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Relationships and responses: Policing anti-social behaviour in rural Scotland

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ABSTRACT

Rural policing, with a few notable exceptions, has been largely absent from the geographic and criminology literature. Yet, examining rural policing is important for revealing details about rural society, and the role that the police play in controlling rural space. Using participant observation and interview data collected as part of a wider study exploring anti-social behaviour (ASB) in rural Scotland, this paper calls for a more nuanced understanding of rural policing. In order to fully conceptualise the response of the police to ASB in these rural locations, the role of discretion, negotiated order maintenance and police–community interactions need to be considered. These dimensions are considered to lie at the core of the response of the police to ASB in rural Scotland. Existing urban-based policing typologies are helpful for beginning to understand the multiple ways that the police control territory. Yet they are of limited relevance to some of the challenges identified with policing rural contexts, namely the scale of the environment, the lack of back-up and the forms of ASB that are common in rural locations. This paper concludes by arguing that the rural needs to be (re)conceptualised as a distinct, challenging and variable policing environment, with particular contextual factors that need to be considered.

1. Introduction

Rural studies and geography more broadly have largely neglected scholarly work examining the police and policing (Fyfe, 1991; Mawby and Yarwood, 2011). A number of papers have, however, recently sought to shed light on the varying dimensions of rural policing (see for example Gilling, 2010; Yarwood and Gardner, 2000; Yarwood, 2007), and perhaps, most notably, Mawby and Yarwood's (2011) edited collection *Rural Policing and Policing the Rural*. Rural locations are a key area of study in relation to policing and the police in Scotland, not only because 94% of the country is classed as rural using the six-fold urban–rural Scottish Government classification (Scottish Government, 2010a), but also because examining rural policing reveals important details about rural society and the role that the police play in controlling rural space (Mawby and Yarwood, 2011). This paper focuses on the police (rather than the broader plural policing agenda which takes into account other criminal justice partners) and argues that understanding the nuance of the rural context is of central importance for understanding the response of the police to anti-social behaviour (herein ASB) in rural Scotland, something which has hitherto been largely missing from the geographic and criminology literature.

The existing rural literature provides a helpful way of contextualising the responses to ASB which is legally defined as someone acting 'in a manner that caused, or was likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same house hold as himself' (Home Office, 1998). Recent years have witnessed a body of work which have sought to move beyond clichéd representations of the rural, and instead treat the rural as 'dynamic, fluid and multi-experiential' (Yarwood and Charlton, 2009: 194), where the rural context is dependent on the everyday life of the individual living it (Cloke, 2003; Halfacree, 2006). As Woods (2009) highlights, work on the production, reproduction and contestations of rurality continue to be prominent within the discipline of 'rural geography', with Rye (2006: 409) stating that 'rather than asking what the rural 'is', the pivotal question has become: how do actors socially construct their rurality?' The everyday life, combined with the rural locality and

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representations of the rural, make up what Halfacree (2006) terms 'the totality of rural space'. This three-fold model is based on Lefebvre's understanding of spatiality, where spatial practices, representations of space and spaces of representations combine to form a three-part dialectic where space is perceived, conceived and lived (Halfacree, 2006; Lefebvre, 1991). Halfacree (2006) argues that the lives of the rural, representations of the rural and the rural locality triangulate to define rural space (see Fig. 1):

Understanding rural space in this manner enables a more complex analysis of the police response to ASB at the local scale and provides a basis for contextualising this response. The triad is intrinsically dynamic, with each facet 'being in relationship with the other two' (Halfacree, 2006: 51), meaning that theoretically understanding the rural depends on the 'totality of rural space'. In their book 'Rural Criminology', Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy (2014: 4–6) define the rural as: having smaller population sizes and densities; where there is closer collective efficacy (Sampson, 1988); where there is less autonomy between rural communities than before and where cultural, social and economic divides are much more obvious than before. Although these points may accurately nominally describe what makes a location 'rural', Halfacree's (2006) analysis enables the rural to be examined without fetishizing particular rural representations. This paper seeks to offer a nuanced discussion of the different responses of the police to ASB in rural Scotland by engaging with Halfacree's dialectic. In turn, it is important to challenge the existing ASB policies which typically treat 'the rural' as a single dimension where (urban) policy gets enacted with little consideration for local context and scale.

Against this backdrop, this paper attempts to understand a set of key practices which structure the response of the police to ASB in rural Scotland. These practices relate to the use of discretion, police–community interaction and the situated knowledge that rural police officers tend to have of the community in which they police. While these features are also important to urban police responses to ASB, they acquire heightened importance for the way that the police in rural locations manage their response to ASB. Indeed, responding to ASB represents a significant resourcing challenge for the police, with large rural policing beats being covered by a small number of officers based in police stations which are often geographically removed from the communities for which they are responsible. In order to fully understand the response of the police to ASB in these locations, it is therefore important to understand the context of the policing responses in rural locations. In exploring these issues, this paper aims to contribute to the evidence base around rural policing and argues that a more nuanced understanding of 'the rural' is necessary for conceptualising the response of the police. After outlining the context of the research, this paper proceeds by examining the role of discretion, police–community interaction and situated community knowledge play in structuring the police response in two contrasting rural communities. The paper concludes by arguing that the distinctiveness of the police response to issues of ASB in rural areas means that the term 'rural policing' is a better conceptualisation of the distinct challenges facing rural officers than 'policing in rural areas'.

