyea and Zingraff (1985) compared drug arrest data in North Carolina for urban and rural counties between 1976 and 1980 and concluded that rural arrest rates were consistently lower, and there was no evidence that rural and urban rates were converging. Castellano and Uchida (1990) estimate that the rate of drug arrests in urban areas is nearly four times that in rural counties. They speculate that because most drug enforcement is proactive, variations in arrest rates among jurisdictions are more the result of differences in enforcement efforts than of differences in consumption patterns.

A 1990 report to Congress by the General Accounting Office (GAO) examined rural drug abuse using data from a variety of sources. The report found that the rate of total drug use including alcohol, was similar across rural and urban areas, but there were differences in the types of drugs used. Cocaine use was lower in rural areas, but the use of inhalants was higher. Further, while total drug arrest rates were similar across areas, alcohol arrests were higher and drug arrests correspondingly lower in rural areas. The report also found that anti-drug programs in rural areas faced special problems:

Rural programs can have greater per-client costs because of their "diseconomies of scale." These areas may find it difficult to attract and hold trained and experienced staff. Clients must travel farther to reach programs and program staff must travel farther to reach clients. The programs may lack acceptance by the community, community agencies, and the local school system (GAO, 1990, pp. 6-7).

Where rural drug treatment programs do exist, the nature of their services may be different:

Rural substance abuse programs tend to offer a wider array of outreach and acute response services, such as hot lines and crisis intervention. Outpatient services tend to be heavily utilized with respect to staff availability. Rural hospitals are less likely to provide inpatient services and the need for inpatient services is filled by sending the patients to the closest urban treatment facility (Leukefeld, Clayton, and Myers, 1992, pp. 100-101).

Recent reports in the press suggest that patterns of urban drug use, including crack, are spreading to rural areas (Treaster, 1991; McConnell, 1989; Weingarten and Coates, 1989b). Whether these reports prove to anticipate emerging trends or are merely isolated cases remains to be seen. They do signal another area that should be monitored closely.

The issue of drug trafficking and production in rural areas is less understood but may also be an emerging cause for concern. Popular reports suggest that rural areas may serve as production sites for methamphetamine, designer drugs, crack, and marijuana (Weingarten, 1989; Baker et al., 1989; Weisheit, 1992; 1993; McCormick and O'Donnell, 1993). It has been noted that clandestine drug labs are often set up in rural areas "where strong fumes, suspicious bottles, and drums of chemicals are less likely to be detected (National Institute of Justice, 1993, p. 4)." It has also been suggested that the dangers involved in handling these chemicals and the complexity of the laws regulating them makes it important that rural police be trained in identifying and responding to clandestine labs and the shipment of precursor chemicals (National Institute of Justice, 1993, p. 5).

Weisheit's (1992; 1993) studies of commercial marijuana growers found they were almost exclusively rural operations. In addition, knowledge about marijuana growing was particularly easy to learn for those who grew up in farm communities.

Other reports argue that rural areas have become important transshipment points for drugs destined for urban areas (Weingarten and Coates, 1989a; "Illegal drug trade spreads," 1989). The problem is exacerbated by an improved highway system and by the large number of isolated airstrips set up for corporate farms and for crop dusters serving rural farmlands.

As one response to the issue of drugs, about 70 percent of the police agencies in the United States are currently part of multijurisdictional task forces (Schlegel and McGarrell, 1991). However, participation in these groups varies by population density, with rural agencies underrepresented. For example, about 80 percent of the agencies that serve populations from 25,000 to 99,999 are in task forces, but only 40 percent of agencies serving fewer than 10,000 citizens are in task forces (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992). This low participation rate does not mean, however, that rural agencies tend to minimize or dismiss the drug problem. To the contrary, the issue of drugs consistently arose as a major crime concern among the rural police officials with whom we spoke. They also believed that drug use was

connected to many of their other crime problems, such as theft and burglary. As one sheriff put it:

I think the citizens are more concerned about burglaries and breaking and entering. However, the burglaries and breaking and entering are caused by drugs and alcohol. . . if you concentrate on drugs and make those arrests, you will put your burglars in jail also, because the addict is usually the burglar.

Rural officers also expressed widespread and enthusiastic support for such drug prevention programs as D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education). Of course, such programs not only address the issue of drugs but also facilitate communication between the police and school-aged children, and they establish excellent public relations with the rest of the community. As one sheriff reported:

We have found the D.A.R.E. program has been a great tool in helping us get things done in the community. The kids go home and say, "Hey, those cops are OK, they're doing things for us." It kind of rubs off on the parents a little bit.

Vice and organized crime. Aside from Abadinsky's (1986) passing reference to the "Dixie Mafia," little has been written about vice and organized crime in rural areas. Despite this, there is good reason to believe that vice and organized crime are features of the rural environment (Potter and Gaines, 1990). For example, small communities near major highways often have problems with prostitution set up for truck drivers. Also, areas that were traditionally involved in moonshining and bootlegging can use some of the same routes and expertise to transport drugs, stolen auto parts, and other illegal merchandise. In 1989, the so-called "Cornbread Mafia," operating out of Kentucky, was discovered to have marijuana operations in at least nine States. By April of 1990, 86 people were arrested as part of the operation, and the government had confiscated 475,000 pounds of marijuana on 33 farms (Yetter, 1989; Coates and Weingarten, 1990). At the same time, a group of more than 30 people operating out of the southwest who called themselves "The Company" ran an elaborate indoor marijuana operation. At the time of the group's arrest, about \$1 million in growing equipment was seized by authorities (Coates and Weingarten, 1990).

Potter and Gaines (1992) used local newspapers, official records, and participant observation to identify 28 crime networks operating in 5 counties in rural Kentucky. A major activity of these networks was marijuana cultivation and the transshipment of cocaine, but they were also involved in the illegal sale of liquor, prostitution, and gambling. Of the 28 networks studied, 25 utilized corrupt relationships with public officials and local law enforcement officers. Further, 5 of these 25 corrupt relationships were based on kinship ties between law enforcement and members of the crime network.

While anecdotal evidence suggests that vice and organized crime are a rural problem, there is simply too little information to make general statements or to even speculate on the similarities and differences with urban organized crime groups.

Violence. In previous sections data from the UCR were used to compare rural and urban violent crimes. Much of the focus in the UCR is on "street crime" involving strangers, an aspect of crime which may be less salient in rural areas where social interaction is more likely to be among acquaintances. For example, among index violent offenses, the crime most likely to involve strangers is robbery, the offense with the greatest rural-urban discrepancy. While the homicide rate in urban areas is about 5 times that in rural areas, the robbery rate in urban areas is almost 50 times that in rural areas.

Greenberg, Carey, and Popper (1987) used data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) to study violent deaths among young people age 15 to 24. Violent deaths included homicide, suicide, highway auto deaths, and deaths from such accidents as drowning, falling, and fires. The highest rates were in four western States, and within these States rates were highest in *rural counties*. In these counties the violent death rate for young whites was even higher than for young inner city blacks in the six most violent cities.

Indeed, the white male violent death rate in the six most dangerous Western counties is 13 percent higher than the comparable black rate in the six inner cities. To be sure, black inner city homicide rates are high, but rural Western violent death rates from auto and other accidents as well as for suicide more than offset their lower homicide rates. *The rural areas of the West, rather than the American urban ghetto, is where youth is far more likely to suffer violent death* (Greenberg, Carey, and Popper, 1987, p. 43; emphasis added).

Regarding *criminal violence*, as opposed to violence more generally, the data provided by the UCR are important starting points but are incomplete in several respects. First, they tell little about differences in the character of urban and rural violence, as it relates to both the offense itself and to the manner in which police and prosecutors respond. Second, some forms of violence are not included, such as family violence.

Bachman's (1992a; 1992b) analysis of National Crime Survey victimization data found that "On average, individuals residing in central cities experienced nearly twice as many crimes of violence as those in nonmetro areas and approximately 40 percent more than those residing in other metro areas . . . (1992a, p. 551). Rural violence was more often among acquaintances and among family members in particular.

Some of these issues can be illustrated using the few studies available on domestic violence in rural areas. In her observational study of families in a rural Appalachian community, given the fictitious name Raven Ridge, Gagne (1992) noted that both the police and prosecutor were reluctant to act in abuse cases and, as a consequence, women were reluctant to call them for assistance.

Most people I met agreed that police protection in Raven Ridge was inadequate. John explained that it took at least an hour for an officer to arrive after a call was placed, and when the cruiser arrived, the officers would sit in

the car and beep the horn rather than come to the door. His explanation for this behavior was that so many officers had been shot responding to domestic calls that few were willing to risk going to the door. . . . Acceptance of a man's authority over his wife and the belief in the sanctity of the home, together with officers' belief that they would be in danger if they responded to domestic calls, resulted in the failure of the legal system to provide protection for physically battered women. . . . Given the geographic isolation, lack of protection, and lack of economic opportunities available to them, women acquiesced to control in the short term while thinking about ways to improve their situation over time (pp. 410-412).

The conclusions of this case study receive some support from the few existing quantitative studies. In his study of police jurisdictions in Ohio, Bell (1986; 1989) found the highest rates for domestic violence disputes were in the least populated jurisdictions. In neither cities nor rural areas were the police likely to make an arrest following a domestic violence complaint, though they were somewhat more likely in urban areas. The response of rural police to domestic violence may be changing. In our conversations with rural officers this issue arose frequently, usually reflecting a heightened sensitivity to the issue. Based on what we have heard, it is possible that rural police are increasingly willing to intervene in domestic violence cases—both because research suggests that arrest might be an effective deterrent and out of concern for lawsuits that might result from inaction. However, further study is needed to determine if earlier observations about the response of rural police to domestic violence are still accurate.

Even less is known about rural-urban differences in child abuse, but two studies by the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (1981; 1988) suggest the issue is worth further study. The first study was conducted in 1980 and the second in 1986. The studies differed in one important respect. In the 1980 version abuse was defined as "demonstrated harm as a result of maltreatment (1988, p. ix)." The 1986 study included a definition of abuse that mirrored that of 1980 but also included children "placed at risk for harm," such as being left alone. When the first definition was used, abuse rates were higher in rural than in major urban counties. However, when the broader definition was used, urban rates of abuse were higher. The studies were based on a relatively small number of counties and could not address contextual issues that would explain these differences. Other research suggests that compared with doctors in larger cities, physicians in small towns detect more child abuse but are *less* likely to report cases to the authorities (Badger, 1989).

Another source of information about both spouse abuse and child abuse is the National Family Violence Survey (NFVS). This self-report national survey was first conducted in 1975 (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1980), and again in 1985 (Straus and Gelles, 1990) and measures violence using the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS). These scales tap a range of behaviors, from verbal aggression to inflicting serious physical harm, and are considered the most thorough and sensitive measures of family violence currently available. They are important because both surveys were designed to specifically include substantial numbers of rural respondents.

Regarding child abuse, the 1975 NFVS found that large cities (1 million or more) had the highest rates, while rural, suburban, and small-city rates were similar. The 1985 survey found no differences in child abuse rates across communities of different sizes (Wolfner and Gelles, 1993). Regarding spouse abuse, the 1975 survey found that rates were highest in large cities and rural areas, and lowest in small cities and suburbs. However, the differences were rather small. Curiously, although the 1985 study was designed to specifically include urban, suburban, and rural respondents, the major book describing the 1985 findings (Straus and Gelles, 1990) does not mention differences in spouse abuse by community size. If domestic violence in rural areas is as frequent as in urban areas, this is particularly interesting in light of the substantially lower general crime rate in rural areas.

Some rural areas have a long history of violence, including lynching, labor unrest, and blood feuds (e.g., Angle, 1980; Littlewood, 1969). Lynching seldom occurs today, and labor unrest is comparatively nonviolent. While there are still pockets of rural America with clan violence (e.g., Burrough, 1989; Bukro, 1991), this, too, seems less common than in the past. Further, the nature of rural interactions means that crimes such as homicide, rape, and assault are more likely to occur among acquaintances than is true in urban areas. This, combined with the greater distrust of government, may also mean that the police are less likely to be called when such crimes occur. Consequently, preventing violent interpersonal crimes in rural areas may require different strategies than in urban areas.

Hate crimes. Related to the issue of violence, though less well documented, is the use of rural areas by so-called "hate groups" and related extremist organizations. Some have argued that the terms "hate groups" and "hate crimes" lack scientific precision, are emotionally loaded, and serve to incense rather than inform (e.g., Jacobs, 1993). The discussion that follows maintains the label "hate crime" because it is familiar to most readers. While the discussion includes several groups under this definition, the focus is on groups that combine hatred, whether based on race, religion, or sexual orientation, with an ideology that fosters violence.

Aside from the physical isolation and privacy afforded by rural settings, rural culture has elements that are consistent with the mindset underlying some right-wing extremist groups. Flynn and Gerhardt (1989) make this argument regarding the rural American West:

It is no accident that the Silent Brotherhood was spawned in the American West. It is a land of huge proportions, its vast emptiness alluring to the frontier spirit. . . . It is that frontier spirit that produced the Posse Comitatus, American Agriculture Movement, Sagebrush Rebellion, Aryan Nations, and other far-right groups. It also produced individuals steeped in the mountain man mystique of individualism and survivalism.

