Northern Policing

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Overview

- Defining north, rural and urban areas
- Importance of non-urban police research and the specific challenges officers face
- Recommendations for future research

Defining the North

Figure 1: north- south divide

Differentiating between Rural and Urban

Statistics Canada

- Population centres
  - Small population centre (1,000- 29,999 people)
  - Medium population centre (30,000- 99,999 people)
  - Large population centre (>100,000 people)

- Rural areas
  - Density less than 400 people/km^2
  - Population less than 1,000 people

(Carleton, 2014; Carleton, Brantingham & Brantingham, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2011)

Northern Rural and Remote

- Geographically sparse (Murphy, 2014; Ross, 2009)
- Unforgiving environmental conditions (Ross, 2009)
- Small population sizes (Allen & Perreault, 2013)
- Lack of resources (Ruddell, Lithopoulos & Jones, 2014)
- Large proportion of Aboriginal peoples (Allen & Perreault, 2013; Ruddell., et al., 2014)

Why Study Northern, Rural and Remote Canada?

Neglected by research, why?

- Urban-centric (Donnermeyer & DeKeseredy, 2013)
- Rural idyll (Carleton, Brantingham & Brantingham, 2014)

(Ottawalife, 2011)

Living in Remote Areas

- Fly-in communities (Murphy, 2014; Ruddell, et al., 2014)
- High cost of living (Murphy, 2014; Ruddell, et al., 2014)
- Lack of specialized services (Sandy & Devine, 1978)
- Safety and welfare concerns
  - Impact on family (Lithopoulos & Ruddell, 2011; Murphy, 2014)
  - Intimidation by locals (Gill, Clairmont, Redmond & Legault, 2008; Lithopoulos & Ruddell, 2011; Lytle, 2014)
- High visibility, lack of anonymity (Murphy, 2014; Oliver & Meier,2004; Ross, 2009; Ruddell et al., 2014; Wood & Trostle,1997)
  - Police legitimacy at risk

Crime and Disorder

Northern jurisdictions report the highest rates of crime and victimization

Figure 2: Police-reported crime rate by north-south region

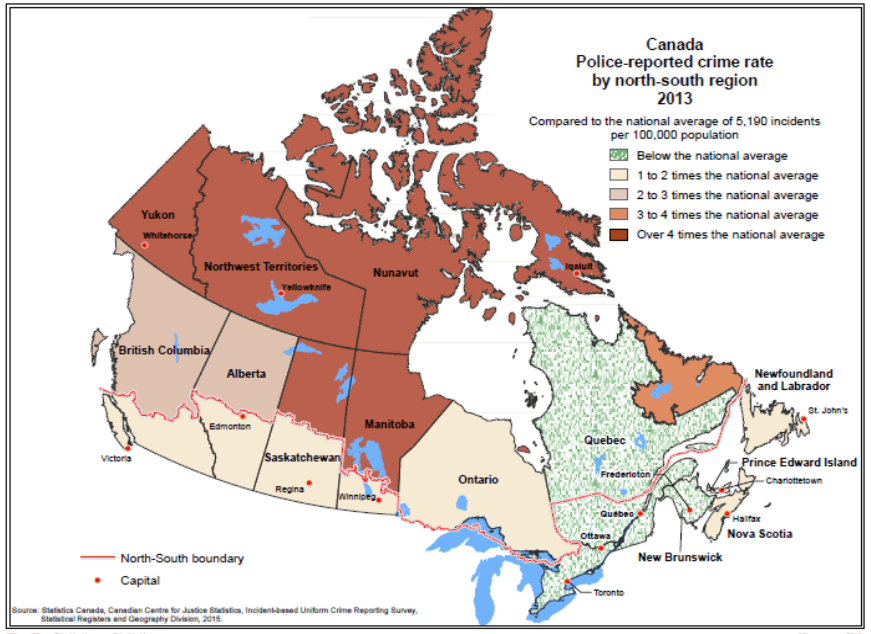
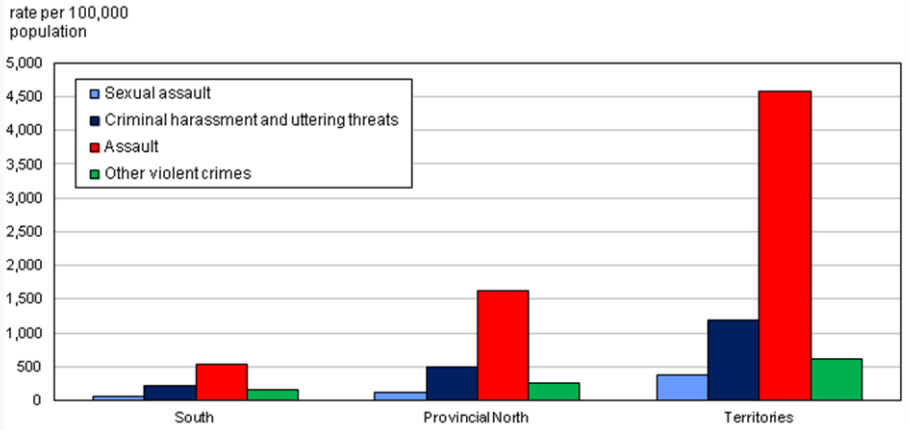


