



REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

Marilyn J. Wooley Ph.D.

Shaneika Z. Smith, M.A., M.S.

Abstract: *Most police agencies across the nation are in small or rural towns versus cities or metropolitan areas. However, most of the literature discussing issues faced by law enforcement communities has focused on urban policing, leaving a gap in understanding the unique challenges faced by rural police officers. Rural police departments often must navigate the challenges of fewer resources, lower staffing levels, and vastly larger geographical areas than urban departments while taking on more diverse roles in their communities and increasing crime levels. This paper examines the unique stressors of rural law enforcement agencies and the police officers who serve in them, their personal observations regarding relevant issues, and a brief discussion on the emerging methods that may increase the resiliency and address the mental health challenges present in this underserved population.*

Keywords: *rural policing, mental health, resilience, telehealth, organizational stress*

INTRODUCTION

The current spotlight on policing and law enforcement issues is focused mainly on urban departments rather than rural areas. Ironically, most police agencies across the nation are not in large cities but small or rural towns. In 2013, 71% of all police departments served jurisdictions of fewer than 10,000 residents, and 30% served communities of less than 2,500 residents. About half of law enforcement departments in the nation have fewer than ten officers (Weisner et al., 2020).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2016) defines rural areas as less dense and sparsely populated than urban areas. Ninety-seven percent of the United States' landmass is rural. About one-fifth of the population, sixty million people, inhabit rural areas. Many residents are employed in agriculture, forestry, mining, and manufacturing; declining job opportunities plague these sectors. Rural areas tend to be impoverished and do not have the tax base to adequately fund social programs, including police and

public safety. As a result, rural agencies are underfunded, understaffed, often under-trained, and lack the necessary equipment. (Ricciardelli, 2018). Rural agencies face challenges in training opportunities, access to resources, types of crimes, interaction with citizens, degree of scrutiny, inferior technology, mutual aid access, and co-operating overlapping jurisdictions, e.g., Native American, federal, and local lands.

In addition to the challenges faced by rural police agencies, cultural factors also impact the dynamics of policing in rural areas. Rural locals are frequently overwhelmingly White (Parker et al., 2018) and characterized by conservative values, aversion to government interference and authority, a tendency to exert social control, higher gun ownership than in urban areas, and the seeds of militia groups. Crimes related to wildlife, agriculture, and hate groups are common. Of necessity, rural police departments tend to have a unique culture and way of doing things depending on local history, demographics, size, and budget. (Weisheit et al., 1994). Therefore, urban

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

solutions to rural policing issues are often not relevant to these individual departments. A sheriff's deputy explained:

“When our department goes to trainings in the big cities we just sit there. What they are teaching is not relevant to our daily operations. They have departments for every job. In rural policing we see and touch it all. Any of us could be first on scene at a traffic collision or a homicide. We're search and rescue, the coroner, the victim advocate at the scene of domestic violence, the family therapist, the sex crimes investigator, and the ones who evacuate people from wildfires.”

The examination of rural agencies in the literature has been largely neglected; therefore, it is essential to address this as the law enforcement profession faces upheaval. The purpose of this paper, while not comprehensive in addressing myriad issues relevant to rural policing, is to elucidate the stressors unique to rural law enforcement agencies the peace officers who serve in them and propose methods to increase resiliency and stress management. To enhance and clarify the experiences of rural police, rural law enforcement officers have graciously granted permission to include their voices, opinions, and stories in support of the research and application needed in our rural agencies.

The Evolution of the Study of Rural Policing

Contrary to some public perception, rural policing is not a "humdrum." As resources and services are harder to come by, rural law enforcement agencies face the rising crime and dramatically increasing incarceration rates (Greenblatt, 2018). Nearly all aspects of rural policing are evolving.

In an early study, Sandy and Devine (1978) delineated four factors unique to rural policing compared to urban policing:

security, defined as an extreme sense of isolation inherent when working in large geographical areas with limited backup; limited financial and training resources that impact working conditions; social factors such as absence of anonymity or living in a "fishbowl," and boredom from inactivity leading to a lack of confidence.

In 2004, Oliver and Meier revisited the Sandy and Devine (1978) hypothesis and found support for the security dimension in that rural law enforcement officers felt stressed by the isolation in their environment. The authors opined that although the perceived risk might be greater than the actual one, the lack of resources and stress education contributed to workplace stress. Social factors, including excessive scrutiny by the community, were not impactful, but relationships outside work highlighted work stress. Furthermore, while officers may have felt useless and bored, they did not necessarily suffer from a lack of self-confidence.

Weisner et al. (2020) found that rural officers continue to report feelings of isolation and concern about long backup times. They still experience higher levels of stress than their urban counterparts because of a lack of resources, understaffed agencies, and overtime, all of which negatively impact their ability to carry out their duties. The authors noted that rural officers also had increased stress from administrative changes and media criticism of the police. The top three organizational stressors were "red tape," inconsistent leadership, and staff shortages. The top three operational stressors were fatigue, not enough time with family and friends, and finding time to stay in good physical shape. Rural policing is becoming more and more challenging.

The pressure of fitting in can also be a factor. A sheriff's deputy stated:

“When you are in a department with fewer officers, there is even stronger

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

peer pressure to conform. There is little room to step up and speak out against an injustice. In larger agencies officers can have private lives away from the dept, and no one knows your business; that is not the case in rural or smaller agencies. There is a constant need to fit in and be accepted.”

CHALLENGES FACED BY RURAL POLICING

In 2022, law enforcement as a profession is at a crossroads. Criminals are becoming more sophisticated and making use of the internet. Sex crimes, theft, drug trafficking, and human trafficking are constantly in the news. Investigative strategies from a few years ago are outdated. Police are increasingly called on to respond to social problems that have de facto become law enforcement problems. In the wake of the protests that followed the killings of people of color by police, mistrust between civilians and law enforcement has grown to epic proportions. Moreover, greater civilian ownership of firearms has caused some concern. For example, former New Orleans Police Superintendent Ronal Serpas stated that throughout his career, the move toward looser gun laws has meant that police have had to learn to co-exist with armed civilians, even in tense settings. (Chang, 2020).