Over the last two decades, America's backwoods became dotted with survivalist training camps. A Klan-run camp at Anahuac, Texas, taught guerrilla warfare techniques. A Christian survival school deep in the Arkansas Ozarks taught urban

warfare . . . The leader of the Carolina Knights of the KKK, Frazier Glenn Miller, claimed a thousand men would answer his trumpet call at Angier, North Carolina . . . And farmers, the veritable salt of America's earth, put a "face" on their plight by blaming Jewish bankers for bringing them to the brink of economic collapse (pp. 9-10).

In his discussion of the rise and spread of survivalist movements, James Coates (1987) addressed the question of where these survivalists come from:

They come from the high pine forests of Montana and the coastal plains of Texas. They come from the hills and hollows of North Carolina and the rugged Ozark Mountains along the Missouri-Arkansas border. They labor in downstate Illinois and press the good fight in Wisconsin's dairy land. They clamor for what they deem to be righteousness on the Nebraska-Kansas-Missouri border and in the bayous of Louisiana (p. 18).

Survivalists in particular eschew urban life and seek to return to simpler times in a world they can create and control, something much easier to accomplish in remote rural areas.

Some of these far right groups have targeted farmers as potential members, particularly in the Midwest with a combination of anti-Semitism, racism, fundamentalist Christianity, and a deep suspicion of government. In economically troubled farm belt communities these groups have a particularly sympathetic audience (Zeskind, 1985). Davidson (1990) describes the literature published by one of those group, the Iowa Society for Educated Citizens (ISEC):

The literature decries race mixing, gun registration, the liberal (i.e., Jewish) media, the IRS, homosexuality, the Council on Foreign Relations, and driver's licenses—the last because by accepting them citizens are, in effect, legitimizing what the self-proclaimed patriots consider illegitimate authority. But the target of choice for ISEC members . . . is the Federal Reserve Bank: root of farmers' problems and the front organization for the international Jewish bankers (p. 103). Many—especially members of the Posse Comitatus—refuse to recognize any government authority higher than county sheriff (p. 109).

Sometimes these beliefs lead directly to violence, as when members of the Posse Comitatus fight paying taxes and farm foreclosures, or when they commit robbery and theft to fund their activities. In perhaps the most famous incident, Gordon Kahl killed two U.S. marshals in North Dakota in February of 1983, before being killed himself in a shootout with law enforcement officials in Arkansas 4 months later. Kahl avoided arrest for 4 months with the help of a loose network of sympathizers (Corcoran, 1990).

Many of these groups weave together violence and religion, believing that Armageddon is near and that they must be heavily armed for self-protection. And, as Colvin notes, the rural setting plays a role in these beliefs:

The most fervent members of the Posse [Comitatus] were armed survivalists whose stated goal was to be prepared for an eventual, and inevitable, catastrophe—a war or economic depression. Fundamental to the beliefs of the Posse was that only rural dwellers would survive a war and that unprepared urban individuals seeking food and shelter would become enemies. Accordingly, followers were instructed to collect arms and stockpile food (Colvin, 1992, p. 20).

While it may seem ironic, many of these groups see themselves as highly patriotic and deeply religious. They believe that the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights were divinely inspired but that subsequent amendments and laws have undercut these documents to serve special (i.e., Jewish) interests. Religion not only underlies their patriotism but is also used to justify racism. Among the most visible religious forces behind these hate groups is the Christian Identity Movement. Identity followers believe that descendants of Northern European stock are the true lost tribes of Israel and that the United States is their promised land. They also believe that Jews are descendants of Cain, who was fathered by the devil in the form of the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

Nine months after eating the apple, Eve bore two sons. Adam's son was Abel. Satan's was Cain. Cain killed Abel. Cain's descendants killed Jesus. Now, under the banner of world Jewry, they're trying to kill all white Christians (Coates, 1987, p. 82).

The Identity Movement also decries race mixing, believing that people of color were mistakes by God in the process of creating man, "false starts before God made the perfect—read white—Adam and Eve (Corcoran, 1990, p. 39)." Viewing them as less than fully human, Identity followers commonly refer to people of color as "mud people." The Identity Movement's focus on a literal interpretation of the Bible makes it appear, at least on the surface, to have much in common with traditional fundamentalist Christian groups. In rural areas this has considerable appeal to many. While such groups may be on the fringe in their beliefs, these beliefs are only an exaggerated and distorted version of existing rural values emphasizing religion, patriotism, and independence from government tyranny.

The number of active members of these fringe groups is unknown, but there are probably no more than 10 or 20 thousand. However, these groups have a high potential for crime, particularly violent crime. Unlike young urban skinheads, whose dress and behavior cry out for public attention, members of rural hate groups blend perfectly into the surrounding community and actively avoid saying or doing things in public that would draw the attention of authorities or the press. Rural hate group members do not generally look like rebels and are often longtime residents of their communities. As Hamm (1993) has observed, American hate groups have found they are best served by secrecy and an unwillingness to share information about their groups with outsiders:

Evidence of a politics of silence among members of the far right is well-documented. . . . withholding information (or silence) becomes a political tool: The less outsiders

know about the individual and organizational features of extremist groups, the safer the group becomes from outside threats to control them through public policy (regardless of their criminal exploits). Silence, therefore, serves to "harden the target" of right-wing extremism by providing a paramilitary umbrella over the individual and organizational interests of such groups (Hamm, 1993, p. 99-100).

Our conversations with rural police indicate these groups are widely scattered and, where they are known to exist, keep a relatively low profile. While secrecy and maintaining a low profile are the rule, there are several notable exceptions, including Tom Metzger in California and Gary Rex Lauk in Nebraska. Neo-Nazi literature, newsletters, electronic bulletin boards, telephone message services, hate-based music, and even public access cable television programs have been attributed to one or both of these men (Hamm, 1993; Dees, 1993; Bjorgo and Witte, 1993).

It is important to recognize that the groups described here are distinct from a host of other "fringe" groups attracted to rural areas. Many religious cults that find rural areas appealing have no organized involvement in crime. The Amana colonies in Iowa are one example. Other groups may be involved in crime, but neither the group nor the crimes of its members are driven by an ideology of hate that also connects them to other groups. This is illustrated by David Koresh's Branch Davidian compound outside of Waco, Texas. The compound was burned to the ground on April 19, 1993, killing most of its members, after a 51-day standoff with Federal authorities. While Koresh stockpiled illegal weapons and explosives in preparation for a coming Armageddon, there was no evidence that the group's philosophy was driven by racial or ethnic hatred, that the group planned such crimes as murder or robbery against people outside the group, or that the group was connected ideologically or organizationally with other hate groups (Gibbs, 1993; Linedecker, 1993). Ironically, the heavy-handed actions of Federal agents in the Waco case, and several others, might be interpreted by survivalists as evidence for their worst fears about the Federal Government.

There will always be groups and leaders driven by individual pathology. The concern in this section has been with groups connected by a criminogenic ideology that combines religion, politics, and racism and is based on institutionalized hatred. Ultimately, such groups have a greater potential for crime and violence and will be more difficult to control. We have suggested that features of the rural environment make it easier for hate-based groups to operate there. The secrecy with which they operate, and the lack of empirical evidence about their numbers and operations make it difficult to determine whether such groups are a greater problem in rural areas than in urban areas. This is an important issue that merits further study.

Arson. The Insurance Committee for Arson Control reports that although urban arson receives the most media attention, rural arson has been increasing. "Unlike arson in cities, which for the most part is confined to a limited site, whether a building or an entire block, rural arsons can cover vast acres of forest and wildlands as well as structures and machinery.

With the depressed condition of the farm economy, some observers fear rural arsons could be on the upswing (*Security Systems Digest*, 1985)."

In contrast, the 1991 annual report of the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA, 1992) reflects relatively stable arson rates in rural counties between 1983 and 1991. According to 1992 UCR data, as the size of the community goes down, the rate of arson offenses also goes down, from a rate of 91 per 100,000 people in cities of 250,000 or more to a rate of only 20 per 100,000 in rural counties. (*Uniform Crime Reports*, 1992, Table 2.30).

Whether rural arson rates have increased or remained relatively stable over time, there are important differences between arson problems in rural and urban areas. Compared with urban areas, rural communities more often lack the resources and staff to fully investigate arsons. In its *Rural Arson Control* report (1989), the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) noted that "Rural arson control efforts are hindered by constraints and requirements specific to rural areas. These special conditions make rural arson prevention, detection, and control different from and more difficult than urban arson problems (p. i)." Small staffs and substantial travel distances can slow response time and impede rural arson investigations. The problem is compounded by a lack of resources and technical equipment for conducting thorough investigations. Further complicating investigations, rural fires more often advance to the "total burn" syndrome, in which the structure is completely destroyed. In fact, "fire damage in rural areas runs at least three times urban rates (p. 17)." Total burn arson fires often require additional manpower and equipment to sort through the debris. Consequently, rural fires are often not investigated for arson unless the preliminary evidence is particularly compelling.

Among the recommendations of the IAFC report is that it is particularly important for rural arson investigators to cultivate good working relationships with local and State police and with the insurance industry. These relationships can somewhat offset the shortage of manpower and resources. Further, the absence of explicitly worked out cooperative procedures for reporting arson fire incidents contributes to the misreporting of arson data to the UCR system (IAFC, 1989).

Existing evidence suggests that the problems of rural arson and its investigation are not identical to those in urban areas. It appears that some of those problems can be minimized by greater cooperation between arson investigators and rural police, but this merits further study.

Agricultural crimes. Most of the crimes discussed to this point (e.g., homicide, child abuse) take place in both urban and rural areas. Some crimes, however, are peculiar to the rural setting. These include such offenses as poaching and agricultural crime, neither of which has been extensively studied. The focus here is on agricultural crime because some literature is available and because of its impact on the country as a whole through escalating food and insurance prices.

The UCR does not separate agricultural crime from other offenses. However, each year the UCR does list specific items of theft and the rate at which these items are recovered. Among the listed items is livestock, which account for losses of about \$18 million in 1992, only about 12 percent of which is recovered (*Uniform Crime Reports*, 1992, Table 24). Charles Swanson (1981), along with Leonard Territo (Swanson and Territo, 1980), has assembled incidents of agricultural crime that illustrate its scope and seriousness. These include:

- \$1 million in annual thefts of avocado, lime, and mango fruit in Florida.
- \$1 million in annual losses to timber thieves and vandals in western Washington.
- \$2 million in annual losses from pesticide thefts.
- Eighty percent of surveyed Iowa farmers had been victims of theft in the prior 3 years.
- \$30 million a year is lost to theft from California farmers.

Further, Swanson, and Territo (1980) note that single offenses can be enormously costly. They cite embezzlement at an Iowa grain elevator which produced a loss of \$10 million. They also cite anecdotal evidence that organized crime is active in agricultural crime in several States. Much of Swanson and Territo's information came from a variety of sources but primarily from State Farm Bureau offices. Though not a conventional source of crime data, the Farm Bureau may be a good source of data specifically on agricultural crime.

The problem of agricultural crime also illustrates the importance of accounting for the considerable variation across rural areas when addressing the crime problem. Most discussions of rural crime focus on the close and relatively informal nature of rural life, and this is true in many rural communities (see the discussion below). However, many farmers, particularly those with large farms, are physically isolated from their neighbors and their community. In their study of Montana ranchers and farmers, for example, Saltiel, Gilchrist, and Harvie (1992) included respondents who lived as far as 78 miles from the nearest emergency services. In addition, the average distance to the nearest neighbor was 4 miles. Those most isolated were most concerned about sufficient police patrols, but these were the very areas in which increased patrol activity was impractical. Saltiel et al. (1992) observed that:

Although those living closer to population centers may face greater risks, those who live farther away are more isolated from potential sources of help when problems arise. . . . Those who live farther from the police appear to be particularly sensitive to the ability of law enforcement to patrol effectively. . . . Those who live farthest from law enforcement are more sensitive to the lack of available help from their neighbors which in turn increases concern about the sufficiency of police patrols. . . . The greater the isolation of farm residents, the greater the reliance on police (p. 542).

While police services are often thinly spread across these remote rural areas, the importance of these services is magnified by the isolation of residents from each other and from other service agencies.

Crime prevention in farm communities has been the focus of some research. The theft of livestock, grain, and expensive farm machinery is facilitated by the trend toward larger farms. As farms increase in size, farmers more often live away from storage sheds, machinery, livestock, leaving them frequently unattended. This not only makes theft and vandalism easier to commit but means that the crime may go undetected for some time, making apprehension more difficult.

In our conversations with rural police in farming areas, a common complaint was that farmers were too casual about marking expensive equipment and about leaving it unattended near roadways, where the temptation for theft would be greater. As one sheriff told us, "People in a rural community have a tendency to trust everybody and they get real sloppy about leaving their stuff laying around. Especially the farmers. They'll have an implement set out in the field and thieves will steal part of it." Some of these casual attitudes reflect the reality that theft and vandalism are not everyday occurrences for the typical farmer. For example, a survey of victimization among 428 Alabama farmers found that in the prior 12 months a relatively small percentage had experienced vandalism (13 percent), burglary (8 percent), or theft (9 percent) (Dunkelberger, Clayton, Myrick, and Lyles, 1992). Just over half (58 percent) of the farmers reported any of these victimizations over their years of farming. Most farmers in the study either did not have such simple security devices as locks on storage sheds, or they had them but did not use them. Perhaps the study's most interesting finding was that theft, vandalism, or burglary were *not* the crimes about which these farmers were most concerned. Their greatest concerns were about what the study's authors describe as "nuisance" crimes—poaching, trespassing, and dumping trash on farm land. It was also found that victimization and crime prevention were related to the size of the farm operation. Large farms were more likely to be victimized. The operators of large farms were twice as likely to leave machinery unattended overnight in fields but were more likely to take other crime prevention measures, such as marking cattle and locking farm gates. Interesting within the context of the earlier discussion of rural crime, the most widely practiced security measure was to "have a neighbor watch the farm when out of town," which was reported by more than 80 percent of the farmers in the study.