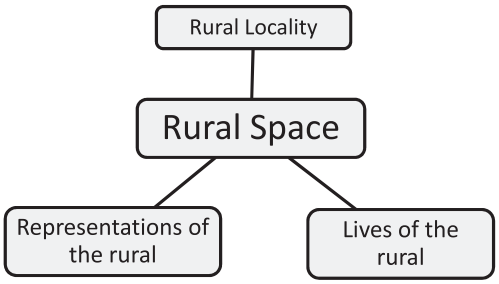

Fig. 1. The totality of rural space (Halfacree, 2006).

2. The research context

This paper draws on data collected as part of a research project which explores the nature and impact of, and responses to, ASB in rural Scotland. ASB is a vague and contested term which has been critiqued in the literature (Burney, 2009; Home Office, 1998; Millie, 2009; Squires and Stephen, 2005). Although England and Wales and Scotland initially had convergent policy responses to ASB, these have since diverged with the 2007 and 2011 elections of Scottish National Party. Despite having similar punitive powers, the Scottish Government have focussed more specifically on prevention and intervention through the Promoting Positive Outcomes Framework (McAra and McVie, 2010; Scottish Government, 2010b). This paper does not seek to analyse the details of the framework, rather use ASB as a lens through which the response of the police in rural locations can be explored. In order to get an understanding of the ways in which ASB differs between types of rural locations and because ASB is typically associated with multiple deprivation (Millie, 2009), two case studies area were selected by combining the Scottish Government six-fold urban–rural classification and the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation. The village of Abanoch, a pseudonym, is classed as a remote rural location by the Scottish Government 6-fold urban rural classification, being located a fifty minute drive from the nearest town of 10,000 people or more. With a population of 1895, it is a small, affluent community with a thriving tourist trade and low levels of reported crime (Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics, 2013). The second case study setting is the village of Crian. Located a twenty-five minute drive from the nearest town of 10,000 people or more, it is classed as accessibly rural by the Scottish Government 6-fold urban rural classification, and the local area wards report higher levels of crime than in Abanoch[1] (Scottish Government, 2010a; Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics, 2013).

The data drawn upon in this paper emerges from: eighty hours of participant observation conducted with the police and young people across the two communities; thirty-three interviews conducted with people living in and organisations associated with Abanoch and Crian and eight focus groups conducted with young people and organisations in both locations. The research took place between August 2011 and January 2013 and because of the temporality of ASB, fieldwork was undertaken at different times and days of the week. The urban contrasts examined in this paper emerge from the wider policing literature rather than primary data collection. This paper focuses on the police responses to ASB and draws primarily on the thirty hours of police ride-along data and the five interviews conducted with officers of different ranks. Data was transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after the interview and uploaded into a software for qualitative data analysis. The analysis of data was carried out to identify patterns and develop codes and themes occurring across the interviews, focus groups and participant observation.

The aim of this research methodology was to understand both the 'formal and informal work practices which, together,

[1] The Scottish Government class 'remote rural' as areas with a population of less than 3000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 min to a settlement of 10,000 or more. They class 'accessibly rural' as areas with a population of less than 3000 people, and within a 30 min drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more.

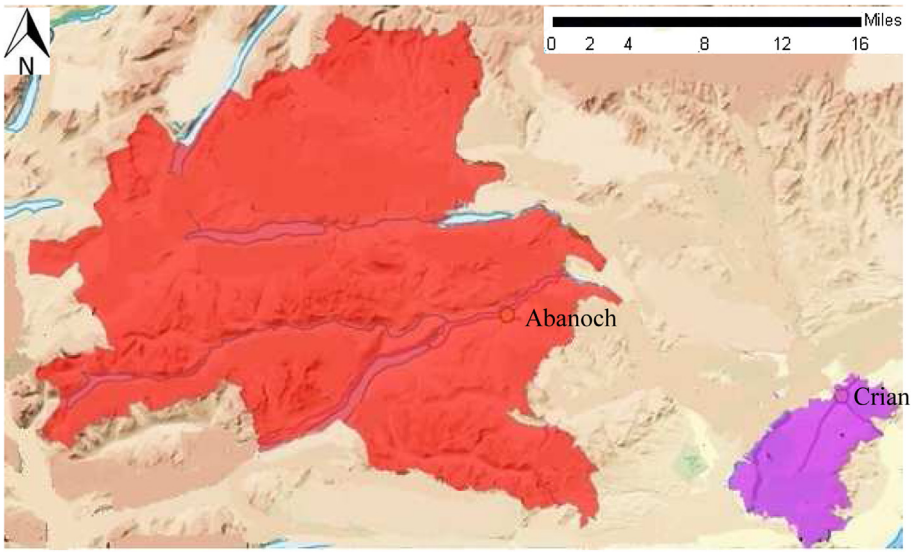

Fig. 2. Anonymised map of Abanoch and Crian police beat areas.

constitute the police officer's world of work' (Norris, 1993: 126) in relation to responding to ASB in rural Scotland. Indeed, Herbert (1997) argues that not only is participant observation within the police a useful tool, but that it is the only way to actively research police work. In his work, developing the theory of normative ordering of police officers, Herbert (1997: 7) argues that 'a detailed explication of these motivations [the motivations that structure police territorial practices] is only possible via ethnographic study'.