Rural agencies face not only the above challenges, but in recent years they have faced growing pressure to cover more territory, respond to more service calls, and deal with more violent crime. The rise of illicit drugs, including manufacturing labs, grows, and distribution, leads to violence, death, and disruption in families and the community. As a result, rural officers are increasingly called upon to manage homelessness, drug addiction, and mental illness. Adequate mental health facilities have often gone by the wayside requiring peace officers to potentially use law

enforcement tactics on individuals who need psychiatric care. Jails have become overcrowded, and prosecution seems pointless (National Police Foundation, 2020). To address these social problems, they may receive inadequate training, have insufficient resources, lack of equipment, and limited access to technological tools. One officer expressed frustration that the suspect he had arrested informed him, “I’ll be out of jail having lunch before you finish your paperwork on me. The suspect was right.”

Difficulties in hiring officers, huge geographical areas to patrol, long response times, and paucity of social services breed more crime, stressing the system even more. A vicious cycle develops an exacerbation of crime, which accompanies unresolved social problems and fewer dollars and personnel to deal with them (Police Executive Research Forum, 2019). Nevertheless, society expects that law enforcement should handle all situations perfectly.

Dias (2019) points out the irony in our expectations of law enforcement.

“Every officer needs to be an empathetic, well-spoken, SEAL-trained ninja, with double majors in psychology and social work, who considers the job a calling, and has no bills to pay, no nerves to fray, and enforces the law completely objectively while also using discretion at all times, unless it’s going to result in arresting—or not arresting—the wrong person at the wrong time, for the wrong thing.”

A rural police officer shared, “I strive to be the most polite, understanding, empathic person I can be right up until the moment I’m forced to draw my weapon and shoot someone’s grandmother. So, no pressure here.”

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

Alone on the Job

Rural law enforcement includes small city police department officers, sheriff's deputies, state troopers, fish and wildlife wardens, tribal police, and fire investigators. Job duties include driving long distances alone in a marked patrol vehicle to remote locations to resolve a potentially violent call for service singlehandedly. Officers report that the perception of isolation leads to significantly higher levels of stress (Oliver, 2004; Weisner et al., 2020). An officer from a large metropolitan area assisted with a call in the high desert of California.

“It was surreal. I was driving Code 3 for 45 minutes one-way in the dark in the middle of the desert. There were meth labs in the middle of nowhere. I was so far out I couldn't get radio calls. And I had no backup. I was alone. Not like in the city where I knew it was only a matter of time before help came.”

Another officer's experience:

“A call came in that a mentally disturbed man shot and killed several of his neighbors and was reportedly on his way to his child's school. I was alone in my cruiser, headed toward the school as part of the search. Radio reception was spotty in the remote mountainous area, and information relayed to me was barely adequate. Other officers available within response time were spread around the county, searching for the suspect who was picking off motorists as he drove. Protocol in the case of a school shooter is to neutralize the shooter first before attending to victims. I'm a mom myself. I had to brace myself for an incident in which I would have to step over the bodies of dead and wounded children to pursue the shooter. I never felt so alone.”

Role Flexibility

Law enforcement officers in rural areas often must do many jobs because other resources are unavailable (Weisheit et al., 1994). As a result, the ability to change gears is essential. For example, Fish and wildlife officers are sworn to conserve and protect natural resources by ensuring people comply with laws and ensuring the public's safety and protection of property regarding wildlife. Sometimes their jobs are not so simple.

During a California wildfire near an isolated tribal town, a fish and game warden was directed to evacuate homeowners and livestock from a rapidly moving conflagration. As he was frantically working to save lives, two men operating meth labs erupted into a territorial gun battle. The officer switched to pursuit mode until the suspects could be detained and arrested. Then he returned to evacuating homeowners as the fire raged toward the town. He admitted that during the incident, the thought ran through his head, “What am I doing? And why?” Nonetheless, he carried on smoothly and discharged his duties effectively and professionally. This ability to switch between roles and duties is essential in rural law enforcement.

In small departments with limited personnel, mutual aid from other departments is not always available.

In rural California, a deputy responded to a civil disturbance call. Before he could exit his vehicle, he was ambushed by a shotgun-wielding suspect and killed instantly. The only available backup was the sheriff. He responded and located the suspect, engaged in a running gun battle, and ultimately detained him. After the incident, the sheriff wanted to support

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

his staff, who was traumatized having heard the entire call on the radio. He was also involved in the officer-involved shooting investigation and the critical incident stress response. Perhaps the biggest challenge he faced was finding balance between taking care of his people, coping with his own stress, and attending to multiple administrative duties.

Interaction with Community

Officers in rural areas tend to have ongoing personal interactions with community members. Community policing is a given. Knowing the individuals in the community gives the officer a sense of what to expect and how to interact. A peace officer who knows the family and understands the habits of an offender has the advantage of informal social control. A deputy in a town of a few thousand people explained how to catch a suspect.

“I drove out to the suspect's house, and his mother told me he was at the bar. I helped her carry some groceries in, then I went over to the bar and told him, 'You know why I'm here.' He just turned around, and I cuffed him.”

A disadvantage is that in tragedy, the officer's likelihood of knowing a victim is high. This occurrence can be one of the most stressful incidents a rural cop can encounter.

An officer in a small mountain town worked on patrol and served as the school resource officer. One of the duties that gave him the most gratification was teaching the high school driving safety program. One afternoon he left class to begin patrol. Within minutes, dispatch directed him to a vehicle accident on a winding mountain road. He responded, and with horror, realized two of his students had taken a curve too fast and drove off the mountain to their deaths.

Suddenly, his primary purpose in life became his greatest burden.

The incidents add up, causing cumulative stress. A police officer in a rural medium-sized town shared:

“There are so many calls where I've known the victim. I've responded to a fellow officer's suicide, a SIDS death in the home of close friend, and I had to shoot and kill the drug enraged son of a Sergeant who worked in a neighboring department, and so on. I've lost count of them all.”