The importance of farm size in the Alabama study has implications for the study of farm crime in other parts of the country. The size of the average farm varies substantially from one State to another. For example, in 1990, the average farm in Kentucky was 152 acres, while the average farm in Arizona was more than 4,600 acres (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). This wide interstate variation in farm size again highlights the importance of recognizing and considering regional variations across rural America.

As a closing comment about agriculture-related crime, it is striking that so little is known about crime and victimization of migrant workers. This group is interesting for practical reasons and for theoretical reasons as well. Migrant workers are an integral part of the rural

environment, yet they remain outsiders in most communities where they work. Consequently, they may experience the informality of the rural justice process without the benefit of the personal familiarity with criminal justice authorities that is true for most permanent rural citizens.

Wildlife crimes. Wildlife crimes, like agricultural crimes, are almost exclusively a rural phenomenon. In recent years wildlife crimes, especially poaching, have become a major concern for conservation police officers such as game wardens and wildlife officers. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "Wildlife shipments entering and leaving the United States during Fiscal Year 1990 had a declared value of over \$1 billion" (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991, p. 3). In a 1986 publication, the estimated replacement costs of illegally harvested fish and wildlife exceeded \$45 million in Illinois, while deer poaching alone was estimated to cost Pennsylvania over \$93 million a year in replacement costs (Pash, 1986). Working in sparsely populated areas, poachers can be particularly difficult to apprehend. According to Lt. Don Hastings of the Illinois Department of Conservation's Law Enforcement Division, "It is estimated that the conservation officer learns of one out of every fifty [poaching] violations" (Hastings, 1985).

The literature also suggests there are noncommercial reasons individuals engage in poaching activities. For example, many rural residents participate in poaching activities to provide food for themselves and their families, while others pride themselves on simply killing a wildlife "trophy" (Bristow, 1982). When illegal harvesting of wildlife takes place on the hunter's own land, there is sometimes an attitude of "my land, my game." This attitude may make it difficult for poachers to define their behavior as criminal. Gathering food, collecting trophies, and a sense of "my land, my game," all reduce the likelihood that citizens will cooperate with the investigation of wildlife crimes and undermine the perceived legitimacy of the wildlife officer.

In their study of poachers in the rural south, Forsyth and Marckese (1993) found that in addition to providing money and food, poaching was exciting and was seen as a test of wit and skill between the poacher and the game warden. Many poachers were proud that they could easily outmaneuver the technology and complex modern strategies of the game warden. "The conflict is similar to the city slicker versus the country rube. Although game wardens are not representative of sophisticated urbanites, they are in the same position (p. 169)." In addition, poaching may reinforce the rural mistrust of outsiders and of government. "They [poachers] are constantly in contact with others who support an 'us' and 'them' orientation toward the larger society. Both game wardens and the laws they enforce represent outsiders (p. 169)." One poacher was quoted as saying, "I outlaw because nobody is gonna tell me what to hunt, where to hunt, or when to hunt. My daddy hunted like that and his daddy before him (Forsyth and Marckese, 1993, p. 168)." Poachers may recognize that the nature of their activities, and the large calibre weapons carried by game wardens, can lead to violent confrontations, but for some the inherent danger only adds to the excitement. As Forsyth and Marckese (1993) observed, "In essence, these men saw poaching as a very

rough game. They took pride in being tough enough to participate in it and being successful in evading the law (p. 167)."

Emerging issues. In addition to traditional wildlife and agricultural crimes, it is clear that rural crime is assuming new forms, forms for which many rural areas may be ill equipped to respond. For example, modern telecommunications makes it easier to victimize rural residents with telephone scams and fraud involving credit cards. Rural areas also face problems with illegal dumping, toxic waste, and highway and railroad accidents involving toxic chemicals and radioactive materials. Similarly, the increase in the number of interstate highways through rural areas has led to increasing problems with crime at rest stops and with crimes against people and businesses adjacent to the highway (McDowell, 1992). It has also created a situation in which rural areas find themselves situated along key transshipment routes for drugs and other illegal items. One sheriff commented to us that "you have to remember how many people we have incarcerated because of the interstate system. Our biggest drug population within the jail is from the pounds of cocaine or marijuana coming off the interstate."

The growing elderly population in rural areas will also present police with a new set of problems related to victimization. Our conversations with rural police indicate, senior citizens may also expect police to provide a wider range of services, particularly in rural areas where other service providers may not be available. Several rural police commented to us about how a large population of senior citizens shapes what is expected of the police, requiring them to provide a wide range of services:

We get a lot of calls from elderly people about checking on somebody. "Would you go over and check on Marge? Would you do this, would you do that?" Last winter I got a call from this woman who says, "I think I got somebody in my basement, would you come over?" She has a clothes chute, opened it and there was a light on down there. She "always" turned the light off, but this time she didn't!

Another sheriff used seniors as citizen volunteers to keep tabs on and provide assistance to other senior citizens:

We can tell you about every widow or widower that lives in the county. A couple of times a week they [volunteers] will call just to see how they are doing. A lot of them are lonely, old, and by themselves. We check to see how they are doing, if everything is all right, if there are any problems, and are they feeling well? Just good basic conversations. Along with that, if they can't make it to town to buy groceries or medicine or make a doctor's appointment, we will actually send somebody out. Whether it's a volunteer or a deputy, to make sure they make it to the doctor. We have made arrangements with the local grocery store so we can charge on their behalf. We have bought basic necessities to get somebody through a blizzard and had deputies deliver it on snowmobiles.

While these citizens often demanded a great deal from the police, in return they often served as watchful eyes, noticing when things aren't right and bringing it to the attention of the police. One sheriff reported that the largest marijuana seizure in his county was the result of a tip from watchful senior citizens.

In addition to the specific crime issues just discussed, little is known about how the features of rural culture may shape the incidence and reporting of a variety of offenses, particularly those outside of traditional index crimes. In their study of the caseloads of rural courts in four States, Fahnestock and Geiger (1990) observed:

The criminal caseload profile reveals that certain criminal activity is seldom prosecuted in rural areas. There were no cases in the sample relating to illegal waste dumping or environmental offenses such as illegal use of pesticides, yet fish and game violations are frequently prosecuted. Banking law violations and other illegal business practices did not appear in this caseload. Few embezzlement, incest, and aggravated sexual assault cases were prosecuted, although it is common knowledge that these crimes are widespread (p. 46).

As discussed in the next section, responding to new forms of crime and to changes in the importance the public attaches to some existing crimes will require more than simply applying urban responses to rural settings.

Summary

Although findings are inconsistent, it is probably true that rural residents are less fearful of crime than are residents of central cities. It is hard to know, however, how much of the difference is a product of using questions that don't fit the rural setting—such as questions about crime on the respondent's street or in their neighborhood. In addition, some differences across studies may reflect real variations across the particular rural areas included in each study.

Rural-urban differences in fear of crime fit public stereotypes and are consistent with available data on rural and urban crime patterns. Official police data, as reported in the *Uniform Crime Reports*, show a pattern of higher crime in urban areas across a variety of crime types. Violent crime per capita is eight times more prevalent in urban areas, and property crime is four times more prevalent in urban areas. Self-report studies of victimization also show rural-urban differences, with rural citizens reporting about half the victimization rate of urban citizens. This difference is large, but not as great as the differences observed in official reports.

Examining trends in rural and urban crime since 1980 suggests that rural and urban crime rates generally follow parallel paths. Official records show that violent crime in both rural and urban areas has drifted up slightly since 1980. A modest increase in the rural-urban gap in violent crime is due primarily to changes in the rate of robbery, which increased in urban

areas and declined in rural areas. Since 1980 the rate of property crime has changed little in either setting. Self-reported victimization studies also suggest that rural and urban crime rates follow parallel trends over time, but according to victimization reports crime has steadily declined over time in both rural and urban settings.

In addition to these general patterns of crime, there are several specific issues that merit discussion. Gang activity was a frequently voiced concern among rural police we interviewed, but is rarely discussed in the professional literature. Documenting the nature and extent of gang activity in rural areas is a difficult but important task.

Drugs appear to be as available in rural areas as they are in urban areas, although rural drug users are less likely to use cocaine and more likely to use inhalants. Alcohol use, particularly DUI, is a greater concern in rural areas because the distances traveled while intoxicated may be greater, public transportation is not an option, and roads may be narrow and poorly lit. Drug production, particularly marijuana and synthetic drugs, is a rural issue about which relatively little is known. Finally, the distances involved and the lack of anonymity in rural areas may raise special concerns regarding the delivery of drug treatment services.

Vice and organized crime are also rural issues about which little is known. Rural areas may be directly involved, or they may be used as transshipment points. Some historical writers address this, particularly regarding the prohibition era, but there is relatively little written about the current status of either vice or organized crime in rural areas.

While violence among strangers is less common in rural areas, rural-urban differences in child abuse and domestic violence are not consistently found in the research. Earlier studies suggested that rural police were more reluctant to intervene in domestic violence cases than were urban police. Our interviews suggest this is changing rapidly. A growing sensitivity to domestic violence, combined with revisions in State laws requiring a more active police response, appear to make rural police increasingly likely to formally intervene. Rural areas are also home to groups based on philosophies of race-based hatred, anti-Semitism, and a disdain for the Federal Government. A variety of practical and philosophical factors make rural settings more hospitable to the establishment of enclaves for these groups.

The distances that must be served by emergency crews, and the lack of technical staff also complicate detecting and investigating rural arson. Buildings are more likely to be totally consumed because of the longer response time for firefighters. This not only increases the loss from fire but may destroy evidence that could be used by arson investigators.

Agricultural crimes are also a rural concern. Each year there are substantial losses from theft and vandalism of farm equipment and from the theft of livestock and harvested crops. A major concern is motivating farm operators to become more actively involved in crime prevention.

Other rural crime issues include poaching, telephone fraud, dumping of toxic waste, and crimes linked to traffic on interstate highways. Another issue, not addressed in the literature, but a concern among some of the police interviewed, is crime associated with the operation of casinos and legalized gambling.

Many, perhaps most aspects of rural crime are poorly understood. This is unfortunate because not only is rural crime a problem in itself but it can also impact urban areas, as when drugs are produced in or transshipped through rural communities. It is likely that the social environment of rural areas shapes the types of crimes committed in these areas as well as the relationship between victims and offenders. It is also likely that the rural environment shapes police work, an issue to which we now turn.

VI. RURAL AND SMALL-TOWN POLICE

As noted earlier, the issues of rural crime and rural justice have received scant attention. For example, the distinction between rural and urban policing is acknowledged in a brief one-page section in the International City Management Association's 447-page book *Local Government Police Management* (Garmire, 1982). Many consider this book the definitive reference on municipal police administration. The distinctions between urban and rural policing are considered nominal. In fact, the authors state: "The historic distinctions between urban and rural police services are rapidly disappearing" (Garmire, 1982: 21). This implies that rural policing is fundamentally the same as urban policing. It is reasonable to seriously question this assumption. Further, as evidence of an increasing trend discounting the importance of rural policing, the one-page acknowledgment cited in the 1982 edition is totally absent in the latest edition of ICMA's book (Geller, 1991). Clearly, there is an urban bias in research efforts concerning police organizations, management, operations, and methods in America.

Further evidence of the overall lack of knowledge about police agencies (especially rural departments) in the United States is revealed in the apparent inability to calculate the precise number of agencies. This issue has been a matter of much controversy for many years. For instance, the 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement estimated that the United States had approximately 40,000 separate police agencies (U.S. Department of Justice, 1977). By the early 1980's the estimated number of police agencies was greatly reduced; one scholar placed the number at 19,691 (Walker, 1983). Today, that same scholar places that estimate at approximately 15,000 (Walker, 1992), while the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates the number of police agencies at approximately 17,000 (Reaves, 1992).

How do we account for this disparity? It is likely that the confusion results from the fact that there are numerous special policing districts and agencies and many very small rural police departments that sometimes have no full-time officers. How should these agencies be counted and who would keep records of their existence? Moreover, it is only recently that State criminal justice information authorities have been in existence and had the ability to gather such data. In short, those who would study rural policing must not only decide what is rural but also what is a rural police agency.

Who Are Rural Police?

In urban settings, any reference to "the police" invariably means the city police department. Various urban policing functions are carried out almost entirely by municipal police agencies, while State and county agencies have more peripheral roles—ancillary or specialized tasks such as operating the jail, providing security for the courthouse, or participating in ad hoc investigative task forces.

While municipal police departments are still the primary agencies in many small cities and towns, county and State policing agencies become much more important outside urban areas.

State police officers may be stationed to provide general policing functions in remote areas not well covered by other police agencies. In addition, they routinely provide highway patrol coverage of the open roads in rural areas. State conservation officers are responsible for enforcing fish and wildlife laws—especially relevant in rural areas where fishing, hunting, and outdoor recreation are major economic activities. In most States they also have police powers in outlying rural areas.