Undertaking policing research in rural environments created distinct ethical challenges, in particular, members of the community and young people frequently assumed I was a police officer because they saw me undertaking ride along with the police officer in the village. In addition, the policing context in Scotland has changed greatly over the past two years, with the eight existing police forces merging to become Police Scotland. The fieldwork for this project occurred before Police Scotland was implemented on the 1st of April 2013. The anonymised map, Fig. 2, illustrates the two beat areas of Crian and Abanoch and highlights the scale of the rural:

As Fig. 2 highlights, although both community policing beats are large, the remote rural policing beat surrounding Abanoch is much larger than that surrounding Crian. Each beat therefore requires a nuanced policing response to ASB which takes the scale of the beat areas into account. The first part of this paper argues that order is negotiated in rural Scotland through the use of discretion, something which structures the policing response to ASB in rural Scotland.

3. Negotiating order and responding to ASB: police discretion, community interaction and situated knowledge in rural Scotland

Given that Halfacree (2006: 51) notes that 'the rural status of any place is […] an issue that always must be determined on the ground/in place to avoid rural fetishism', the differences between the police response in Abanoch, the remote rural community, and Crian, the accessibly rural community, are important. The rural context is a key element in understanding the challenges of responding to ASB and negotiating order maintenance, with Henry and McAra (2012) highlighting that negotiated order is temporally and spatially specific. They note that negotiated orders require 'due recognition to the role that social actors have played in their constitution', something which this paper seeks to do by understanding the way that officers seek to construct rural space as places which can be patrolled and controlled in specific ways according to the way that they (re)produce and legitimise their responses to ASB (Henry and McAra, 2012: 344). The challenges related to policing the rural are summed up by Yarwood and Mawby (2011: 218), who note that:

> In many cases those policing the countryside face a difficult task: one that must balance efficiency against community interaction; local need against national policy; fairness with local sensitivity; and, above all, trying to achieve these over often vast areas with limited resources.

The micro-geographies and the spatial context of the community are thus important elements for understanding the specific police responses to ASB in rural Scotland. Negotiated order maintenance structures the response of the police to ASB in rural Scotland, with discretion, police–community relationships and the situated knowledge of the community playing a key role in the way that different (non)enforcement options are utilised. Order is negotiated at several contextual levels, with this paper focussing on the local scale of the police responses rather than the broader structural level responses. Halfacree's (2006) model enables rural analysis to be conducted at this scale by focussing on the relationships and the everyday lives of those within the communities of Abanoch and Crian. Although the broader 'punitive turn' is important in relation to ASB and it is clear that much of the local policy change is driven by the politicization of crime control, nowhere more clearly than in policing practice, focussing on the representations of the rural and the everyday lives of those in Crian and Abanoch (Halfacree, 2006) allows the relationships between rurality, the police and their response to ASB to be drawn out. In order to explore the nuanced ways that the police respond to ASB over different scales of rurality, the following vignettes describe a typical response to ASB in Abanoch and Crian respectively:

Vignette 1
Responding to reports of ASB in Abanoch

We are in the car on patrol, doing a similar route to the usual figure of eight route through the village. The officer gets a radio message in his earpiece saying that there has been a complaint about young people causing a disturbance. A group of 10 or 12 young people aged between 11 and 14 were running up the street and making a lot of noise. A couple of holidaymakers in a rented cottage heard this and went out to confront them – the group then turned on them and started shouting and swearing. The couple are primarily concerned that their car would get scratched. The officer said to me 'I reassured them that this wouldn't happen and if it did I would bust the kids, because I know who they are and I know their parents – that's the beauty of working in a small village'.

We go to the bottom of the village [the park] and the officer rolls down the window from the road and we can hear the sound of young people messing about in the park below. There are 5 young lads and 3 girls. I know most of them from undertaking fieldwork at the youth club. The officer gets them to gather round him – in a kind of story telling kind of way – and focuses on a young lad. He asks them if any of them know why he might be there … the story then emerges, that a lad of 14/15 had come down to the park and thrown sand at one of the girls. The boys had taken this badly and decided to chase the lad, running up past the house that the holidaymakers were in. They heard the commotion and came out and instead of continuing to chase the older lad the young people started shouting abuse at the holidaymakers instead.

The officer listens intently and then says 'phone me if you have problems with other people – do not take the law into your own hands'. *As we walk back up to the car I am thinking about the consequence of what the officer calls his 'fatherly advice'. We go back to the holidaymakers and t*he officer tells the couple he has spoken to the young people and if there are any more problems to phone him on his mobile. They feel like they are getting personalised policing service while the young people *are 'nudged' into behaving. The officer explains: 'if they [the other young people] see me speaking to a young lad in a mature manner and respecting him and him respecting me, then I can gain the respect of the group and not deal with it in a criminal manner.'*

(Notes from research diary, Abanoch 13/10/11)

This vignette exemplifies the officer responding to a call of minor public forms of ASB in Abanoch and illustrates the way that discretion and police–community interaction are central to the order maintenance that occurs in this location. In particular, the officer listens, communicates with and respects the young people in this vignette. The officer believes that this approach, his use of discretion in a broad sense and treating the young people fairly, will help him gain the respect of the young people.