Recruiting and Retaining: "A Workforce Crisis"

According to the Police Executive Research Forum (2019), the demands put on officers and agencies, are causing recruiting, and retaining to become increasingly difficult. Some departments are reporting a drop between 50% and 70% in new job applications since 2015. Experienced officers are also leaving the job in droves well before their retirement age. Low recruitment numbers nationwide, and a sharp increase in officers choosing to leave law enforcement well before retirement age, have caused a workforce crisis.

What contributes? The recent protests in response to nationwide officer-involved shootings, "increased scrutiny and criticism," and "negative news stories about the use of police force" (Cassady, 2020), as well as officers being found guilty of murder and corruption (Liu & McCausland, 2020d). These problems are compounded in rural departments that offer lower pay and fewer benefits compared to the private sector or larger agencies, making competition impossible (The Economist, 2020). Officers working in rural agencies with budget constraints often must pay for their own firearms, vests, and body cameras.

Lifestyle issues is also a factor. Police work is not "9 to 5." The necessity of working

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

nights, weekends, and holidays does not offer the flexibility that younger people seek. They want a balance between work and their private lives.

Then there is the risk factor. Policing is inherently dangerous. Line of duty deaths and the increasing number of ambush-style attacks cause realistic concerns about safety. In large rural areas where radios don't operate in dead zones and backup is hours away, add to that anxiety.

Working alone in a remote mountainous area, an officer stopped to help what he thought was a stranded motorist late at night. The motorist turned out to be a psychiatric patient who assaulted the officer with a machete, nearly severing his arm. The officer struggled back to his car but had no radio contact, and even so, backup was more than an hour away. His life was saved by a local resident who heard him yelling and called the home of an off-duty peace officer to assist.

Police agencies are looking for recruits with education, talents, and far more experience. They need recruits with technological skills to solve crimes such as identity theft, sex crimes, and cyberstalking. Recruits must be interested in and capable of duties that resemble social work more than law enforcement, while at the same time being able to perform traditional policing, investigating crimes, making arrests, and responding to protect the public during natural disasters. The Police Executive Research Forum (2019) summarized: "so even as police departments are struggling to get enough applicants in the door, they need to be raising the bar and looking for applicants with a wider array of talents and skills."

As a result, departments, especially rural ones, are forced to relax hiring standards,

especially regarding tattoos, facial hair, or prior drug use (Cassady, 2020). Educational requirements are loosened because applicants to rural agencies tend to have lower education and experience compared to applicants to larger departments (Weisner et al., 2020). Furthermore, the application process may be streamlined, or applicants are offered reserve or part-time positions before the hiring process. Nonetheless, many officers purposively choose a rural environment. A small-town police officer explained:

"Rural cops can work more independently. I chose a small department because no one was looking over my shoulder all the time. You also have the chance to be better connected with the civilians and get to know them. It's your words and reputation. For example, I've been saved from deadly parolees when someone said, 'Hey, he's a good cop.' I've learned to reason more with people and talk them down rather than take them down."

The question of how to recruit is often eclipsed by who will fit in. One deputy from a rural sheriff's office found a job in a large city and, within a few years, realized he missed the rural values and moved back to his original agency. But for many, the lure of higher pay and better benefits is the deciding factor.

Law Enforcement Officers and Gender

Van Ness (2021) showed that women are more skilled at assessing the policing needs of diverse communities, are less likely to use force, and can deescalate situations better than males. They are named in fewer complaints and get better outcomes for some victims, including children and victims of sexual assault. However, out of nearly one million sworn officers in the United States, fewer than 12% are women. Women cops in rural areas are even rarer. Dias (2020) reports

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

that of the 7,616 California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers patrolling 100,000 miles of road and responding to 6 million 911 calls per year, 442 are female, and of those, only a handful work in rural environments. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service employs 222 officers in mostly rural areas to protect wildlife, the natural environment, and the citizens who enjoy it. Of those, 17 are women. Full-time law enforcement employee data collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2018), indicates that 14.1% of officers in metropolitan areas were women while 8.1% in nonmetropolitan areas were women

Although the number of recruits has declined, recruiting women and people of color has proven even more complicated, with candidates thinking twice about their career choice considering the protests calling for police reform (Police Executive Research Forum, 2019). According to the National Institute of Justice (2019), issues of gender and race are inextricable. Both groups face extraordinary challenges in policing, yet they are not a homogenous group and differ in background, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other factors.

Males and females in rural departments experience comparable stressors, self-perceived stress, and supervisory-perceived stress. (Bartol et al., 1992; Lonsway, 2006). However, women reported more stress upon exposure to tragedy and stress associated with a responsibility for the public and their colleagues' safety. In addition, women experience stressors unique to their gender, including a lack of support at home and work which may cause difficulties in managing stress and relationships. Additionally, problems with gossip, training, lack of promotional opportunities, inflexible working patterns, a double standard for performance evaluations, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, personal and professional isolation, and administrative

policies present disadvantages for female officers (Oliver, 2004). Other challenges for women cops working in rural areas include overcoming stereotypes, arranging childcare, irregular hours, and "peeing in the woods." (Dias, 2020a).

A cop and a mother shared:

“Women cops also must deal with childcare especially they if are single. They won't be able to work as much overtime and it affects their pay. Not working overtime or specialized details can affect your promotional opportunities or even getting into the detective positions. It's harder for women to make detectives as men are making most of the decisions and they tend to put their buddies into the specialized spots.”

The psychological cost for women is great, even if they don't show it. Bartol et al. (1992) found that although supervisors reported that males and females performed job functions equally, female public safety officers exhibited symptoms of burnout more than their male colleagues and physiological symptoms, including headaches, muscle tension, and nausea, and upset stomachs. A female deputy reported:

“As the only female in a rural agency, I have to act tough all the time. Even at the debriefing for a horrible incident I have to act tough. I can't get emotional because I'm surrounded by men who see it as a weakness and use it against me by acting like I'm not capable. I learned to stuff my emotions really early on the job and never talked about anything I was experiencing. Maybe that's partly the reason I developed PTSD.”