A number of Federal enforcement agencies also operate, to varying degrees, in rural areas. A brief sampling of these Federal agencies includes the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Border Patrol, DEA, FBI, and the U.S. Forest Service. Unlike local sheriffs or municipal police, these Federal agencies are ultimately responsible not to local citizens but to the Federal Government. In addition, Federal agents are not generally from the areas they police, nor are they likely to develop long-term social attachments and commitments to the local communities in which they operate. While a number of State and Federal police operate in rural areas, the key enforcement agencies are sheriffs and municipal police.

Sheriffs vs. Municipal Police

The major difference between rural and urban settings is the far greater importance of the county sheriff's office in the administration of rural policing and law enforcement. In rural areas, the sheriff often becomes the central organization of policing rather than a peripheral or support agency (as in urban settings). Where rural necessarily includes all unincorporated areas outside of municipal units, these are by statute the primary jurisdiction of the county sheriff. Also, even incorporated places in rural areas may depend on the county sheriff for basic policing services. Where many small villages, towns, or small cities cannot afford full-time police coverage, the county sheriff's office may provide many basic policing services. The sheriff may also serve as a central agency to coordinate resources among the small local departments.

A clear understanding of the differences between rural and urban policing is closely related to recognizing the basic distinction between the municipal police department and the county sheriff's office as distinct forms of police agencies.

Because of their historical evolution, sheriff's offices have a different political structure and character from local, municipal police agencies, and that authority diverges from that of local police chiefs. The authority of the sheriff is grounded by centuries of legal evolution, not specifically delimited by statutory law, and includes a range of implied responsibilities and powers. In contrast, the authority of the municipal police is a relatively recent statutory creation, being expressly limited in power and function, and dating only to the 19th century.

Unlike most municipal chiefs, the sheriff holds an *elective* office in all but two States—Rhode Island and Hawaii (National Sheriffs' Association, 1979). This expresses the independence of the sheriff from other political offices or executives within local governmental structure. It also means that the sheriff is directly subject to the community and to the power of public

opinion. Since terms of office are often fairly short—usually 2 or 4 years—the sheriff is dependent on good relationships with voting members of the community. In these terms, the sheriff is less insulated from the public than the police chief and lacks the administrative buffer that most municipal departments have in the mayor, police commission, or city board. The difference between sheriffs and municipal chiefs is well illustrated by a local sheriff who told about working with a local municipal chief. The chief pointed out to the sheriff that when they were together in public, e.g., having lunch in a restaurant, people introduced them to others as *the* police chief and *our* sheriff. We have heard comments like this from other sheriffs and can speculate that being elected changes the relationship between the police and the public.

The employees of the sheriff's office are also dependent on the sheriff's reelection, since they "serve at the sheriff's pleasure" in many jurisdictions. Slightly less than half of the sheriff's offices in the United States have formal merit procedures for personnel decisions; the majority rely on discretionary administrative appointments. Since the election of a new sheriff can result in a new set of appointed deputies and supervisors in the office, personnel in a sheriff's office have a more symbiotic relationship with the sheriff than do police officers with their chief. Indeed, the latter often seem to have rather antagonistic relationships built into the bureaucratic structure of police organizations.

By virtue of its historical evolution, the legal responsibility and authority of the sheriff is much greater than that of local police chiefs. In most States, the sheriff is responsible for providing any or all of the following:

- Criminal law enforcement and other general police services.
- Custodial and correctional services, involving the transportation of prisoners and the management of the county jail.
- Processing of judicial writs and court orders, both criminal and civil.
- Security of the court via bailiffs.
- Miscellaneous services, such as the transportation and commitment of the mentally ill.
- Seizure of property claimed by the county.
- Collection of county fees and taxes.
- Sale of licenses and permits plus other services that do not fall neatly under the statutory responsibilities of other law enforcement or social service agencies. A unique expression of the sheriff's greater legal mandate is the doctrine of *posse comitatus*, under which the sheriff may require the assistance of any citizen.

In relatively small sheriff's offices, generalist road deputies find that a large portion of their shifts are taken up with the processing of court writs, either criminal or civil. Since most writs are for civil matters, deputies are left with little time for proactive criminal law enforcement, unlike their municipal counterparts.

As a result, sheriffs' efforts are divided across multiple, competing administrative concerns. Even though the public image of the sheriff's office may be based mostly on law

enforcement activities, the sheriff cannot afford to concentrate on that task. The funding of the office may depend heavily on doing other tasks that generate important revenues for the county (such as serving court writs and warrants or collecting taxes and license fees) or that involve substantial legal liabilities to the sheriff and the county (such as holding unconvicted defendants in jail pretrial).

Generally associated with county-level government, some sheriffs provide services for independent cities; however, this occurs less than 1 percent of the time (Reaves, 1992). The geographic area of jurisdiction for most sheriffs is the county or parish; however, it is the unincorporated regions within those areas that are of special concern to sheriffs. Sheriffs have criminal and civil jurisdiction throughout their counties, but it is the unincorporated areas for which they are primarily responsible. In contrast, municipal police are responsible for police services only within their incorporated areas.

As a countywide police agency, the sheriff's office holds the potential for coordinating police efforts throughout the county. In fact, in rural settings the county sheriff is seen as not only a coordinating office but as a higher law enforcement authority with better trained criminal investigators and technicians (most of whom are generalist officers) than municipal officers in small rural police agencies. Where local agencies do not provide full-time police coverage, the sheriff's deputies often provide services upon request to incorporated areas in the county.

The sheriff's office tends to operate in a personalized manner. For example, deputies and civilian employees tend to work "for the sheriff" rather than for the organization per se. There is less distance and impersonal separation between the sheriff's office and the community it serves than in urban areas. In most offices, sheriff's deputies are required to be members of the community in which they serve. According to the *1990 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics* survey (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1990), 87 percent of sheriffs require deputies to be residents of their legal jurisdictions, while just under 50 percent of municipal police make such requirements of their officers.

The preceding section has discussed the office of the sheriff as if it were a single uniform organization. In fact, however, the form and content of specific sheriff's offices vary greatly both among States and among counties within the same State.

Department Size

Nationally, most local police departments are small; about half of the Nation's local departments employ fewer than 10 commissioned officers (see Figure 3). Ninety-one percent of all local police agencies maintain fewer than 50 sworn officers, and 90 percent of the Nation's police departments serve a population of under 25,000 (Reaves, 1992). Illinois, for example, has nearly 35,000 combined State and local officers in approximately 785 separate and distinct police agencies (Illinois State Police, 1990). Although Illinois as a whole is heavily populated and is included in the enumeration of the 11 industrialized States, very small rural (municipal) police departments predominate. Most of Illinois' police departments

have fewer than five full-time officers (59 percent), and approximately 32 percent have no full-time officers, only part-time officers. Further, relatively few Illinois municipalities (only 17 percent) have police departments with more than 20 officers (Falcone, Wells, and Charles, 1992).

Precisely what is meant by a small department? The truth is ". . . no typology of police departments by size exists. Therefore no common definition of small town and rural police exists" (Sims, 1988: 15). One could forcefully argue that typing police departments by size (manpower allocation) is not reasonable, given that different contextual considerations might account for those numerical differences.

In their study of the organizational structure of police departments, Crank and Wells (1991) found it was misleading to assume that small police departments were rural or that rural departments were necessarily small. A rural county, a bedroom community, and an industrial community, each with the same sized population, may have different manpower requirements (Sims, 1988), and even departments of the same size may have different missions. To complicate matters, some agencies policing rural America are not necessarily located in rural areas. Included in this category are investigative agencies at both the State and Federal levels. The potential for conflicts between local citizens and "outsiders" who enforce the law is substantial, as described in other parts of this report.

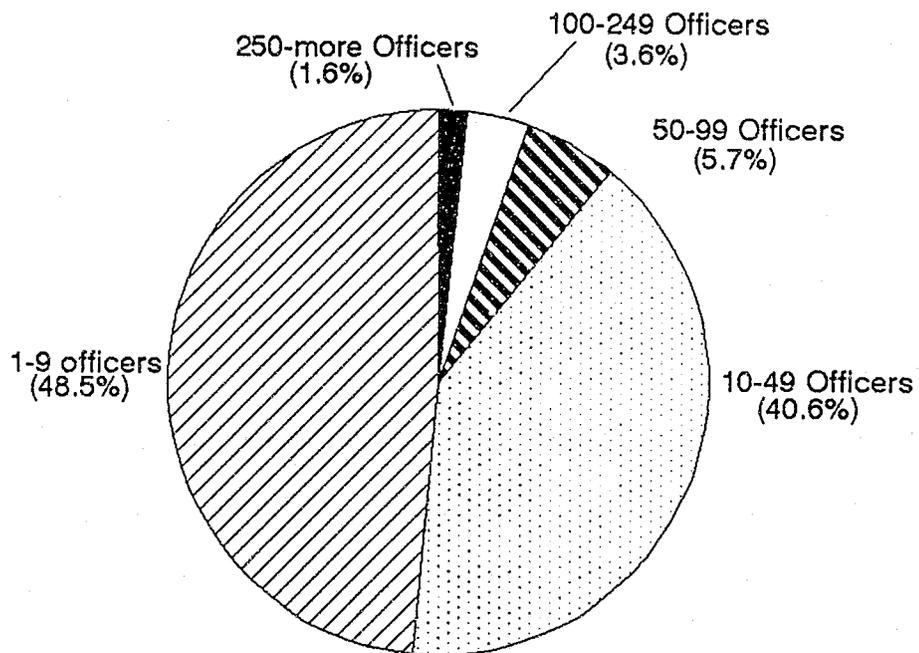
Another reality for rural policing, especially for rural sheriff's departments, is that along with shrinking populations and attendant resources, these agencies are responsible for dealing with generalized police services for a given and nonshrinking geographic area. Current budgetary realities, along with the fact that many of the Nation's worst roads exist in rural areas, present special problems for rural sheriffs. A recent article in *Rural Missouri* reported that 80 percent of that State's fatal vehicular accidents happen on rural roadways—often policed by sheriff's departments and augmented by the State Highway Patrol ("Research looks at rural roads," 1992). According to the National Safety Council, motor vehicle deaths per 100,000,000 vehicle miles are over two and one half times *higher* in rural areas than in urban areas (National Safety Council, 1992).

The combined loss of population and taxing base is crucial for local rural police agencies, both municipal and county level. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) estimates that the per officer expenditure for police agencies serving populations of fewer than 2,500 is \$31,500, while in urban areas it is nearly double that at \$62,600 per officer. Similarly, departments serving a population of under 2,500 (the smallest they cited) spent about \$95 per resident a year for local police expenditures, compared with \$144 per resident per year in areas of 1,000,000 citizens or more (Reaves, 1992).

In the past, National and State commissions, among others, have operated under the presumption that the size of a police department is related to the quality of its performance. In particular, it has been presumed that departments with 10 or fewer officers are less

FIGURE 3.

Sizes of Police Departments (LEMAS, 1990)



Percentage of all Local Police Departments
in the U.S., 1990 (total=15,383)

efficient, less forward thinking, poorly organized, and staffed by officers who are poorly trained. John Crank, in evaluating the trend toward civilianization in medium and small police departments, noted that rural agencies are "civilianizing" at nearly twice the rate of large urban departments (Crank, 1989). The UCR (1992, Table 75) indicates that civilians constitute 22.4 percent of employees in the largest cities but 34.4 percent of employees in agencies in rural counties. If civilianization is viewed as a progressive change, then Crank's findings and UCR data appear to contradict common perceptions that rural agencies are seldom in the vanguard of change.

One proposed solution is to do away with small programs by consolidation. The 1973 report by the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, for example, recommended that departments with 10 or fewer officers be consolidated. As Ostrom and Smith (1976) have noted, however, these assumptions, and the policy recommendations that are drawn from them, are generally without empirical foundation. Their study, based on interviews with police officials, police activity reports, and a survey of 4,000 residents in 29 jurisdictions of varying sizes, reached very different conclusions. They found that citizens in the jurisdiction of small departments reported less victimization, fewer citizens who thought crime was rising, and more positive police-community relations. In a variety of other areas, differences were small or nonexistent. Small departments fared less well than medium-sized departments in the speed with which they responded to citizen complaints, but small departments still outperformed large departments in this regard. They concluded that consolidation made sense for some small departments but was ill-advised as a blanket policy. More recent analyses of police consolidation suggest it is not necessarily cost effective (DeBoer and Mann, n.d.; Gyimah-Brempong, 1987). Further, the community policing movement has been defined by some as a move away from consolidation and toward decentralization (Staley, 1992).

Expanding on the work of Ostrom and Smith, research by Cordner (1989) examined police jurisdictions of varying sizes in Maryland, with a focus on investigative effectiveness. He found that *neither* police agency size *nor* the size of the jurisdiction were among the most important determinants of investigative effectiveness. Instead, he concluded that "regional scale and community complexity" were more important, with greater investigative effectiveness in the more rural departments (i.e., departments with the least complex community structures). He illustrates why complexity may be more important than size per se:

Consider two small police departments, one located in a rural area and the other in a metropolitan area. Although the residential populations served by the two agencies may be the same size, the investigators in the rural departments have some natural advantages. They actually know, by name, by sight, and/or by reputation, a much greater proportion of the people in their jurisdiction and its surrounding area than the metropolitan agency investigators know of theirs. The witnesses that they deal with are much more likely to have recognized suspects they observed. Also, the rural investigator has only a few neighboring jurisdictions to keep in contact with, whereas

the metropolitan investigator may have a dizzying array of other police departments in close proximity (Cordner, 1989, p. 153).