In vignette two, the accessible rural community, discretion and situated community knowledge are also important in the decision making process of the officers:

Vignette 2
Responding to reports of ASB in Crian

A call comes in of a neighbourhood disturbance in Crian. I am on patrol with a community officer in the nearby town when the call comes in. I am immediately struck by the sense of urgency of the police officer and as we are driving the small distance to Crian [5 miles] I ask about the call, and apparently there is trouble between these individuals regularly […] when we arrive at the village, there is a bit of a fracas going on between two males in neighbouring houses. We are the second police car there, another car from [nearby town] has also turned up …

The lads are still shouting and swearing at each other, creating a scene in the street. The mum of one of them comes out and is distressed with what is going on. She starts to become aggressive too, and the officer I have arrived with intervenes and tries to calm her down while the other two [male] officers deal with the two lads. The male officers arrest the younger of the two lads, not because of this disturbance, but because he is out on license. His mum is clearly distressed and the officer I arrived with is attempting to keep her calm. I get the sense the officer knows the situation, something I later confirm.

Once we are back in the police car, I ask about the situation and the role of discretion in the decisions that are taken … 'to be honest, I will use my discretion here more [than neighbouring city] … like you tend to know people more here … see [name of the arrested], I know his family well, they are trouble, he's had loads of chances and like I try to build trust with him but look, if he needs the jail, he'll get it and our hands were kinda [sic] tied there' … I then ask about backup and custody and the officer says 'that's no problem, the cells are not far away and the station is only ten minutes up the road'

(Notes from research diary, Crian, 23/01/13)

In contrast to vignette 1, in this example the officer is not on their own and is faced with a more challenging form of ASB. The officer explains that they have used their discretion before with the family and that at this point they have to arrest one of the individuals. Negotiating order in this sense involves the officer using their discretion to arrest the individual. The rest of the paper is going to explore the nuances of the police response to ASB across these two communities, focussing on the role that rural localities and the everyday lives of those in the rural interplay with the police (Halfacree, 2006).

3.1. Responding to ASB in rural Scotland: the importance of discretion to the police

According to Davis' (1971: 4) the 'public officer has discretion wherever the effective limits of his [sic] power leave him free to make a choice among possible courses of action and inaction'. Influences on discretionary decision making emerge from legal and administrative rules, the informal rules associated with occupational cultures, the agency and subjectivity of the individual officer and the context within which decisions are made (Bronitt and Stenning, 2011). Discretion has been examined in a number of contexts (see for example Alpert et al., 2004; Bronitt and Stenning,

2011; Brown, 1981; Davis, 1971; Ericson, 2007; Lowe, 2011), with Ericson (2007), usefully highlighting the important role that the context of organisational constraints play in fettering the use of discretion. While this is not the place to explore this literature, this paper will highlight the importance of the rural locality in the discretionary police response to ASB.

The broader context of policing is important for framing these discussions. Weisheit et al. (2005) for example, found that the specific activities that rural officers did varied compared to their urban counterparts, with rural officers typically emphasising crime prevention over enforcement. They also found that rural officers tended to carry out a wider range of tasks than their urban based colleagues, while the rural community also reflected the style of policing used by officers in these communities. Payne et al. (2005) also note that rural officers have to contend with different complexities to their urban counterparts. In particular, the physical distances between locales means that the policing response is dependent on factors beyond the normative orders that structure the police response in, for example, Herbert's (1997) study of Los Angeles. Gilling (2010) discusses how different rural communities are characterised and represented in different ways, and, importantly, the way that the scale of rurality can impact on the ways that the police respond to ASB.

These previous papers highlight the distinctive nature of the rural environment, where discretion appears to be readily used as both a way of negotiating order and as a pragmatic way of responding to ASB. As both vignettes highlight, a key part of the discussions with police officers relates to the role that discretion plays in deciding how to respond to ASB. Prevention and intervention are the dominant policy discourses in relation to ASB in Scotland (Burney, 2009; Ormston and Anderson, 2009), something which Henry (2009) and McAra and McVie (2010) argue shapes the broader policing response to ASB. It is not that using discretion is a uniquely rural way of responding to ASB, rather that one of the implications of being in a rural environment relates to the frequency that discretion is used in the response to ASB. This is both because of the unavoidable bureaucratic ordering associated with the rural locality and because officers tend to have a situated and localised knowledge of the communities of Abanoch and Crain. In vignette 1, for example, the fact that the officer uses negotiated order maintenance, something which is temporally and spatially specific and requires recognition of the views of different social actors, enables him to decide on an outcome which works for both parties (Henry and McAra, 2012). The everyday lives of those in the rural communities of Abanoch and Crian therefore helps shape the police response to ASB through identification of norms of acceptable behaviour. Discretion is important, not only because of the broader negotiated order of those living in small rural community situations, but because discretion facilitates a choice between enforcement and other interventions. Enforcement therefore tends to be regarded as a failure on the part of the wider interventionist policy strategy:

> *'In terms of closure orders, anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs)*[2] *and things – they tend to be on the enforcement side and we tend to try and avoid [them].* I mean if every other intervention hasn't worked we might go to that, and it may work, but it depends on the type of person who is involved. But it is a last resort and in some ways can be seen as a failure on our part and the part of the other agencies … *we have often used our discretion numerous times before going down the enforcement route'* (Interview Inspector, Abanoch, 24/01/13)

In Abanoch, in particular, because of the embedded nature of rural policing, where the officer lives and works in the same community and back-up is a long distance away, behaviour that is constructed as 'a last resort' differs from that in other contexts. As vignette 2 shows, ASB in Crian is typically at the more serious end of the harm scale (Innes and Weston, 2010) meaning that discretion, tended to structure the police response in a more limited way than in Abanoch. The relatively distinct spatial practices and the bureaucratic ordering of the police in Crian drive the police response to ASB in a different way to Abanoch.

3.1.1. The role of bureaucratic ordering in police officer discretion

Herbert (1997) uses a series of 'normative orders' – a set of rules and practices that structure action – to examine the ways in which the police control territory. Bureaucratic ordering is identified as important and essentially relates to the organisational control within the police service. The bureaucratic regulations within the police 'structure their territorial practices' and 'the particular responsibilities the officer is to assume within the territory' (Herbert, 1997: 61). There is however, a tension between the apparent 'success' of bureaucratization and the actual implementation of bureaucratic practices. As Reiner (2010) notes, the rigidity and bureaucracy within the police leads to variations in the bureaucratic burden between the horizontal and vertical strands of the organisational flowchart, with the police required to have 'a craft like ability to adapt to the particular context … be situationally rational … and aware of the need for flexibility and anxious to exercise their individual judgement, resist efforts to regulate their practices' (Herbert, 1997: 61). This is something which bureaucratic ordering can enable or inhibit. In relation to discretion, bureaucratic ordering is an important part of the decision making process and operates in situationally distinct ways across the communities.

In Crian, bureaucratic ordering lies at the heart of the response of the police to ASB. The main community officer for Crian works part-time, something which fundamentally structures his role and ability to respond to ASB in Crian:

> I would like to be in Crian more often … thing is, I work Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday day shift. Monday is catching up with the weekend stuff in the area, Tuesday is paperwork needed for court and if I'm lucky I can get into Crian for a bit on Wednesday … and this doesn't include time for attending court and other abstractions … (Notes from research diary, Crian, 27/02/12)

Although this is accommodated appropriately within the policing section, part-time officers raise interesting bureaucratic challenges for policing management and responding to ASB. As Dick (2004) identifies, notions of part-time working within the police are frequently produced within a discourse which understands flexibility from the point of view of the organisation and not the officer. The top-down, reactive bureaucratic structure of the police makes it difficult for the organisation to enable part-time working and maintain service delivery (Dick, 2004). Although this is an individual case in a rural community, it illustrates the way that rural communities, due to fewer police officers, are adversely impacted upon by bureaucratic factors. This is particularly true in the rural locality of Crian, where the community do not receive the same level of police input from a community officer as the community of Abanoch. As the local Sergeant explained, 'this officer isn't involved much with preventing ASB because he isn't able to be in the village at the peak times' (Notes from research diary, Crian,

[2] Interestingly, early Home Office guidance suggested that ASBOs should be used more readily, yet many local authorities adopted a tiered approach and used them principally as a last resort (Home Office, 2003; Millie, 2009).

10/01/13). This impacts on the situated knowledge of this officer, which, due to the way his work is structured, means that it is more complicated for the officer to engage with the fractured and ultimately incoherent accounts of the everyday lives of those in Crian (Halfacree, 2006). Ultimately, this means that the officer is less readily able to utilise his situated knowledge in dealing with incidences of ASB.

In contrast to Crian, rather than limiting the use of discretion, bureaucratic ordering enhances the use of discretion by the officer in Abanoch. With only five officers covering a large rural area, there are serious resource implications involved with arresting individuals. From Abanoch, it is a minimum fifty minute drive to the nearest police cells which, when the amount of time booking-in the suspect in is taken into account, can mean that an arresting police officer can be out of the beat for a number of hours. This necessarily takes resources away for other parts of the section. This is less of a consideration for urban police officers, where back up is often only seconds away (Dempsey and Forst, 2013). These resource implications are undoubtedly another factor for rural police officers to consider when making an arrest, making discretion a favourable option when dealing with minor public and parochial ASB (Innes and Weston, 2010). This is something that vignette 1 underlines, where a less formalised, non-enforcement option is utilised over traditional ASB disposal methods. Additionally, by using his discretion in the appropriate manner, the officer hopes to change the attitudes of other young people towards him. 'Gaining the respect of the group' is therefore an important driver to the way that this officer responds to ASB in Abanoch. The officer in vignette 2, in contrast, suggests that the relatively short distance to the custody suite from Crian means that distance is rarely a consideration in deciding whether to arrest someone or not. Thus, the spatial challenges associated with policing rural locations means that discretion is more readily used in these locations.