According to Van Ness (2021), the low rate of women in law enforcement can be attributed to stereotypes about the profession,

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

the demands of training, patterns of sexism, and harassment. Many agencies are looking to recruit more women to change who is policing and how their departments police. Under the 30X30 Initiative, a collaboration between the Policing Project at NYU Law, The National Police Foundation, The Police Executive Research Forum, and the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives, policing agencies have established the goal of having women comprise 30% of recruits by the year 2030; with the idea that at this level under-represented groups can positively benefit the police culture.

The perpetual lack of women to serve as mentors is another issue. Only 3% of law enforcement leadership positions are women, resulting in a lack of role models for promotion. However, in 2020, California's Governor Gavin Newsom generated a sea change in the current by appointing Amanda L. Ray as the 16th Commissioner of the CHP, making her the first woman and second Black person to lead the largest police agency in the nation during its 91-year history.

Law Enforcement and People of Color

Current thought and recent research emphasize the importance of law enforcement agencies reflecting the demographics of their citizenry. Russo and Rzemek (2021) opined that police departments have an ethical obligation to their communities to promote equity, inclusion, and diversity. Leatherby and Opiel (2020) noted that greater diversity in patrol and administration promotes institutional trust in underrepresented neighborhoods and fewer excessive force complaints in larger departments.

However, there is a paucity of research on people of color serving in law enforcement in rural areas, possibly, in part, because rural America is traditionally less racially and ethnically diverse than the

nation's urban areas. However, this is changing. The U.S. Census Bureau (2020) data indicates that people of color increased 3.5% in the median rural county. People of color now make up about 24% of the rural population, compared to 42.2% in the nation as a whole (Rowlands & Love, 2021). Whether the trends in parity seen in urban departments can be extrapolated to rural areas is unclear. Certainly, larger urban cities, with the resources and political will to pursue greater diversity, have been able to move toward demographic parity faster than rural areas (Leatherby & Opiel, 2020).

Wilson et al. (2015) studied Black officers in rural areas and found that 93% felt that their worth as law enforcement professionals was well recognized in communities of color as opposed to only 52% who agreed that they were adequately recognized in cultures other than their own. Serving in larger departments may dilute these issues to some degree, but the meager presence of people of color in small departments may leave them with little support and a lack of social capital. In addition, most rural Black officers perceived that racial profiling occurred in their departments, and many or most believed bias was condoned at the administrative level. Furthermore, Weisner et al. (2020) noted that rural Black officers (37%) are more likely than rural White officers (8 %) to report police bias and say that institutions treat Blacks unfairly. There are complicated explanations for this, including a lack of training, implicit bias, or lack of contact with people of color. The bottom line is that the level of racial bias in police departments is not well studied and often misunderstood or underestimated. Although police officers of color have served their communities for hundreds of years, many of them feel marginalized, treated as second class, and believe they have fewer opportunities for

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

advancement. An officer of color who worked in a smaller department noted:

My (White) predecessor worked really hard to put together a new modern recruiting poster showing diversity. He picked several Whites, Blacks, and Asians along with one Hispanic. Then he posed them around a patrol car. When he showed it to me, I immediately noticed all the officers were people of color and all the people of rank were White. He was shocked and asked me how I saw that so fast. I explained that is how I see life living as a person of color.

Tak (2022), a former police Lieutenant in a small California department, opined that even when Blacks are hired, the culture may not change.

“If the Black employee vocalizes an issue, their concerns are often minimized or dismissed. They are often told they are “too sensitive” or “angry” and there is often little promotional opportunity. The Black employee is often burdened with not upsetting the status quo. There is an expectation that they will assimilate to the existing culture even if it is injurious to their mental health and well-being. The implicit rule is they will not do anything to make their White superiors or coworkers uncomfortable. The most effective way to bridge the racial gap is for us to work closely together over time on a shared project. What better way to realize that than working in law enforcement, in a rural community where you must depend on one another with limited resources and manpower.”

Law Enforcement and Lgbtq+

There has been a history of strain between the LGBTQ+ community and law enforcement (Copple & Dunn, 2017), but serving in law enforcement as a LGBTQ+ individual can be life threatening if fellow officers refuse to respond when called for backup. As a result of “horrible discrimination” some LGBTQ+ officers have sued their departments, which has prompted sensitivity training, improved working conditions, and more inclusive recruitment practices (Lam, 2019). However, research on LGBTQ+ officers in conservative rural areas is hard to come by. Anecdotally, LGBTQ+ females serving in traditionally masculine roles don’t seem overly concerned about how other officers perceive them, whereas LGBTQ+ males are reluctant to “come out.” One rural deputy anonymously noted, “It may sound awful, but most rural cops aren’t ready to tolerate a gay male who’s come out of the closet.”

COVID-19

Law enforcement agencies are trying to cope with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Common issues include staffing shortages, closure of ancillary agencies that usually provide support, longer shifts, lack of childcare, loss of camaraderie with coworkers, and exposure to COVID-19 while dealing with the public. (Spence & Drake, 2021).

Rural agencies face the same challenges with even fewer resources. They are less likely to employ individuals with expertise in health policy, mental health, and information distribution to guide civilians and agencies through the pandemic. Smaller agencies cannot spare personnel to network with larger departments, train or procure PPE. In small agencies, a COVID-19 infection could potentially wipe out an entire department (Phillips, 2020). Despite this, many rural law enforcement officers are strongly con-

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

servative and resist government-mandated vaccines or mask mandates. (Wooley, 2022).

Additionally, the coronavirus has exacerbated many social problems in rural communities. Access to services and resources has long been problematic in financially challenged rural areas. Adding the loss of jobs, stay-at-home orders, a new layer of regulations, lack of privacy, and a lack of social outlets—just being able to get away from family members—has potentially increased the risk of domestic violence, thus creating more stress in law enforcement (Hansen & Lory, 2020).