These studies of agency size and police performance show that small departments can be quite effective and that small and rural are not interchangeable terms when describing police departments.

The Effectiveness of Rural Departments

It has been argued that small and rural are not synonymous, though there may be substantial overlap. It has also been argued that small departments may be more effective. The issue of effectiveness of rural departments has not yet been addressed. Some evidence comes from the UCR, which reports the percentage of crimes cleared by arrest by size of the community served. As Table 6 shows, agencies in rural counties have consistently higher clearance rates than departments in cities of 250,000 or more people. This pattern holds for every index crime except rape, for which the clearance rates are essentially the same.

TABLE 6: Percentage of Index Crimes Cleared by Arrest, 1992.

CRIME TYPE	CITIES 250,000+	RURAL COUNTIES
Violent	38.5	60.7
-Murder	59.6	74.5
-Rape	53.4	53.0
-Robbery	21.4	38.1
-Aggravated Assault	53.2	63.4
Property	14.3	18.4
-Burglary	11.3	16.4
-Larceny	16.9	18.3
-Vehicle Theft	10.3	32.4
-Arson	9.2	21.8
All Index Crimes	18.8	23.0

Source: *Uniform Crime Reports, 1992; Table 25*

The gap in clearance rates between rural and urban areas shown in Table 6 is particularly marked for violent crimes. Some of the rural-urban differences might be attributable to differences in reporting practices. Rural agencies might, for example, be less likely to write up a report on a larceny if there are no suspects. However, this argument cannot explain the very large rural-urban difference in clearance rates for homicide, which will almost certainly be recorded regardless of whether there are suspects. It is also possible that close social networks in rural areas make it easier to solve crimes. One police chief told us:

You've got a specific number of kids who are committing things and it's very easy after a crime to determine who did it here. The closeness of the community and the wide variety of MOs, when something happens they usually leave enough of a tell-tale sign that we know exactly who committed it. We only have one school that we have to listen to for rumors and things. We've got a lot of law abiding kids that let us know what they are hearing. We solved almost every one of our crimes here. For every one of our thefts, burglaries, we know who has done it.

A county sheriff echoed this view by noting:

For example, my secretary's husband owns the tire store. His tire store got burglarized. People know him and they know her, so they come and tell me "I know who did it." All we have to do is prove it. In some place like Fort Worth [Texas], that's not going to happen—ever. The people on the street don't know the cop, the cop doesn't know the person on the street. They don't intermix too much.

Styles of Policing in Rural Areas

Given the differences between rural and urban crime and culture, it should be expected that police in rural and urban areas would approach police work differently. In his study of tasks regularly performed by police in 249 municipal agencies of differing sizes, Meagher (1985) found that small agencies were more concerned with crime prevention, medium-sized agencies showed the greatest concern for providing noncrime services, and large agencies focused on enforcing criminal laws and controlling crime through arrests. Similarly, Flanagan (1985) examined public opinion data about the police role. He found that the larger the community the more likely citizens were to believe that police should limit their role to enforcing criminal laws. Conversely, people from smaller communities were more likely to want police to perform a wide variety of functions. In the sheriff's department in rural "Pine County" (a pseudonym), Decker (1979) observed that:

The police were called upon and *expected* to render services for a wide variety of irregular occurrences, only a few of which were statutorily defined as law enforcement responsibilities. For example, the deputies complied with a request to inspect a boundary line between two farmers' property that was only accessible by tractor. In a related incident the same mode of transportation was used to check on a

founded cow. Many instances required the symbolic presence of a sheriff's deputy to legitimate its occurrence in the citizen's eyes (Decker, 1979, p. 104).

In many rural areas, police *must* provide a wide range of services because other social services are either nonexistent or are more remote than the police. Marenin and Copus (1991, p.16) observed that in rural Alaska, where all types of social services are scarce, traditional law enforcement is a relatively small part of the service police are expected to perform. "Village policing is not normal policing, in the sense of law enforcement or crime control, but is much more of a social work kind of job," which includes firefighting, emergency medical services, and rescue operations.

Styles of policing are partly a reflection of the relationship between police and the community. While police in many urban areas may be viewed as outsiders, in rural areas they are an integral part of the community (Decker, 1979). In interviews with officers from one rural department and several urban departments, Kowalewski et al. (1984) found that officers in rural and urban departments had many similar concerns but differed in several interesting respects. Urban officers thought they were less respected by citizens. At the same time, police in rural communities felt more public support for being tough, particularly with juveniles. Dealing with juveniles is an important function for rural police, because this is often a major concern for rural community members (Decker, 1979).

Consistent with the greater informality of rural areas, rural and urban officers believed they were given public respect for different reasons. In urban areas, respect went to the *position*, and it was believed that a good way to improve public respect was through professionalizing the department. In contrast, respect was thought to be given to rural officers as *individuals* who had to prove that respect was deserved. This was often done by establishing a reputation for toughness early in their career.

The bonds between rural police and the community are also strengthened by the practice of hiring local citizens in police agencies. Thus, the officers not only know the community and share many of its values but they are also members of the community and are often involved in community activities. As Decker noted:

All members of the sheriff's department had biographies not uncommon to those of the community. The sheriff and his three deputies were all born and educated in the county. Prior to joining the force, every member was involved in an agricultural form of employment, the dominant form of employment for the county. There is evidence of integration into the community in other ways. Each member participates in an important community function; i.e., the softball team, Jaycees, Rotary, Elk's Club, etc. (Decker, 1979, p. 105).

Given the nature of rural culture and of social interactions in rural areas, it can also be speculated that police-community relations will be very different in rural and urban departments. In rural areas officers are likely to know the offenders and their families, just

as the officer and his family will be known by the community. Rural officers are also more likely to know and appreciate the history and culture of an area and to use that information in their work. In his study of marijuana growers, Weisheit (1991) quotes one rural officer who describes his arrest procedure in one of his cases:

You can't act overly high and mighty with them, you won't get any cooperation. In the big cities, that's what you do, you come on strong, "I'm the boss." That's often a very effective method there, but not out here in the rural areas. . . . This summer I went down and there was a guy with maybe 200 plants spread out over a small farm. I was fairly confident it was there and I pull up in his driveway. He was unloading wood. I'm in the pickup truck, and obviously he knows who I am. I walked up and told him what I was doing there. I said "I've come to get your marijuana and we're going to be doing an open field search. We're not going to be going through your barns or anything right now. You've got some marijuana out there and I've just come up here to tell you what I'm doing." I helped him unload his wood and then I said, "I'm going down by the pond and look at this marijuana. I'll be back in a minute." I went down, looked at it and came back up. I said, "Well, your marijuana is down there," and then I went ahead and helped him unload some more wood and talked about it. He went to jail with no problem. I think this was the kind of guy who would have liked to have fought you. But because of the way I handled it, he wasn't going to fight anybody. Because, I didn't go in there and say, "You're a marijuana grower and you're worthless." A lot of times if you're dealing with people in these rural areas, they don't have a problem with you coming in and arresting them. They just want to be treated like human beings (Weisheit, 1993, p. 225).

Given the closer social ties between police and their community, it should be expected that rural officers will use policing styles that are more responsive to citizens in their area; in turn, local residents would be more supportive of the police. In fact, a 1991 Gallup survey found substantial rural-urban differences in the support that citizens show for the local police. In urban areas, 54 percent of the citizens reported having a great deal of respect for the local police, whereas 61 percent of rural citizens reported this. The differences were much more pronounced when they were asked about police brutality; 59 percent of urban residents thought there was police brutality in their area, but only 20 percent of rural residents believed this ("Americans Say Police Brutality Frequent," 1991).

The same features of rural policing that compel officers to be more responsive to the public also mean that rural police have relatively less discretion:

A major explanation for the high degree of police discretion found in urban areas is the *low visibility* of police actions. In smaller communities the actions of police officers are known to most of the population thanks to the effectiveness and extensiveness of informal communication networks; there they are more highly visible. As a result, small town police enjoy less latitude in deviating from dominant community values (Eisenstein, 1982, p. 117).

Crank (1990) found that organizational and community factors had a different impact on the adoption of a legalistic police style in rural and urban areas. In urban areas characteristics of the police organization, such as the number of ranks or the ratio of administrators to sworn officers, were better predictors of police style than were characteristics of the community, such as percentage of blacks or level of economic distress. In rural areas, the relationships were reversed, with community factors being more important than organizational factors. As might be expected, Crank's data suggest that rural departments are more responsive to the local community, whereas urban departments may be more sensitive to the dynamics of the police organization. Or, as a publication of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) put it, "The urban officer answers to the police department. The rural or small town officer is held accountable for his actions by the community (IACP, 1990, p. 9)."

The less formal nature of rural life, along with the small size of many rural departments, itself makes complex bureaucratic procedures less necessary for day-to-day operations. Thus, rural departments are less likely to have detailed written policies in a variety of areas, a situation which can place them in a legal "limbo" when problems arise. For example, in their study of police vehicle pursuits, Falcone, Wells, and Charles (1992) observed substantial rural-urban differences in both the number of pursuits and in whether departments had written policies regarding pursuits:

The paucity of pursuit policy in small departments is of tremendous importance because nearly one third of all Illinois police departments have fewer than one full-time officer. It is the officers working for these small departments who are unaided by policy and who have the highest per officer pursuit ratios. . . officers in departments comprised of 1-10 officers (small agencies) had an average pursuit ratio of over twice that of large agencies and nearly three times that of the next agency category (11-50 officers) (p. 168).

While rural departments, particularly small ones, may be less likely to have detailed written policies than urban departments, our conversations with rural police suggest that written policies are increasingly seen as necessary and worthwhile. It is in the area of developing written policies that State-level agencies and training programs seem particularly helpful for rural departments.

While we have touched upon a number of issues, there may be a large number of other issues of pressing concern to rural police that have not been systematically studied and therefore do not show up in the literature. There is a clear need to identify these areas and initiate a systematic examination of how they might best be addressed.

Community Policing

The preceding description of policing in rural areas raises a number of obvious questions about parallels with what has been called community policing. We have explored this issue

in more detail elsewhere (Weisheit, Wells, and Falcone, forthcoming), but it is worth some discussion here.

Community policing is a broad concept that has been interpreted in a variety of ways. Although the term is relatively new, it has already generated a sizable body of literature (e.g., Brown 1989; Greene and Mastrofski 1988; Moore 1992; Goldstein 1986; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux 1990; Wilson and Kelling 1989).

Aside from the obvious emphasis on community, it is possible to extract three broad themes from the literature on community policing. The first has to do with the police being *accountable* to the community as well as to the formal police hierarchy. The second is that police will become more *connected* with and integrated into their communities, which means that police will interact with citizens on a personal level, will be familiar with community sentiments and concerns, and will work *with* the community to address those concerns. A third theme requires that police will be oriented to *solving general problems*, rather than only responding to specific crime incidents. From the preceding discussion it should be obvious that these themes are consistent with what rural police have been doing for some time.

Regarding *accountability*, we have already suggested that as elected officials sheriffs must be responsive to the citizenry, particularly in rural areas where most of the voters are likely to know the sheriff personally. In rural areas and small towns, municipal chiefs must also be sensitive to the wishes of local citizens. As an example of accountability, we have observed that rural sheriffs and small-town chiefs often have their home phone numbers publicly listed. Citizens expect to be able to call them at home at any time and for the smallest of problems. As one sheriff told us:

I'm willing to be shown that I'm wrong but it's a lot harder being a sheriff of a small rural county than it is to be the sheriff of [a city] with a population of 250,000 because everybody in that [rural] county—they want to be able to pick up that phone, whether it be Saturday night at 2:00 in the morning and they have a problem. They want to be able to pick up that phone and call that sheriff. They don't want to talk to a deputy, or the dispatcher. They want the sheriff, "I have a problem." It may be dogs barking.

Rural sheriffs and small-town police also seem to be more *connected* to their communities than are urban police. Rural police are more likely to live in the community they serve and to be active members of the community. Because the communities are small, the police know many of the citizens and interact with them in a variety of social situations, such as buying groceries or having their personal car serviced. As one rural officer noted:

Their [police and citizens'] kids go to the same school. You see them on the street. You see them in the grocery store. It isn't like a city. In fact, I've worked with several cities and their officers are cold. They treat the good people the same way they treat the bad people. They are callous.

Another chief observed:

I come from a bigger agency. In the bigger agencies, you lose that personal day-to-day touch with the actual citizenry, unless you're there for a specific reason. Here, we're very close to these people. There's not too many of us, so they all get to know you. They come in all the time with their problems, and not just law enforcement-related problems. Yes, we're extremely sensitive. It's a very close knit operation.

This bond between the police and community in rural areas has been observed by others:

Rural and small town police are closer to their community than are urban police. Rural and small town police are a part of the local culture and community, whereas urban police tend to form a subculture and move apart from the community. . . . Urban police tend to be efficient; rural police tend to be effective (IACP, 1990, p. 8).