In addition to the spatial and contextual differences between the two case studies, there were also differences in the organisation of the police which impacted on the use of discretion and relates to what Halfacree (2006) terms 'the formal representations' of the respective communities. The officer in Abanoch frequently responded to ASB on his own, allowing him to build rapport with people and negotiate order in a more nuanced and complex manner. In Crian, because of the part-time nature of the community officer, other response officers, as in vignette 2, were more likely to respond to ASB. Response officers, who have a broader policing remit across a larger geographic area, are expected to respond in a more robust way than community police officers. A sergeant, who is responsible for one community officer and five response officers notes:

> 'We try and protect the community officer's time, giving them the opportunity to do other things in the community … the response officers are much more involved with responding to incidents, enforcement … *but at the end of the day if someone needs the jail, they'll get it … and that stands for both officers*' (Community Sergeant Interview 20/01/13)

Different policing roles elicit different responses in relation to the law, something which has been noted in other studies of policing culture (Chan, 1997; Holdaway, 1983; Loftus, 2010). Different scales of rurality and ways that the rural is constructed, particularly in relation to the ways that order maintenance is developed, also seem to elicit different police responses to ASB across space.

Beyond the bureaucratic structures relating to the use of discretion when responding to ASB in the case study locations, the situated knowledge that the respective officers in Crian and Abanoch demonstrate in the vignettes also has an impact on the ways that they spatially control incidences of ASB. Discretion was, in both cases, identified as a craft that was utilised through an intimate knowledge of the community that is being policed:

> 'The community officer discusses discretion in the patrol car, noting it is a skill you pick up over the years … 'I mean, like when you start on a rural beat like this you just follow your training … but you soon learn who are the ones who will cause bother and cause you bother … with the young people it is about … knowing when to come down hard and when to give them guidance … for me it's about understanding the community' (Notes from research diary, Abanoch, 1/10/11)

This quote highlights the advantage that this remote rural community police officer believes he has in knowing the community in which they police in great detail. It is, of course, important not to fall into idyllised notions of rural policing, yet, echoing the work of Anderson (1997), policing in rural Scotland appears to have a distinct spatial challenge which means that it is often an unavoidable necessity for officers to use their discretion when responding to ASB. This is reminiscent of Banton's (1964) work, where the rural context necessitates a peace-keeper role (as opposed to law enforcer typology) amongst officers in order to maintain social order. When asked about the role of discretion, this Inspector, whose section incorporates Abanoch and other remote rural locations, emphasised its importance in responding to ASB in rural Scotland:

> Discretion is vital. It is trying to weigh up – they [the officer] – will make that assessment themselves – you know is something serious enough that we can't ignore it by just giving a warning. Do we have to report somebody and caution and charge them? Or is it something of a minor scale? And the person hasn't come to our attention before, and maybe a warning might be sufficient. Essentially we police by consent, so we have got to have the public onside to police effectively. So whilst there are things we can't have discretion over – drink drivers for example – we have no discretion over this nor should we … but there might be instances where maybe someone in [name of city] doing the same thing will get the jail where here they won't. You need to box cleverer here. Particularly with disturbances, because the nearest backup might be half an hour away … by blue light … ' (Interview Inspector, Abanoch, 23/1/13)

Thus it appears that discretion, as structured by the rural context, plays a key part in the way that a rural officer responds to ASB for two key reasons; firstly, because officers typically know the individual perpetrators of the ASB and the family circumstances, they can routinely respond to ASB in less of a formalised manner. Secondly, the rural is not a uniform space, with the everyday lives of those in rural communities affected by different rural localities which create different bureaucratic challenges for the police. The remote rural local context in Abanoch has different resource implications compared to Crian and the local scale context is therefore important for analysing the way that different types of rural impacts on the police response to ASB.

The preceding discussion demonstrates that discretion plays an active part in shaping the police response to ASB in rural Scotland, often out of a necessity due to policing large beats. Structural and community contexts are therefore factors which enable and inhibit the use of discretion, with the bureaucratic ordering, for example, playing an important part in the discretionary decisions taken by an officer to use their discretion or not. Halfacree's (2006) model of

rural space, particularly the negotiated order maintenance that takes place through understanding the rural localities and the everyday lives of those in the rural, is important for understanding the police–community relations. The rural context is therefore of central prominence, because in the examples discussed above, the lack of additional resources in large rural policing beats means that there are no other officers available to cover abstractions or to cover part-time officers. These findings about the links between local context, spatiality and policing mirror those of Weisheit et al. (2005) who note that policing styles in rural communities reflect the relationship that officers have with the community. Discretion enables order maintenance to play an important part in the way that the police respond to rural ASB, something which is reflected in the police–community interactions.