Chart 1: Police-reported violent crime rate by north-south region 2013



Note: Rates are based upon the most serious violation in the incident. One incident may involve multiple violations. Provincial north encompasses the northern regions of Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. South refers to the southern regions of these provinces as well as Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Crime and Disorder

High incidences of social disorganization

- Substance abuse (Gill et al., 2008; ICURS, 2014; Lithopoulos & Ruddell, 2011)
- Suicide (McInnis & Young, 2015)
- Unemployment (Gill et al., 2008; Lithopoulos, 2007; Lithopoulos & Ruddell, 2011)
- Poverty (Gill et al., 2008; Lithopoulos & Ruddell, 2011)
- Family disruption (Carleton, 2014; Gill et al., 2008)

Multifaceted Role

- Required to perform an unlimited range of tasks
- Cover for other agencies

> *"After 4:30pm the only things here that are open are 7 eleven and the police department"*
>
> (Murphy, 2014)

- Role strain (Huey & Ricciardelli, 2015)
- Proactive approach and assume a wide range of occupational demands (Gill et al., 2008; ICURS, 2014; Landau, 1996; Murphy, 2014; Ross, 2009; Wood & Trostle, 1997)

Detachment Size

- Detachments can have as little as 3-4 officers
  - Even when off duty officers remain ‘on standby’
- 452 officers responsible for 1.35 million square miles in Canada’s territories (Ruddell et al., 2014)
  - 1 officer per 3000 square miles (Murphy, 2014)
- Slow response time = residents may take matters into their own hands (Ross, 2009)

Detachment Size

- No readily available backup
  - Can cause feelings of isolation and fear (Murphy, 2014; Oliver & Meier, 2004; Ross, 2009)

Thus, while calls like domestic violence may be highly stressful, far more 'simple' calls like auto accidents or even giving out a ticket can also become highly stressful to the small-town and rural officer"

(Oliver & Meier, 2004)

Stress and Rural Policing

- Significantly higher levels of stress among officers (Oliver & Meier, 2004; Sandy & Devine, 1978)
- Stress training urban based (Sandy & Devine, 1978)
- Support services available for rural police officers (Huey & Ricciardelli, 2015).

Training and Maintaining Officers

- Recruiting and maintaining officers
  - Multifaceted role (Murphy, 2014; Ross, 2009)
  - Strong communication and interpersonal skills (Murphy, 2014)
  - Conflict resolution skills (Murphy, 2014)
  - Sacrifice multiple years without access to basic resources (Ruddell et al., 2014)
- Inadequate training
  - Cultural sensitivity (Lithopoulous and Ruddell, 2011)
  - Limited by budget constraints (Oliver & Meier, 2004; Ross, 2009).

Future Directions

- Are traditional theorectical explanations appropiate for northern-rural regions?
- Improved understanding of policing and mental health contexts
- Study of the environmental impact on policing in small communities
- Crime prevention and reduction policies must be designed to address rural areas

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Thank you!

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