Another characteristic of community policing is a focus on *general problem solving*, rather than a narrow focus on reactive law enforcement. That is, officers not only respond to specific criminal incidents but they recognize and respond to more general problems that set the stage for specific criminal acts. The problems need not be limited to crimes and the solutions need not involve arrests. When asked about the kinds of problems to which his department was expected to respond, one small-town chief responded:

Everything, including the kitchen sink. I've had people in here to counsel families on their sex life because they think I'm the Almighty and can do that. I've had people come in who are having problems making ends meet, and we intercede for them in getting assistance, helping them file for welfare. We do a lot of service-oriented work. I consider it non law enforcement. Somebody needs a ride, like an elderly lady needs a ride to the doctor. We'll take her to the doctor or go get her groceries for her.

Because they are closer to the public they serve, and because they are often one of the only 24-hour service providers in rural areas, rural police receive calls for a wide range of services. If they respond to a wider variety of "nonpolice" problems than urban police it is not because they are required to do so by statute, or because written departmental policies demand it. Rather, they seem to define police work differently, perhaps because the people they serve are not nameless, faceless citizens but neighbors and fellow community members.

Given these observations, we have been surprised to periodically hear observers from outside rural areas comment that little community policing goes on in rural America. Such observations seem to be based on the belief that community policing requires the development of a specific program that has been codified and prescribed in writing. If one accepts this definition of community policing, then it can be argued that community policing is *not* simply and invariably identical to rural policing. Rather, community policing is a formalized and rationalized version of small-town policing—where the purpose is to introduce

accountability and provide a measure of legal rationality to what, in rural areas, is a much more spontaneous and informal process. Thus, formal community policing and rural policing are not identical—community policing is small-town policing set in a rational framework; it attempts to formalize the spontaneous acts of good sense and good citizenship found in many rural officers into a systematic "program" that can be taught, monitored, and evaluated. This is the paradox of community policing—in many ways it is the formalization of informal custom and the routinization of spontaneous events.

It is also true that rural policing is not homogenous across the country. One implication of this is that to be effective there can be no "one" program of community policing. Effective community policing must be tailored to the needs and wishes of each individual community, just as rural police tailor their activities to their local communities.

The higher clearance rates for rural police and the more positive perceptions of rural police by their citizens may reflect the benefits of the "community policing" as practiced by rural police. On the other side, the lack of privacy experienced by rural officers is just one illustration of the problems that accompany community policing. The rural setting may also be a good place to examine the concern that community policing will lead to greater problems with corruption. Our study was not designed to specifically address this issue, but it clearly merits further examination.

In summary, rural departments are positioned to be the very embodiment of community policing. Sheriffs and chiefs with whom we spoke frequently saw what they had been doing in rural areas as community policing and believed they were well ahead of urban areas in this regard. One sheriff's comments are typical:

Yes, there's far more community policing taking place in rural agencies than urban. We have been doing community policing since time began, I believe. We have always stopped and talked with the ranchers, the businessmen, walked the streets, rattled doors, and checked on sick folks. We know the various workers in the community and what they do. We see the kid delivering papers at 6:00 a.m. and talk with him. We have always done that. We are much closer to the people. Consequently, your whole mode of operation changes. Our method of gathering information derives from our personal contact on a day-to-day or minute-to-minute basis. In an urban setting, you're out "developing informants." We do that too, but the vast majority of our information comes from regular folks on a regular basis. I'm a believer in scanners. That would cause cardiac arrest in a lot of agencies. We have gotten more help from folks that have heard us out on a chase and we have lost the guy. They call up and say, "He's two blocks away going down this street." Plus, it tells them we are on the job, what we're doing.

But is this community policing? Examining rural police practices raises questions about what is meant by the term community policing. Is community policing a formalized explicitly planned program, or is it what police actually do in maintaining community order and safety?

Using the first definition means that little community policing takes place in rural areas because the procedures there are not part of an explicit program derived specifically from this philosophy. Using the second definition means that community policing is a common feature of rural police work because the procedures routinely used there correspond closely to the basic tenets of community policing. Using the first definition means that rural police have much to learn from their urban counterparts. Using the second definition means that urban departments might well look to rural areas for models of community policing.

Special Problems

While rural and urban policing may share a variety of concerns, there are also problems that are either unique to the rural setting or are made more complicated by the rural environment. For example, many small municipalities are strapped for funds, which not only makes staffing difficult but may make it impractical for their departments to tap into statewide systems for records checks or vehicle registrations. Even a nominal hookup fee may be more than the department can afford. Further, the more self-contained nature of rural communities may make it more difficult to generate support for training, equipment, or services that would increase routine interactions between the local agency and State or National enforcement groups. In addition, the distances covered by some rural officers may also complicate radio communication.

Rural officers are more likely to find themselves physically isolated but socially under a microscope. This situation is the inverse of that for many inner city officers. Perhaps the best example of this can be found among conservation officers, whose work is often done alone in remote areas, with backup some distance away.

Rural officers do not have a police backup system that will respond to their assistance within minutes. Game officers usually work alone with their nearest support as much as 50 miles away. They face a population which is generally armed and skilled in the use of weapons. Thus, they must face the threat of danger alone with the knowledge that they have limited, if any, support systems to aid them if they are injured (Walsh and Donovan, 1984, p. 337).

In our conversations this was an issue commonly raised by police in the most rural areas. When asked "What's the worst thing about being a rural officer?" comments such as this were not unusual:

That's distance—if you need backup or other emergency services. If you have a bad accident and you're 50 miles outside of town, it's going to take them a while to arrive. Or, if you have a hostage situation where you need backup, they won't be there for an hour.

In small departments, as well as among conservation officers, this isolation is compounded by the fact that there are fewer colleagues with whom they can socialize when off duty. At

the same time that officers in small rural departments are isolated, they also have less privacy and more difficulty in separating their professional and personal roles. Conservation officers again provide a good illustration of the lack of privacy afforded rural officers:

. . . conservation officers are highly visible members of the community they serve and are in fact never off duty. The officers' homes are their offices, with the game commission logo prominently displayed outside their houses as well as on their vehicles. Their telephone numbers are published statewide. The officers and their families are under constant observation because they are members of the communities where they enforce the law. Thus, they can never develop personal identities other than their official roles. They cannot, like their urban counterparts, disengage from this role, seek comfort in their occupational peer group, and find relief from anxiety privately. Because they lack peer companionship, their families play a very important and sensitive role. However, even then, the officers must be guarded lest confidential case information becomes a source of rural gossip (Walsh and Donovan, 1984, pp. 337-38).

Similarly, the IACP has noted that:

The rural or small town police officer cannot escape his role, and is often viewed by the community as a 24-hour police officer. This generates stress because the officer cannot participate in the social activities of the community as a person but is forced to be constantly identified as a police officer (IACP, 1990, p. 9).

Thus, the same familiarity with citizens that facilitates investigations by rural police also takes away from the rural officer's privacy. We have observed there are very few rural chiefs or rural sheriffs whose home telephone numbers are unlisted. Many of them reported that citizens were more than willing to call them at home at any hour with even minor problems. One rural chief provided a particularly telling example that is unlikely to be duplicated by any urban chief:

In a small town you lose your private life, too. It has taken a toll on my wife and our kids. Two years ago on Thanksgiving we had the family over and then we had a domestic that ended up on my front porch. The husband came over to tell me the problem and then she came over. . . It was pretty embarrassing. I have since put a sign up on my porch that says this is not the police department, it is our home. Dial 911 if you have an emergency. It hasn't worked. The amount of calls that you get at your house, and . . . if you get an unlisted number, they will come by your house. I would rather have them call me.

This chief, and a number of others observed that when off duty they could not have a beer at the local bar without starting rumors in the community. In such cases it is not unusual for the chief, sheriffs, and their officers to go to nearby towns if they wish to have a quiet evening or if they wish to have a drink.

In summary, it is true that "police work is police work" and that rural and urban police share many problems and concerns. It is also likely that the more serious the offense the more similar are rural and urban police practices. In matters of lesser offenses and day-to-day routines, however, there are a number of important rural-urban differences in how work is done, police-citizen interactions, and what citizens expect of the police. These differences raise questions about blindly applying urban models to rural police and may even raise questions about the urban models themselves. Consider the importance urban departments have placed on professionalism and the way in which that term is defined:

Critics point to the personalized and informal methods of rural and small town police as unprofessional. Perhaps "professionalizing" them would erode their effectiveness. Maybe metropolitan policing could learn something about police effectiveness from rural and small town police. It is possible that "professionalizing" rural and small town police would destroy the close and effective personal relationships they have long enjoyed with their community and its citizens (IACP, 1990, p. 9).

Although the IACP raises this point without presenting evidence to document it, the idea is a useful starting point for thinking through the role of professionalism in modern policing. Thus, understanding what rural police do and how they do it can provide valuable insights to improve policing in all communities.

Violence and Rural Police

It has been argued that violent crime occurs less often in rural areas, and that although guns are much more available in rural areas, they are less often used in crimes. Further, rural police more often know the citizenry personally and interact with them in a variety of settings. These factors combined should create an environment in which rural police are less likely to be victims of assault or of felonious killing. As Table 7 shows, however, the available evidence presents a mixed picture. On one hand, rural officers are least likely to be victims of assault—4 times less likely than officers in large urban areas serving 250,000 people or more, and 9 times less likely than officers serving urban areas of 100,000 to 249,999 people. On the other hand, officers serving very small towns and rural areas are killed at comparatively high rates that are 50 percent higher than for officers serving communities of 250,000 or more. The highest rates of felonious killings of officers are in midsize cities of 100,000 to 249,999 citizens, but officers serving small towns (under 10,000 people) and rural areas have the next highest rates. It appears that assaults on rural officers are less frequent but more often deadly. It should also be noted that the highest rates for both assault and for the felonious killings of officers are *not* in the largest cities, but in mid-sized cities of 100,000 to 249,999 citizens.

It is not possible, with the available data, to explain both low assault rates and high rates of felonious killings of rural officers. It is possible to speculate on fruitful avenues to follow in studying the problem. Perhaps, assaults on rural officers may be more seriously underrepresented. If the officer personally knows a belligerent drunk at a wedding, for

example, the officer may be less likely to officially record an assault if the drunk takes a swing at him or her. Or perhaps the high death rate is the product of officers patrolling alone in rural areas, where help will not be called as quickly and where medical assistance is less immediate. Further, even if rural and urban assaults were equally likely to involve guns, rural dwellers might be better marksmen, making their attack more deadly.

A related issue, which has been ignored in the literature, is the use of deadly force and excessive force by rural police. There are good reasons to speculate that rural and urban officers will show differences in the circumstances under which they use force and in the long-term implications of using force. For example, the rural officer is more likely to personally know the offender, as well as the offender's friends and family. This may shape the psychology of using force. It also makes the officer more vulnerable to retribution, since these individuals are likely to know where the officer lives and his daily routine. Conversely, because the rural officer is better integrated into the local community, there may be more sources of emotional support after deadly force has been used.

TABLE 7: Average Annual Number of Assaults and Killings of Sworn Law Enforcement Officers by Population Area for 1988-1991.

AREA	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SWORN OFFICERS	AVERAGE NUMBER ASSAULTED	AVERAGE ASSAULTS PER 1,000 OFFICERS	AVERAGE NUMBER KILLED*	AVERAGE DEATHS PER 100,000 OFFICERS
Group I Cities 250,000+	244,921	23,560	96.2	19.0	7.8
Group II Cities 100,000-249,999	33,824	7,918	234.1	5.3	15.5
Group III Cities 50,000-99,999	37,097	7,060	190.3	2.3	6.1
Group IV Cities 25,000-49,999	39,138	5,322	136.0	2.3	5.8
Group V Cities 10,000-24,999	45,211	4,441	98.2	2.8	6.1
Group VI Cities Under 10,000	56,481	4,823	85.4	7.3	12.8
Suburban Counties	100,725	8,877	88.1	8.3	8.2
Rural Counties	75,266	1,892	25.1	9.0	12.0

*Refers to *felonious* killings only.

Sources: The number of sworn officers was drawn from the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports: Crime in the United States* for 1988-1991, and the number of assaults and killings of officers was drawn from the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports: Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted* for 1988-1991.

Summary

A variety of Federal, State, and local agencies have jurisdiction in rural areas. However, two types of agencies—sheriffs' departments and municipal police—are the primary providers of rural police services. While municipal police dominate the urban landscape, in rural areas the sheriff's department is more often the central police organization. Sheriffs not only have countywide jurisdiction but a host of duties not assigned municipal police. These additional duties may include court services, running the local jail, serving civil papers, transporting prisoners, issuing licenses and permits, and collecting county fees and taxes. Most important, sheriffs are usually elected, which makes them directly accountable to the public.

Most police departments are small. Almost half have fewer than 10 sworn officers, and 91 percent of all local police agencies have fewer than 50 sworn officers. Not all rural agencies are small, and small agencies are not always in rural areas. Still, small agencies are the most common feature of the rural police environment. Rural departments are not only small but generally funded at about half the level of urban departments, per officer.

The small sizes and small budgets of many rural departments does not mean they are ineffective. To the contrary, rural police typically have higher clearance rates than urban departments. In addition, rural citizens have a more positive image of their police than do urban citizens.

Rural and urban police tend to operate differently. Rural police generally provide a wider range of services and are more closely tied to their communities. Rural police are more likely to come from and reside in the community they serve, and they are often active members of community organizations. Closer ties to the community are an advantage for responding to crime, but this closeness costs the rural officer personal privacy. Many aspects of rural police work are consistent with the principle of community policing, although rural departments are not likely to have formal written programs of community policing.