3.2. Responding to ASB in rural Scotland: the importance of police–community relations

As both vignettes show, the rural policing response to ASB is about interacting with the community and mediating a response to a disturbance at a local scale. This requires a situated knowledge, something which is developed through knowledge of what Halfacree (2006) terms 'the everyday lives of the rural'. The rural context is therefore important, with officers in Abanoch and Crian appearing to have a contextualised knowledge about the community they police and the ASB which is pertinent in each community. As Slade (2013: 120) highlights, many rural police officers are required to 'think on their feet' and interact with the community in a different manner than the officers who work in large urban contexts. In both Abanoch and Crian, the community police officer appeared to be part of the respective communities, with both living close to their respective beats. This is something which is exemplified in Cain's (1968: 378) study, where she observed the 'welfarist orientation' of juvenile liaison officers could be seen more commonly in the culture of officers policing specific territories.

3.2.1. The importance of situated community knowledge in negotiating order

Living and working in the same rural policing community inevitably creates an understanding of the locality and the social elements of the respective rural communities. There are differences between Abanoch and Crian in the way that the respective officers interact with the communities. Carr (2012: 408) identifies four levels of citizen role in negotiating order:

The different bureaucratic policing challenges in Abanoch and Crian outlined in 3.1.1 means that different citizen roles take prominence in the respective communities. Although this is not the place to sketch out the community differences in detail, it is important to note the effect that the structural police decisions have on the way that they can respond to ASB. In Abanoch, the officer has worked and lived nearby for three years, his children go to school in the village and he participates in the everyday village life, including being a member of a number of village committees. Predominantly, the citizen–police interaction therefore appears to operate at the partner and associate levels of interaction, with the community taking an active role in shaping the way that ASB is policed:

> *'I have what I call 'the monthly tea spots', these are people in the community who have the gossip and know what's going on – info that's very useful to me. So I pop by Miss Harver's, sit down, have a cuppa … that way she thinks she's getting good service and I get to hear about all that's been going on … '* (Notes from research diary, Abanoch, 15/11/11)

The community officer in Crian was born and brought up in the village; yet because of his wife's death, he was part-time and therefore unable to participate as fully in the everyday life of the village (as a police officer) in the way the officer in Abanoch managed:

> I am out with [the Officer] and he tells me he has just done a charity walk in aid of his wife's memory … she died last year … in the hour I am walking with him around Crian *three different people come up and give him the sponsor money they owe for him completing the walk … he later explains that he knows a lot of people in Crian and would like to be in Crian more often as a police officer 'it's just because of my circumstances, it's a shame … '* (Community officer, Crian, 27/02/12)

Thus, although the officer in Crian has a situated knowledge of the community, built up through years of living within the village, being part time means that forming professional relationships with those in the community who negotiate the order maintenance is problematic. Most of the citizen–police relationships in Crian therefore tend to operate at the citizen bystander and occasionally associate levels on Carr's (2012) schema (Table 1).

There is a literature questioning the legitimacy of this broader community policing agenda, with, for example, Mitchell et al. (2013) noting that the powerful members of the community determine who is acceptable to be considered 'in' the community and what behaviours should be acceptable or not. Indeed Carr (2012: 408) questions when and how individual aspirations and/or roles become a collective response, asking 'how many partners or associates are needed for the response to become a collective one?' Additionally, young people are most frequently identified as those causing ASB, yet evidence suggests that many of the young people accused of committing ASB are in fact defined as anti-social by people who do not have an understanding of young people (Brown, 2013; Neal and Walters, 2008). These are appropriate concerns, but not the focus of this paper. The broader point is that the response of the police to ASB in Abanoch and Crian is at least in part structured by the intimate knowledge, understanding and embedded nature that these officers have of their respective communities. Halfacree's (2006) conceptualisation of rural space helps underline the importance of understanding the context of communities for structuring the everyday lives of those in the rural, the representations of the rural and how these entwine with the rural locality to form rural space.

There are distinct differences between the police response to ASB in Abanoch and Crian, yet there are some commonalities around the dominant characteristics that structure the response of the rural community officer. The relationships that officers have with those in the communities directly impacts on the responses of the police to ASB. Many policing studies over the past five decades have sought to understand what core characteristics make up the

Table 1
Citizen–police interaction (Carr, 2012).

Citizen type	Role
Citizen partner	Takes active role in negotiating order
Citizen associate	Consulted about crime and safety but has no real means of making inputs
Citizen bystander	Takes no role beyond being a passive observer of law enforcement
Opponent	Completely alienated from police

police officers working personality (Bittner, 1975; Bowling and Foster, 2002; Chan, 1997; Loftus, 2010; Manning and Van Maanen, 1978; Manning, 1998; Reiner, 2010; Skolnick, 1966). One such characteristic is that of adventure/machismo, described by Herbert (1997: 80) as a 'subcultural collection of rules and practices that values the courage, power, and aggressiveness of an officer eager to be pitted against the most lethal criminal enemies. Unafraid to face dangerous challenges, capable even of handling themselves strategically in the face of potential death … '

Similarly to Cain (1968) and Banton (1964), this paper argues that at the scale of the individual, rural police officers tend to not exhibit adventure/machismo in the way that they interact with the community when responding to ASB. Far from encountering daily life and death situations, as the police officers in Herbert's study in Los Angeles Police Department do, rural policing in Scotland is about balancing the challenges of remoteness, isolation and a lack of nearby back-up with community expectation and problem solving (Fenwick et al., 2011; Mawby and Yarwood, 2011). The lack of traditional forms of machismo/adventure is a primary reason why rural policing is not considered to be a particularly glamorous policing role. As the Community Sergeant in Crian said to me, *'a rural beat like that [Abanoch], well that's where you were farmed out before retirement or if you had fallen out with your boss'* (Notes from research diary, 20/06/12, Crian). Anecdotally rural community policing beats are considered easier, more placid and less exciting than city policing, thus they tend to be considered as 'soft' and 'boring' by other police officers (Payne et al., 2005). Not only does ASB rarely require a 'macho' response, but as Weisheit et al. (2005) note, the relational police–community interactions are far more important for structuring the policing response in rural communities.