Another stressor for law enforcement is the increasing number of inmates housed in small county jails because of insufficient pretrial services, a lack of diversion programs, and few alternatives to detention. (Kang-Brown & Subramanion, 2017). Attempting to care for inmates who have psychiatric problems and are waiting for the medical services they need compounds the problem. A rural deputy reported:

“There's always been a problem with the time it takes inmates who are jailed waiting to be transferred for treatment. There aren't enough facilities to take care of them. Before COVID, it would take six to eight months for a 1368 (psychiatric patient) to be transferred to a mental hospital. Now with COVID, they're not being transferred at all. And we must deal with them the whole time without the proper training or holding facility. Bigger facilities at least have better holding facilities to protect the mental patients from themselves or others.”

Accessing Mental Health Services

The nature of policing exposes officers to an increased risk of negative mental health consequences (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMSHA], 2018). Depression, anxiety, substance use,

and posttraumatic disorder/symptoms are common reactions to critical incidents. Officers are often aware they would benefit from better access to mental health services. However, the unique factors of rural policing, such as increased isolation, lack of resources, understaffed agencies, increased frequency, and duration of exposure to critical incidences, and expectations of serving multiple roles in the community combined with a dearth of culturally competent rural mental health providers is problematic. A rural officer stated:

“It took four tries to find a counselor who didn't cry or freak out when I told them about my incident. And I have to drive three hours to see the one who finally was able to help me. She explained what was happening to me, that I had posttraumatic stress, and helped me get through it.”

Papazoglou et al. (2021) found that officers are reluctant to seek support from an institution or organization because mental health issues are stigmatized and experienced as a significant drawback in the work environment. Papazoglou et al. (2021) highlights the existing variables affecting an officer's mental health, such as a negative worldview, the lack of family support, the continuous experience of traumatic events, toxic work environments, unsupportive organizations, lack of peer support, and the everyday use of coping mechanisms such as suppression of emotions and to self-medicate. He proposes that organizations promote practices to prevent and cope with job pressures such as mental detachment, reframing, refraining from personalization, permeance, and catastrophizing. Other strategies to decrease organizational stress include meditation, exercise, peer and group support, improved sleep and nutrition, listening to music, and organization of the work environment.

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

Suicide

Across the nation in 2019, 228 police officers took their own lives, making suicide the top officer safety issue (Barr, 2020). Police are at the highest risk for suicide than any profession. Suicide occurs in police at triple the rate of Line of Duty Deaths. (Hilliard, 2019). According to the SAMHSA (2018), the prevalence rate of suicidal ideation in police officers was 25% in female officers and 23.1% in male officers. The reported prevalence of suicide attempts among police officers approached 55% among those who experienced suicidal ideation at one time or another. Rural police are not immune to this increasing safety issue (Healy, 2019). Violanti et al. (2012) found that smaller police departments had a significantly higher suicide rate than large departments. Constant exposure to traumatic events, isolation, and lack of mental health services are contributing factors.

Fleischmann et al. (2018) found that in a study of 575 critical incident team officers, approximately 50% reported knowing at least one or more other officers who changed after experiencing a traumatic event. Almost half stated that they had known a fellow officer that died by suicide. Tragically, suicide statistics are suspected to be higher than reported because of the stigma and politics that go into labeling an officer's death as a suicide.

The CHP faced an epidemic of suicide in a 5-year span from 2003 to 2007. Thirteen employees, all but one uniformed, took their lives. The tragedy came to national attention and was emotionally crushing to the 11,000 employees of the department, many of whom work in rural environments. The riddle of suicides within the CHP ranks was not easy to solve. No one defining stressor was experienced by those who took their lives. Some individuals were facing minor disciplinary actions; others had personal life stressors or PTSD, while in some cases there

were no outward signs that the individuals were experiencing life stressors. In response, CHP developed a suicide prevention and intervention program in conjunction with the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) that offered training in recognizing symptoms of potential suicide, how to respond, access to resources, and how to support individuals experiencing the guilt and blame that often occur in the aftermath of successful suicide. The program was entitled "Not One More."

The program developers then asked, "What are the cultural roadblocks that prevent cops from seeking help?" Elizabeth Dansie, one of the "Not One More" program developers, stated:

“Officers develop adaptations during their law enforcement careers. Those adaptations, or *coping tools*, that assist officers in survival include personal invulnerability, emotional suppression, isolation from support, alienation, a need to maintain one's image, mistrust, and misuse of alcohol. These also are the very behaviors that explain why officers are less likely to seek assistance when needed. The personality traits that make individuals good cops (action oriented, risk taker, control oriented, altruistic, obsessive-compulsive, decisive) can work against them when they need help.”

Additionally, asking for help suggests powerlessness within the agency culture. Prior to the CHP's suicide epidemic, the law enforcement culture believed that asking for help meant one was weak and that reaching out meant jeopardizing one's image and career. Employees who expressed concerns or asked for help, believed that a "fitness for duty" would follow, with the strong possibility of being placed off-duty or not being trusted by fellow officers. An officer who has been there stated”

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

“When the officer is demoralized to the point that the barriers of not being trusted or losing their career are no longer a concern, there is still the very real fear of losing their ability to carry the weapon they had depended on to keep them and their family safe both on- and off-duty.”

Prior to the suicide epidemic, CHP utilized peer support personnel and therapists who guided affected employees and the aftermath of the incident, arranged needed assistance and resources, and provided general support. Other than a private employee assistance program available, there was no departmental assistance or wellness program to provide resources to employees facing the possible choice of suicide. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) was not offered for employee deaths that were not "work-related," including suicide; Critical Incident Stress Debriefings only occurred when requested.

CHP presented the program at the 2009 ICISF World Congress. Since then, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the Bureau of Justice, and the U.S. Department of Justice have used the program nationwide. Components of the program continue to be regularly utilized in the CHP academy, field training, and with employees around the state. After the program was implemented, EAP usage has increased and receptivity to CISM, including 1:1 sessions, and there has not been another epidemic of suicide at CHP. That said, CHP is a state agency with access to far more resources than rural departments who simply don't have the resources to combat the enemy without much less the "enemy within."