Given the more positive relationship between the police and the community in rural areas, it would be expected that rural police would engage in less violence against citizens and that rural citizens would be less violent against the police. Little is known about violence by rural police against citizens. The available evidence about violence against rural police is contradictory. Although rural officers less often officially report being assaulted on the job, they are much more likely to be feloniously killed in the line of duty.

While there is much to be learned about rural policing, the evidence suggests important differences between rural and urban police work. More needs to be learned about rural policing, particularly how it varies across rural areas, how rapidly growing rural areas can retain the positive features of rural policing, and what urban departments can learn from rural examples.

Rural police do not operate in a vacuum. In addition to rural citizens, rural police routinely interact with other actors in the criminal justice process, and this interaction seems to be shaped by the rural environment. The focus now shifts to those other components of the rural justice system and their functioning in the rural environment.

VII. OTHER PARTS OF THE SYSTEM

The informal nature of interactions in rural areas has implications for the willingness of citizens to invoke the formal legal process and for the ways in which defense attorneys, prosecutors, and judges conduct themselves. Long-term members of rural communities rely more heavily on informal processes for resolving problems, particularly for lesser offenses. One example of this is Ellickson's (1986) study of northern California ranchers who sustain damage to crops, fences, or their own livestock herds from the stray cattle of other ranchers. Although the dollar value of damage might be considerable, formal channels are considered inappropriate:

Rural residents deal with one another on a large number of fronts, and most residents expect those interactions to continue far into the future. . . . They interact on water supply, controlled burns, fence repairs, social events, staffing the volunteer fire department, and so on. Where population densities are low, each neighbor looms larger. Thus, any trespass dispute with a neighbor is almost certain to be but one thread in the rich fabric of a continuing relationship (Ellickson, 1986, p. 675, emphasis in the original).

The landowners, particularly the ranchers express a strong aversion to hiring an attorney to fight one's battles. To hire an attorney is to escalate a conflict. A good neighbor does not do such a thing because the "natural working order" calls for two neighbors to work out their problems between themselves (Ellickson, 1986, p. 683).

Similarly, Engel's (1984) study of personal injury lawsuits in a rural Illinois county found that such formal legal actions were rarely brought. When injury claims were taken to court awards were very low and the plaintiff was often viewed by the community with hostility and suspicion. Because of the stigma of handling these cases, the majority were handled by attorneys from outside the area. This was in contrast to noncivil actions, which were usually handled by local attorneys. The same pattern was observed by Fahnestock and Geiger (1990) in their study of rural courts in four States.

Interestingly, both Ellickson and Engel found that among cases that were taken to court, most were by plaintiffs who were outsiders, people who were either relatively new to the community or who had weak attachments to the area. And, as Ellickson (1986) noted, community members in his study considered a 10-year resident as "new" to the community.

The Practice of Law

It should not be surprising that the distinctive character of rural culture is reflected in criminal justice institutions. For example, the self-imposed isolationism of rural areas is illustrated in Kessler's description of the problems in establishing a legal services program in a rural community (Kessler, 1990):

The norms of cooperation, trust and courtesy shared by members of the local bar apply exclusively to attorneys with strong local roots. In general, the legal community is unreceptive to lawyers from outside the county using their local court. Further, members of the local legal community are suspicious of, if not openly hostile to, lawyers born and raised outside the county opening a practice within the county. The attitudes of the legal community to outsiders are illustrated in the comments of one veteran local attorney: "If you're part of the community, practicing law here can be great. But it's not particularly pleasant for out-of-county people. There's a very tight knit organization over here that doesn't particularly care for the outsider (pp. 274-75)."

The existence of small close personal networks in rural communities also means that attorneys in rural areas face conflicts of interest and ethical dilemmas seldom confronted by their urban counterparts. For example, client confidentiality can be a particular problem, and as Landon (1985, p. 86) has observed:

One of the defining characteristics of country life is the complexity of social connections. Most persons are involved in multiple-interest relationships. The client who comes to the small town attorney may also serve with the attorney on the local Chamber of Commerce Board, or attend the same church, or also have a son on the high school basketball team, or have a cousin who is married to the attorney's wife's niece. . . . Continual encounters with others are virtually assured, and therefore the motivations that apply to each interactional situation tend to narrow down to those that will make the next encounter comfortable.

Landon (1985) also argues that the familiarity of the rural lawyers with both the client and the community leads them to define their roles more broadly than do urban lawyers. Rural lawyers were more accessible and spent more time providing "general counseling" about "family problems, children's troubles, business difficulties, and moral dilemmas (p. 92)." They also had a more difficult problem separating the role of "friend" from that of "client" when approached by citizens about a legal problem.

The rural environment also shapes the work of prosecutors. The rural prosecutor is more likely to be familiar with the judge, defense attorney, offender, and the victim. In addition, the relationship between the rural prosecutor and the police is likely to be much closer than in urban jurisdictions. As Thorne (1976) has noted:

A prosecutor is the chief law enforcement official in his jurisdiction, and it seems an anomaly that the police are nearly always independent of that office. . . . For the small-office prosecutor, the opportunity will usually exist to know each law enforcement official personally. This facilitates the opportunity to meet with the enforcement units to explain prosecutorial policy, answer questions, and receive suggestions. . . . Awareness of such policies are as important to the police function as staying abreast of case law affecting their actions (p. 311).

Rural Courts

The rural setting also shapes the operation of courts. Going as far back as Wiers' 1939 study of juvenile court cases, a number of researchers have compared the operation of rural and urban courts. Wiers found the crime rate was lower in rural areas and that courts more often handled cases informally. More recently, Austin (1981) found that social background factors were more important in rural criminal courts, whereas urban courts were more legalistic and formal. In his analysis of juvenile justice in Minnesota, Feld (1991, pp. 206-207) observed:

Urban courts operate in communities with more disrupted families, more racially heterogeneous populations and less residential stability, all of which provide fewer mechanisms for informal social control. . . . Accordingly, urban counties place greater emphasis on formal, rather than informal, mechanisms of social control.

In another study, Feld (1993) identified some of the differences between rural and urban juvenile courts and suggested how those differences influenced the handling of juvenile offenders:

Urban courts appear to cast a broader, more inclusive net of control that encompasses proportionally more and younger youths than do suburban or rural courts. There also appears to be a relationship between social structure, procedural formality, and severity of sanctions. The more formal, urban courts hold larger proportions of youths in pretrial detention and sentence similarly charged offenders more severely than do the suburban or rural courts (pp. 158-59).

Others have considered not only the structure of rural courts but have compared the sentencing practices of rural and urban courts. Hagan (1977) found that urban courts were more bureaucratized with heavier caseloads and larger, better-trained staff. Hagan also found that the less formal nature of rural courts accounted for the harsher treatment of minorities in rural courts. Myers and Talarico (1986) concluded that simple rural-urban distinctions in sentencing were too simplistic. For example, urban courts were more likely to sentence rapists to prison, but when rural judges used prison they gave longer sentences. They also suggest that using an official label for a crime (such as homicide) may mask important rural-urban differences in the nature of the offense.

In her study of rural courts, Golden (1981) also emphasized how activities that appear similar on the surface may have very different meanings in rural and urban courts. She cites the example of plea bargaining, which is common in both urban and rural courts but is used very differently in each. In busy urban courts, plea bargaining is used to expedite case processing, whereas in rural courts plea bargaining may more often be the result of "informal personal interaction between the functionaries in the system, as well as their proximity and familiarity (p. 41)."

In rural areas, this close professional network extends beyond lawyers and judges to include most actors in the justice system. The number of actors in rural justice systems is small, and their interactions are frequent and expected to be long-term. As Fahnestock (1991) notes:

Over half of the rural counties in the United States rely on part-time prosecutors. The active bar often consists of a dozen or fewer members, including the prosecutor and the attorney(s) who represent local government. Often, there are five or fewer sheriff's deputies and a single probation officer, and each is known to the judge. The clerk of court's staff frequently numbers two or three. In short, fewer than 30 people routinely work together, a group about the size of a small family reunion (p. 14).

The extent to which these close working relationships can shape the operation of the justice system in rural areas is well illustrated by a judge who commented that he was hesitant to find defendants not guilty because that "would be like saying the sheriff lied (Fahnestock, 1991, p. 19)."

In addition to these professional networks, rural justice professionals may be strongly connected to their rural communities through longstanding social and family networks, some of which span generations:

The small scale of rural communities results in a web of interrelationships among justice system workers and the community at large. The defendant may be the judge's mother's hired hand. The plaintiff may attend the judge's church or be his or her daughter's Little League coach. The prosecutor may be the judge's former law partner. Rural judges cannot recuse themselves every time they know someone involved in a case. Indeed, many rural judges recuse themselves only when they have witnessed the alleged offense or they have a direct interest in the matter before them (Fahnestock, 1991, p. 14).

Under these conditions it becomes nearly impossible for criminal justice officials to separate their social and professional lives. Thus, it has been observed that judges in rural areas have no truly private lives, a condition which is probably also true for rural police:

Unlike the urban judge, the rural judge has no anonymity. Whether eating out, grocery shopping, seeing a movie with the family, playing golf, or walking down the street, the rural judge is often scrutinized. Whatever the rural judge does outside the court reflects on the judicial office (Dilweg, 1991, p. 28).

Rural judges are always accessible, so they always must be "on." They cannot run out for milk or gas up the car without an awareness of their judicial role. . . . Nearly every rural judge has stories about encountering the mother of someone they have just sent to prison (Fahnestock, 1991, p. 65).

Because they are highly visible as both citizens and officials, the professional, community, and family roles of rural justice officials sometimes collide. As one judge recounted:

You know, I had to sentence my own son to prison. When he got arrested, I thought about recusing myself. But then I thought about how it would look to the community. Folks would say, 'He can sentence other people's sons to jail, but he won't send his own.' So I stayed on the case. I took his plea and gave him a stiff sentence. It was the hardest thing I've ever done, but it was the right thing to do for the court (Fahnestock, 1991, p. 13).

Fahnestock (Fahnestock and Geiger, 1993) also argues that rural and urban courts function differently and that assessing them may require different criteria. While urban courts may emphasize speed and procedural correctness, rural courts are more focused on using the court as a forum to solve problems. As Fahnestock and Geiger (1993) have observed:

To rural judges, parties are not just docket numbers and fact patterns. They are known individuals, with families and problems, whose actions are viewed in the context of community values. At their best, rural judges can fashion responsive, tailored solutions that address the actual needs of defendants, victims, and litigants (p. 258). . . . Therefore, rural courts regard movement of the entire caseload as less important than their ability to deal with any one case in a way that satisfies the interested parties and the community (p. 262).

The picture of law that emerges suggests important points of difference between urban and rural areas. Like rural police, rural courts are compelled to be more responsive to the local community. Urban courts are more likely to focus on following proper procedures and on the processing of cases, while rural courts are more likely to focus on outcomes—i.e., given what is known about the offender, the victim, and the community, what is the most just disposition of a case? For officials in urban courts, determining whether "justice" has been served requires focusing on the process, whereas in rural courts "justice" is more likely to be measured by looking at outcomes.

Rural Jails

In addition to the judicial branch, some discussion has focused on rural jails, which are generally the responsibility of local sheriffs. As was true of police departments, research tends to focus on urban jails, but by far the greatest number of facilities are in rural areas. According to the 1988 National Jail Census, two-thirds of the jails in the U.S. have a daily population of less than 50 inmates (Innes, 1990).

Most observers agree that while urban jails tend to be seriously overcrowded, rural jails are more likely to operate *under* their rated capacity (Klofas, 1990). Mays and Thompson (1988) found that rural jails are not only underutilized but are often older than urban jails and more poorly staffed. Because the fixed costs of running a jail exist apart from whether

the cells are full or empty, the per-inmate cost of running jails in rural areas is about double that in urban areas. Further, the lack of staff and programming mean that rural inmates are less often separated by age and are less often supervised, which may partly account for their substantially higher rates of homicide, suicide, and death from illness and natural causes (Mays and Thompson, 1988). In rural areas, the fiscal conservatism that leads to small budgets for jail structures and jail services may create problems for the local sheriff, who can still be held "individually liable for the safety and welfare of inmates (p. 432)."

Mays and Thompson (1988) also argue that sheriffs in rural areas have fewer support services available to more quickly process inmates and move them out of the jail. For example, limited probation services may leave fewer alternatives to jail for misdemeanants. Also, the rural practice of relying on part-time judges may have a direct impact on the jail. "The result may be a less-than-timely dispositions in bail hearings, preliminary hearings, trials, and other functions that require a judge's presence (p. 431)."

The economic plight of some rural areas leads local sheriffs to raise money by housing jail inmates from urban areas or from rural areas with no jail. Federal authorities also contract with local jails to hold prisoners or to house illegal aliens for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (e.g. "Haitians suffer from isolation in rural jails," 1993). Housing inmates for other jurisdictions may be a good fiscal move by the sheriff whose jail receives the inmates and a practical necessity for the official who must reduce overcrowding. Little is known, however, about the full implications of this practice. For example, what is the impact of separating the inmate from local connections, both legal and illegal? These connections would include family, friends, employers, and legal counsel. Another issue is the type of inmate sent to rural jails. Do urban facilities send the most troublesome inmates to rural jails, and does this facilitate the spread of gang influence and other criminal networks, particularly when inmates are shipped across State lines? Other questions arise about the treatment of these inmates. It was argued earlier in this report that the behavior of rural police is relatively visible to citizens, and they are accountable to local citizens. It is possible that these immediate controls over police behavior are substantially reduced when the client is not a local citizen—perhaps not even a citizen of the United States. While little is known about rural jails, even less is known about short-term lockups and holding facilities in rural areas.