Similarly, competence is important for defining police–community relationships, but not in the way Herbert identifies. The precise definition of competency varies depending on the officer's bureaucratically defined position (Herbert, 1997). The community judgement of whether the police response to ASB has been effective or not forms an important part of assessing whether an individual community officer is 'competent' or not. Measuring the competence of community policing is challenging (Mackenzie and Henry, 2009), even more so in rural locations, where, as has already been described, discretionary decisions are taken in relation to ASB regularly:

> 'They have to have a handle on what is happening in their area, so if for instance we were having a spate of problems … I would say that providing the officer is performing in that sort of level and identifying problems, you know, and coming up with action plans alongside the community … *they are doing their job well*' (Interview Community Sergeant, Abanoch, 20/01/13)

The community therefore have a role in defining whether an officer is competent and the norms for which their competence and performance is to be judged against. This contrasts from Herbert's understanding of competency, a reading which focuses more on colleagues being able to trust the competency of an officer in dangerous situations.

The response of the police to ASB in rural Scotland therefore relies on discretion, negotiated order maintenance and community interaction to a greater extent than the police response of ASB in other contexts. This is often out of necessity, with greater distances to travel, less back-up, and more of a community focus reflecting on officer performance, means that the dimensions of policing outlined above are prominent in the way that the police response to ASB is structured in rural Scotland.

4. Conclusion: towards rural policing

Using the policing of ASB as a lens, this paper argues that the rural is a distinct policing context which requires a better understanding of 'the spatialities, moralities and powers of policing' (Yarwood, 2007: 460). This can only be done by understanding the rural as a nuanced landscape in which different locales require different police responses. Discretionary practices, police–community interactions and situated community knowledge form the basis of rural policing. The rural is a nuanced environment, with different localities having different representations and people within those communities having different lived experiences of the police and ASB. This paper has explored the dominant ways that the police response is structured in two rural communities in Scotland, examining some of the different ways that discretion and citizen partnerships are influenced by structurally significant factors. There are distinctive elements associated with rural policing, notably a lack of nearby back-up, bureaucratic challenges associated with part-time working and situated knowledge of the community which makes discretion a more likely route in responding to ASB. Existing, largely urban based typologies of the way that the police operate only partially describes the police response to ASB in rural Scotland, suggesting that the rural context impacts on policing responses in a fundamental way.

Discretion is informed through community–police interactions which, combined with situated community knowledge, lie at the forefront of the decision making process when it comes to deciding on what response may or may not be needed. Understanding the interplay between representations of the rural, the rural locality and the everyday lives of those in rural locations (Halfacree, 2006) therefore becomes of central importance for analysing the police response to ASB. This paper emphasises the importance of policing in a context dependent way, something the broader policing literature has begun to address (see Fyfe, 2014; Henry, 2012; Yarwood, 2007). Halfacree's (2006) conceptualisation of rural space allows for these complex power relations to be explored.

This has important research and policy implications because given that large tracts of Scotland are considered 'rural', there has been a relative dearth of work examining the police in these contexts. By better understanding the spatiality of the police in rural communities and their response to ASB over space, resources can be more appropriately dispatched. This is particularly important in relation to the introduction of the single police force in Scotland, where there are concerns that the local, rural policing context has been diluted by the centralisation of power and control. As Fyfe (2014: 502) notes, there are a range of issues that the introduction of Police Scotland raise in relation to democratic criteria, in particular, equity, service delivery, responsiveness, distribution of power, information, participation and redress. This paper has highlighted the importance of the local scale and contextualised knowledge in the police response to ASB. The introduction of routine armed officers patrolling rural parts of Scotland, and the subsequent criticism by the local MSP (Member of the Scottish Parliament), brings the importance of policing in a contextually aware manner into sharp focus (Kelly, 2014). It would be beneficial for future research to track these developments and examine the implications that the single force has on the way that police officers conceive their role and respond to ASB in rural Scotland.

More broadly, in terms of rural discourses, the police, and policing more generally have remained largely absent. This paper goes someway to redressing the lack of theorisation of the police and policing more broadly in rural contexts. The rural is a distinct policing environment, something that national policy neglects, with policing in the rural often considered as an appendage of urban policing more generally. Moving towards theorising 'rural

policing' as something distinct, where there are different challenges, opportunities and ways to respond to ASB and crime would help rescale ASB policy development. Understanding the rural as a nuanced and complex environment which contains geographical and resourcing challenges and requires context specific responses to ASB, would help begin to (re)conceptualise the police response to ASB in rural Scotland as 'rural policing' rather than 'policing in the rural'.

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