Therefore, concern regarding officer suicide remains. In 2020 Congress directed The U.S. Department of Justice to "assess the availability of existing mental health resources for law enforcement agencies and should also include recommendations for

increased access to, and utilization of, mental health counseling and programs focused on law enforcement suicide prevention efforts." The report concluded that programs are needed starting at the academy to promote resiliency and mental health training and continuing at the organizational level to provide diverse and individualized services throughout officers' careers and beyond. Training, peer support, supportive leadership, crisis response, and culturally competent clinicians are all required (Spence & Drake, 2021).

Unfortunately, rural departments that can't afford basic equipment or training, are again likely to be left out of the loop. As a result of efforts to reach underserved communities such as rural areas and measures to combat COVID-19 in the United States, the move toward creative and innovative methods to provide mental services for rural police officers is essential.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? APPLICATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

In 2004, Oliver and Meier pointed out that stress intervention programs, such as CISM and mental health counseling, are as essential in rural agencies as urban ones, yet they lack large metropolitan departments' resources to provide them. More than a decade and a half later, Weisner et al. (2020) noted that the dearth of rural mental health services is one barrier to overcoming the stressor experienced in policing. The stigma of seeking mental health services may be partially overcome if the administration of an agency is supportive. The requirement that officers partake in CISM or see a psychologist after an officer-involved shooting sends a message that the agency is committed to officers' mental well-being. Nonetheless, a challenge arises when culturally competent psychologists specializing in police and public safety are a rarity in rural areas.

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

Rural areas face significant challenges in providing CISM services, although the need is as great as urban areas. Potential challenges for forming CISM teams in rural areas are the lack of funding, initial and ongoing training, maintenance of educational material, access to mental health professionals, and the strain of adding one more thing to the existing multiple roles officers must fulfill. Nonetheless, as a form of psychological "first aid" CISM teams offer an additional sense of preparedness, which can be a protective factor regarding mental health issues for rural police officers.

D'Andrea et al. (2004) proposed an adaptation of the use of CISM teams in rural communities, recognizing the unique challenges that rural emergency crews face, including the likelihood that victims will be known to responders. Wooley (in press.) described that traveling to a rural CISM may present challenges and noted that the CISM team should be aware of and prepare for distinctive cultural and political values in rural areas that may impact the team's ability to relate the participants. CISM rules may have to be modified in small departments if resources are not available to cover duties during CISM. In addition, peer pressure and departmental politics may be more pronounced in small departments and should be handled with finesse.

Peer-support Programs

Peer support can be the frontline in addressing acute emotional distress in first responders. Trained first responders can provide safe spaces to listen, mentor, or support coworkers. "Sometimes, a responder may just want to talk to a peer who has walked in their shoes and can provide understanding and direction" (Conant, 2020).

Marks et al. (2017) found that peer support trainees demonstrated knowledge of stress injuries, initiated, and maintained *hard* conversations, increased motivation to

follow-through seeking services, and provided acute stress management. Peer-support programs also address barriers to access of care such as stigma, lack of time, lack of access to providers, and difficulty with trust in rural first responder organizations (Creamer et al., 2012). Papazoglou et al. (2021) notes that, "The need for normalizing their experience by sharing with others who have had similar experiences and been given the tools to cope are an essential part of the efforts put forward to assist police officers and their families." On the other hand, rural areas may present problems in confidentiality. A deputy stated:

"In smaller agencies there are more confidentiality issues. It's hard to confide in someone who you know personally outside the job and who may be friends with others in your circle. In our agency the peer support program was generally run by those trying to promote and there was little confidence of confidentiality. Cops love to gossip so I can only imagine if your peer support guy has beers regularly with your captain or chief you can count on your stuff getting out."

One treatment program for first responders, the West Coast Posttrauma Retreat (WCPR) began in 2001 and is the residential component of the First Responder Support Network (FRSN). It includes the "support of peers, clinicians, chaplains, and volunteers that aid in the educational experience for first responders to recognize the signs and symptoms of work-related stress, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in themselves and others." The intensive week-long program provides a peer support model in which participants attend weekly zoom meetings connecting them to other peers. This peer model could serve as a framework for connecting rural police

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

officers that report stress-related symptoms to peers outside the community in a psychoeducational experience.

Empirically Supported Treatment Modalities

The challenges faced by rural policing are further impacted by geographical location barriers, which creates immense obstacles in obtaining specialty providers. The use of technology to deliver therapeutic services has been increasingly accepted and found effective in treating such disorders as PTSD and depression. Various health and counseling organizations have published guidelines and standards for telehealth and telehealth delivery. These organizations include the American Counseling Association, the American Medical Association, the American Psychology Association, the American Telemedicine Association, the Association for Counseling & Therapy Online, the National Association of Social Workers, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, and the National Board for Certified Counselors (EMDR International Association [EMDRIA], 2020). For rural police officers who have high accessibility barriers, telehealth can provide a unique care opportunity and offer privacy and confidentiality because they don't have to worry about running into someone they know in the therapist's office.

Morland et al. (2020) summarized the efficacy of telehealth in the treatment of PTSD and depression. They found that the virtual-delivery of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) interventions such as prolonged exposure, cognitive processing therapy, and a combination of behavioral activation and prolonged exposure did not differ in outcomes compared to face-to-face treatment delivery in veterans. Virtual delivery and face-to-face delivery of CBT treatment modalities resulted in comparable attrition rates; however, there is some

evidence to suggest that telehealth services may increase retention as it can eliminate travel as a barrier (Hernandez-Tejada et al., 2014).

There is a growing body of research for the use of telehealth in general to reach difficult populations, including rural police officers. Modalities such as EMDR had been shown to be effective in the treatment of PTSD in first responders (Jarero et al., 2013). EMDRIA (2020) released guidelines for virtual delivery of EMDR therapy. Computer-based programs such as Remote EMDR and EMDR Remote have been developed to assist in the virtual delivery of bilateral stimulation. Additionally, Brain-spotting shows emerging support for the efficacious treatment of PTSD (Hildebrand et al., 2017), and current training in Brain-spotting addresses virtual based service delivery. Although empirical support is limited on virtual implementation of new wave treatment modalities such as EMDR and Brainspotting, providers' creativity, exploration, and inspiration will increase our rural police officers' empowerment now and into the future.