Prisons

The United States has been in a prison building boom for over a decade, and most State and Federal prisons are built in rural areas. In rural areas with high unemployment and no strong economic base, citizens often lobby hard for new prisons (Patrico, 1992). One consequence of building prisons in rural areas is the cultural and racial difference between the predominantly white rural staff and urban minority inmates (Jacobs and Kraft, 1978). Aside from providing jobs, prisons have an impact on the local criminal justice system. In most States felonies that occur within prisons can be prosecuted in the local county. Although little is known about this issue, Eichenthal and Jacobs (1991) have done

preliminary work and raised some interesting questions. For example, they found large variations in the willingness of prison officials to pursue prosecutions through the local courts, as well as variations in the willingness of local prosecutors to bring charges. Among the problems associated with investigating prison crimes, they note:

The police investigators, *especially when they are from rural counties*, are likely to have special problems in establishing rapport with potential inmate witnesses and in understanding the complex norms and dynamics of the inmate social system, which provide the context for the crime and the key to the investigations (1991, p. 292, emphasis added).

Eichenthal and Jacobs found that in some areas prison cases accounted for as many as 25 percent of the cases handled by local prosecutors. Thus, the burden on local courts is raised correspondingly. The cost of handling prison cases can be substantial for these rural communities, even when they are partially reimbursed by the State. These costs include legal defense services for indigent defendants, increased courtroom security, and secure detention facilities during the trial. In addition:

Inmate defendants also may be more litigious and less willing to settle the cases against them quickly. Indeed, for some inmates the opportunity to travel back and forth to court and the county jail may be viewed as a desirable break from the deadening prison routine (Eichenthal and Jacobs, 1991, p. 294-5).

In fact, Eichenthal and Jacobs found that some local prosecutors routinely declined to prosecute prison crimes because of the costs involved. In addition, a locally elected prosecutor has little to gain by spending time on crimes within the local prison if that means less time on local criminal concerns. An exception to this might be cases in which inmates assault guards who are local citizens.

Another issue is whether having a prison in the area influences the local crime rate. This is still an open question, although what little evidence exists suggests that crime does not increase when a prison is opened. It seems likely that even if crime does not rise because of the prison itself, some forms of crime, such as burglary, might increase as a consequence of the economic development that accompanies the prison.

With the hundreds of studies that have been done about prisons, it is ironic that so little has been done exploring the relationship between prisons and the rural communities in which most prisons are located. With no immediate end to widespread prison construction, it is important to have a better understanding of the impact of prisons on the rural communities in which they are built.

Summary

It appears that criminal justice institutions operate differently in rural and urban areas. In particular, rural officials are likely to have much closer working relationships with others in the system and to be less able to separate their professional and private lives. Rural courts are less formal than urban courts, though not always less harsh. Further, the flexibility that accompanies the less formal approach to case processing may also lead to greater racial disparity in sentencing. In general, rural and urban courts may operate under different definitions of justice, with urban courts more focused on justice as a process and rural courts more focused on justice as an outcome.

Nationally, most jails are small and in rural areas. Unlike urban jails that tend to be overcrowded, rural jails are more likely to operate under their rated capacity. It is not unusual for rural jails to house inmates from other jurisdictions, as a way to offset operating costs.

Prisons are usually built in rural areas. Many rural communities, particularly those with high unemployment and a small tax base, actively lobby to attract new prisons. Locating prisons in rural areas sets the stage for conflicts between rural white staff and urban minority inmates. While a prison may not generate a substantial amount of crime in the surrounding community, it may increase the workload of the local justice system in States where felonies committed in the prison are prosecuted locally. The boom in prison construction in rural areas suggests the importance of further study.

There are few aspects of the rural justice system that are thoroughly understood, and there are some, such as probation, about which almost nothing is known. It is clear that rural justice, like rural crime, is shaped by the culture and geography of small towns and rural areas.

VIII. POLICY AND RESEARCH ISSUES

Compared with urban areas, little is known about crime and policing in small towns and rural areas. Most research on police has focused on urban departments, while studies of crime have either had a restricted urban focus or have used national data in which rural and small-town issues are not specifically addressed. The discussion also suggests that the issues are complex and that a more careful study of rural and small-town crime can be important for both serving the rural community and for understanding crime in general.

Rather than summarizing the "facts" about rural crime and rural policing, this discussion will highlight issues raised in the preceding discussion. The discussion first concentrates on broad issues relevant to policy and research on rural and small-town crime. Following that, the focus shifts to specific issues that require further study.

General Issues

Careful consideration of rural and small-town crime and justice requires that several general issues be considered. For most issues there is no right or wrong approach, but an appreciation of these issues is important in conducting research and developing policies relevant to rural areas and small towns.

Although the terms "rural" and "urban" are used frequently in everyday language, there are no precise meanings of these terms upon which everyone can agree. While some include only unincorporated areas in their definition, we found instances in which communities of 50,000 were considered rural. A similar problem of definition arises when discussing small police departments. Many would define departments of 10 or fewer officers as small. However, one researcher was told by a large-city police chief that more attention needed to be focused on small departments. The chief then explained that small departments are those with fewer than 300 officers. Arriving at a precise definition of rural areas or of small police departments, with which everyone can agree—and that will be useful in all applications—is both impossible and unnecessary. What is important is that researchers and policymakers make clear what they include in their definition and, where possible, provide some justification for that definition.

While the term rural may defy precise definition, there are differences between rural and urban cultures, and these differences have implications for crime and policing in small towns and rural areas. Even issues that appear similar across rural and urban areas may have very different meanings. For example, both rural and urban areas have pockets of extreme poverty, but the implications of that poverty for crime are very different in the two areas. It appears that the *meaning* of poverty, rather than the *fact* of poverty is what is important. In short, caution should be exercised in applying urban solutions to rural crime problems. Not only is the study of rural and small-town crime useful in its own right, but it can also be a valuable tool for challenging assumptions about crime that are based on an urban perspective.

While much needs to be learned about rural-urban differences, it is likely that differences *among* rural areas are also great and merit further examination. It is *not true* that "sticks is sticks." For example, the culture and crimes of rural Appalachia are quite different from those of southwestern migrant workers or of Indian reservations in the Plains States. Thus, national policies uniformly covering rural areas may be a mistake, and research on rural crime problems in one area may have limited applicability in another rural area. One of the challenges for future research and policy will be to distinguish features that are common across rural areas from those unique to particular rural locations, and to make policies that can be adapted to local needs.

Over the long term, understanding and responding to rural crime will require a more careful study of rural environments, but as the discussions above suggest, these environments may present methodological problems that need to be addressed. Geography and culture in rural areas also raise questions about the applicability of urban research methods to rural environments. Urban methods cannot simply be applied in rural areas with the same results. For example, streetcorner interviews with urban drug addicts have no counterpart in rural areas. It is not clear how rural drug users who have not been identified by authorities might be conveniently located by researchers in rural areas.

These general issues form the setting for policy and research involving rural and small-town areas. The challenges facing researchers and policymakers in rural areas and small towns are formidable, but the needs of these area are real and deserve attention.

Specific Areas for Further Consideration

In the course of this study it became clear that a number of specific issues merited further consideration. Some have been longstanding problems while others are emerging concerns. The list that follows is by no means exhaustive and the items are not listed in order of importance. The list begins with crime issues and then moves to questions about police and the criminal justice system in general.

- *Gangs and gang influences.* Is there a gang problem in rural areas and small towns? What is the nature of the problem? How can it be documented? If there is a problem, what is the appropriate response? How are the problems and solutions different in rural and urban areas?
- *Drugs—production, transshipment, distribution, use.* How do rural and small-town drug networks differ from urban drug networks? What role do rural areas play in the production and transshipment of drugs that are eventually consumed in urban areas? What is the nature of the drug-use problem in rural areas, and what features of the rural environment have an effect on drug treatment? Do police play a greater role in drug prevention programs in rural areas?

- *Crimes connected to highways.* How has the construction of interstate highways influenced crime in rural areas and small towns? Are rest-stop crimes a problem and, if so, what is the role of rural police in dealing with the problem?
- *Crime and violence in rural schools.* Are violence, drugs, and guns a problem in rural schools? What features of the rural environment shape the response to crime and violence in these schools? What impact does school consolidation have on the problem?
- *Domestic violence.* How is the detection of and response to domestic violence different in rural and urban areas? What are the options for disposing of domestic violence cases in rural areas?
- *Impact of casinos and gambling.* What is the impact on rural and small-town crime of nearby casinos and riverboats? What impact does this crime have on local resources?
- *Crime in areas of transition (e.g., areas of rapid growth or decline).* What happens to crime when rural areas undergo sudden change? Examples include building a large factory in a rural area or rapid urban sprawl that turns rural areas into suburban communities.
- *Crime by and the victimization of special populations (senior citizens, tourists, etc.).* What special services or considerations are required of the criminal justice system when senior citizens begin moving into a rural community in large numbers? What are the issues that arise when populations undergo dramatic seasonal shifts because of tourism?
- *Crime by and against minorities in rural areas.* Does the low representation of minorities in rural areas change the way they are handled by other citizens and by the criminal justice system? What about crime and justice in rural areas with relatively large minority populations?
- *Impact of technology on crime and the victimization of rural citizens.* Have satellite communications, improved telephone systems, faxes, and modems made rural citizens more susceptible to fraud and high-tech, deceptive practices? How has technology helped in crime prevention and calls for assistance?
- *Women and minorities in rural police work.* Nearly all studies of women and minorities in police work have been done in urban areas with sizable minority populations and police forces large enough to have several women and minority officers working in the same department. Are women and minority police in rural areas doubly isolated—both from citizens and from other women and minorities in the department with whom they can socialize?

- *Attracting and retaining rural police officers.* What steps can rural and small-town departments take to improve the retention of police officers? Why do some rural departments seem to be training grounds for police who wish to move to larger departments, while other rural departments have a relatively stable workforce?
- *Getting training to rural police.* Where the number of officers in a department is small, the absence of one officer for training is an inconvenience for everyone and sometimes means periods of no police service for the local community. Problems with access to training are compounded in areas where the distance required to get training is long. Are there strategies for dealing with these problems?
- *Explaining high rates of felonious killings of rural police.* Why is the rate so much higher in rural and suburban areas than in central cities? Is it because of police practices or because of people with whom the police must deal—or a combination of the two? What can be done to lower the felonious killing rates in rural and suburban areas?
- *Handling juvenile offenders in rural areas.* Do rural and small-town police handle juveniles differently than do urban police? How does the distance from detention facilities influence the decisions of police? What are the options for handling delinquent juveniles in rural areas?
- *The role of rural police in crime prevention.* Given their greater ties to their communities, do rural and small-town police play a greater role in crime prevention? Does their informal knowledge of much of the citizenry help them identify problems in their earliest stages?
- *Impact of prisons on crime and justice in rural areas.* What is the impact of a prison on the local community's crime rate? What is the impact of a prison on the local justice system, particularly on the prosecutor and the courts?
- *Urban police officers who begin working in rural areas.* It is our observation that some of the rural-urban differences in policing we have reported are most evident to officers who leave urban settings to work in the rural environment. It is also our impression that such a move is relatively common for retiring urban police who view the move as a second career. The adjustment is often difficult for both the officer and the local community.

- *A job task analysis of rural police work.* Precisely how does rural and urban police work differ? What are the implications of these differences for the content of training and the evaluation of police performance? That is, "good" police work in rural areas may not be identical to good police work in urban areas.
- *Innovative uses of technology by rural police.* The availability of less expensive computers, the expansion of communication capabilities, and similar advances in technology may have a considerable impact on rural police. Information sharing, remote site training, and improved communications across large jurisdictions are examples of how technology may benefit small departments. Further, the falling prices of this technology put it within the reach of more rural departments than ever. What are some of the most innovative uses of new technology by rural departments, and what can be done to make them more widely available?
- *Rural resource sharing.* In rural areas with low tax bases and scarce resources, are there examples of resource sharing that work particularly well for local police?
- *Community policing in rural areas.* How can a further study of rural policing help outline the benefits and limits of community policing? What aspects of the rural police style are transferrable to urban areas, and which are unique to the rural setting?
- *Working relationships among rural justice agencies.* It appears that rural police, courts, and other agencies work more closely than in urban areas. How does this influence the handling of cases and the quality of justice meted out?
- *Local, State, and Federal cooperation.* Why are working relationships among local, State, and Federal authorities more positive in some rural areas than in others? How does the trend toward defining an increasing number of crimes as Federal offenses affect crime and justice in rural areas? From a local perspective, are there offenses for which this approach is helpful, and are there offenses for which this trend is counterproductive?

This brief overview of rural and small-town crime and policing has raised more questions than it has answered but suggests it is an area worth considerable further attention regarding both policy and research. Studying crime across rural areas and between urban and rural areas is useful in the same way that studies of crime across countries tell us much about larger patterns and suggest what works and what does not work in policing and crime prevention. It should also be clear that policies aimed at rural crime problems cannot ignore the unique features of rural culture that shape crime, citizen responses, police activities, and the operation of the courts.

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