The National Consortium of Telehealth Resource Centers (NCTRC), funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), aids in removing barriers for specialty providers of remote services for police and other rural populations. Services include accessing research laws, tracking regulations, technical assistance, education, and resources on topics concerning telehealth services, and training in providing telehealth to rural and underserved communities.

CONCLUSION

The current spotlight on policing and law enforcement issues is largely focused on urban departments rather than rural areas. Ironically, most police agencies across the

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

nation are not in metropolitan areas, but small or rural towns. By and large, the literature does not reflect the unique challenges facing rural police officers. Rural policing is plagued by a lack of material resources, limited staffing, and vast response areas with limited back up. Rural officers face the same mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, PTSD symptoms, and suicidal ideation as urban officers. These issues may be exacerbated by isolation, cultural barriers, conservative values, and organizational expectations.

Geographical location and long shifts often limit access to mental health services. Emerging advances and ongoing research in interventions such as telehealth and existing treatment modalities such as peer-support groups and critical incident stress management may prove to be a bridge in closing the gap for this underserved population.

REFERENCES

- Bartol, C. R., Bergen, G. T., Volckens, J. S., & Knoras, K. M. (1992). Women in small-town policing: Job performance and stress. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 19*, 240-259.
- Barr, L. (2020, January 2). *Record number of U.S. police officers died by suicide in 2019, advocacy group says*. ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/record-number-us-police-officers-died-suicide-2019>
- Cassady, D. (2020, July 29). *Amid calls for police reform across the nation, police struggle with recruiting and retention*. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielcassady/2020/07/29/amid-calls-for-police-reform-across-the-nation-police-struggle-with-recruiting-and-retention/#3713b8c64f94>
- Chang, A. (Host). (2020, August 27). Why experts say the police don't need militias' help [Audio podcast episode]. In *All Things Considered*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/27/906791713/oh-hell-no-why-the-police-doesnt-need-militias-help-at-riots>
- Conant, J. (2020, August 28). Peer Support: The missing piece of the mental health puzzle [Editorial]. *EMS1*. <https://www.ems1.com/mental-health/articles/peer-support-the-missing-piece-of-the-mental-health-puzzle-5vITjH2EZaQz8FaX/>
- Copple, J. E., & Dunn, P. M. (2017). *Gender, sexuality, and 21st century policing: Protecting the rights of the LGBTQ+ community*. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.iadlest.org/Portals/0/cops%20LGBTQ.pdf>
- Creamer, M. C., Varker, T., Bisson, J., Darte, K., Greenberg, N., Lau, W., Moreton, G., O'Donnell, M., Richardson, D., Ruzak, J., & Forbes, D. (2012). Guidelines for peer support in high-risk organizations: An international consensus study using the delphi method. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 25*(2), 134-141. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.21685>
- D'Andrea, L. M., Abney, P. C., Swinney, R., & Ganyon, J. R. (2004). Critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) in rural communities. *Traumatology: An International Journal, 10*(3), 179-187. <https://doi.org/10.1528/trau.10.3.179.43230>
- Dias, K. (2019, December 29). *Decide what you want*. [Online forum post]. The Rural Badge. <https://www.theruralbadge.com/2019/12/decide-what-you-want.html>
- Dias, K. (2020a, May 22). Women in rural law enforcement [Editorial]. *Police1*. <https://www.police1.com/rural-law-enforcement/articles/women-in-rural-law-enforcement-7zjgEhKgbKa5ohSA/>

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

- Dias, K. (2020b, June 12). Why even the smallest agency needs a critical incident response plan [Editorial]. *Police1*. <https://www.police1.com/rural-law-enforcement/articles/why-even-the-smallest-agency-needs-a-critical-incident-response-plan-Ij2NoZhOYPXx6i9D/>
- EMDR International Association. (2020). *Guidelines for Virtual EMDR Therapy*. https://www.emdria.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Virtual_TG_Report_for_Member.pdf
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2018). *Full-time law enforcement employees* [Data set]. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/crime-in-the-u.s.-2018/topic-pages/tables/table-74>
- Fleischmann, M. H., Strode, P., Broussard, B., & Compton, M. T. (2018). Law enforcement officers' perceptions of and responses to traumatic events: A survey of officers completing crisis intervention team training. *Policing and Society*, 28(2), 149-156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2016.1234469>
- Greenblatt, A. (2018, July 25). *In rural America, violent crime reaches highest level in a decade: The loss of jobs and the opioid epidemic are two of the biggest reasons*. *Governing: The Future of States and Localities*. <https://www.governing.com/topics/public-justice-safety/gov-crime-rural-urban-cities.html>.
- Hansen, J., & Lory, G. (2020). Rural victimization and policing during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45(4), 731-742. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09554-0>
- Healy, M. (2019, September 6). Economic hardship tied to increase U.S. suicide rates, especially in rural areas. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/science/story/2019-09-06/economic-hardship-suicide-rates>
- Hernandez-Tejada, M. A., Zoller, J. S., Ruggiero, K. J., Kazley, A. S., & Acierno, R. (2014). Early treatment withdrawal from evidence-based psychotherapy for PTSD: Telemedicine and in-person parameters. *The International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine*, 48(1), 33-55. <https://doi.org/10.2190/PM.48.1.d>
- Hildebrand, A., Grand, D., & Stemmler, M. (2017). Brainspotting – the efficacy of a new therapy approach for the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder in comparison to eye movement desensitization and reprocessing. *Mediterranean Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.6092/2282-1619/2017.5.1376>
- Hilliard, J. (2019, September 14). *New study shows police at highest risk for suicide of any profession*. Addiction Center. <https://www.addictioncenter.com/news/2019/09/police-at-highest-risk-for-suicide-than-any-profession/>
- Jarero, I., Amaya, C., Givaudan, M., & Miranda, A. (2013). EMDR individual protocol for paraprofessional use: A randomized controlled trial with first responders. *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research*, 7(2), 55-64. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1933-3196.7.2.55>
- Kang-Brown, J., & Subramanian, R. (2017). *Out of Sight: The growth of jails in rural America*. Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/out-of-sight-growth-of-jails-rural-america.pdf>
- Lam, K. (2019, February 8). *LGBT police officers say they've faced horrible*

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

- discrimination, and now they're suing.* USA Today. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2019/02/08/lgbt-law-enforcement-officers-sue-over-workplace-discrimination/2404755002/>
- Leatherby, L. & Oppel, R.A. (2020, September 23). Which police departments are as diverse as their communities? *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/23/us/bureau-justice-statistics-race.html>
- Liu, S., & McCausland, P. (2020, November 10). *Rural police struggle to recruit amid poor pay and public perception.* NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/rural-police-struggle-recruit-amid-poor-pay-public-perception-n1078496>
- Lonsway, K. A. (2006). Are we there yet?: The progress of women in one large law enforcement agency. *Women & Criminal Justice, 18*(1-2), 1-48. https://doi.org/10.1300/J012v18n01_01
- Marks, M. R., Bowers, C., DePesa, N. S., Trachik, B., Deavers, F. E., & James, N. T. (2017). REACT: A paraprofessional training program for first responders—A pilot study. *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic, 81*(2), 150-166. <https://doi.org/10.1521/bumc.2017.81.2.150>
- Morland, L. A., Wells, S. Y., Glassman, L. H., Greene, C. J., Hoffman, J. E., & Rosen, C. S. (2020). Advances in PTSD treatment delivery: Review of findings and clinical considerations for the use of telehealth interventions for PTSD. *Current Treatment Options in Psychiatry, 7*(3), 221-241. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40501-020-00215-x>
- National Institute of Justice. (2019). *Women in Policing: Breaking barriers and blazing a path.* U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/252963.pdf>
- National Police Foundation. (2020). *Conversations with Rural Law Enforcement Leaders: Volume 1.* U.S. Department of Justice. <https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-w0892-pub.pdf>
- Oliver, W. M., & Meier, C. (2004). Stress in small town and rural law enforcement: Testing the assumptions. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 29*(1), 37-56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02885703>
- Papazoglou, K., Milliard, B., Neofytou, E., Davis, J., Bellon, S., & Thompson, J. (2021). To tell or not to tell: Systemic and organizational stigma of police officers seeking mental health support. *Crisis, Stress, and Human Resilience: An International Journal, 3*(3), 85-103. <https://www.crisisjournal.org/article/30787-to-tell-or-not-to-tell-systemic-and-organizational-stigma-of-police-officers-seeking-mental-health-support>
- Parker, K., Horowitz, J. M., Brown, A., Fry, R., Cohn, D., & Igielnik, R. (2018). *Demographic and economic trends in urban, suburban, and rural communities.* Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/05/22/demographic-and-economic-trends-in-urban-suburban-and-rural-communities/>
- Phillips, K. (2020, April 12). 'It would cripple us completely': Coronavirus takes toll on rural police agencies. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2020/04/11/coronavirus-pandemic-rural-police-brace-worst/2971863001/>

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

- Police Executive Research Forum. (2019). *The workforce crisis, and what police agencies are doing about it*. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>
- Ricciardelli, R. (2018). "Risk it out, risk it out": Occupational and organizational stresses in rural policing. *Police Quarterly*, 21(4), 415-439. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611118772268>
- Rowlands, D. W., & Love, H. (2021, September 28). Mapping rural America's diversity and demographic change. *The Avenue*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2021/09/28/mapping-rural-americas-diversity-and-demographic-change/>
- Russo, C., & Rzemek, T. (2021, August 4). Finding equity, inclusion, and diversity in policing. *Police Chief Online*. <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/finding-equity-inclusion-and-diversity-in-policing/>
- Sandy, J. P., & Devine, D.A., (1978). Four stress factors unique to rural patrol. *The Police Chief*, 45(9), 42-44.
- Spence, D. L., & Drake, J. (2021). *Law Enforcement Suicide: 2020 Report to Congress*. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-p429-pub.pdf>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2018). *Disaster Technical Assistance Center supplemental research bulletin-first responders: Behavioral health concerns, emergency response, and trauma*. <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/supplementalresearchbulletin-firstresponders-may2018.pdf>
- Tak, E. (2022). *Considerations in recruitment and retention of Black law enforcement* [Unpublished manuscript].
- The Economist. (2020, March 14). *Small towns and rural parts of America have a policing problem*. <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2020/03/12/small-towns-and-rural-parts-of-america-have-a-policing-problem>
- U.S. Census Bureau (2016). *New census data shows differences between urban and rural populations* [Press Release]. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2016/cb16-210.html>
- Van Ness, L. (2021, October 20). Percentage of women in state policing has stalled since 2000. *Stateline*. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/10/20/percentage-of-women-in-state-policing-has-stalled-since-2000>
- Violanti, J. M., Mnatsakanova, A., Burchfiel, C. M., Hartley, T. A., & Andrew, M. E. (2012). Police suicide in small departments: A comparative analysis. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health*, 14(3), 157-162. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4536806/>
- Weisheit, R. A., Falcone, D. A., & Wells, L. E. (1994). Crime and policing in rural and small-town America: An overview of the issues. *National Institute of Justice Rural Crime and Rural Policing*, 2(2). <https://www.ncjrs.gov/txtfiles/crimepol.txt>
- Weisner, L., Otto, H. D., & Adams, S. (Principal Investigators). (2020). *Issues in policing rural areas: A review of the literature* (Project No. 16-DJ-BX-0083) [Grant]. Criminal Justice Information Authority. <http://www.icjia.state.il.us/assets/article/s/Rural2CoverPage-200320T21095517.pdf>

REACHING RURAL POLICE: CHALLENGES, IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

Wilson, C. P., Wilson, S. A., & Thou, M. (2015). Perceptions of African American police officers on racial profiling. *Journal of Black Studies*, 46(5) 482-505.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934715583596>

Wooley, M. J. (in press). Providing CISM where the deer and antelope play: Adventures and insights in remote, far-northern California. *Life Net*.