

Restorative Justice in Rural and Urban Nova Scotia¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine, using secondary data analysis, whether there are differences in the discourse or the practice of restorative justice in rural and urban Nova Scotia (NS). The paper outlines the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice programme (NSRJ) and its administration, discusses why rural and urban differences may generally be thought to be significant in the delivery of restorative justice, and questions the extent to which the binary distinction is still useful. It utilizes quantitative data on the NSRJ collected by the Department of Justice as well as qualitative and quantitative data from research initiatives undertaken by a federally-funded, community-university research programme that culminated in 2012. Through the analysis of a variety of quantitative and qualitative data, some rural/urban differences were found, but in many cases the results could not be interpreted unambiguously as reflecting spatial differences.

Introduction

In 1999, the government of Nova Scotia implemented a programme of restorative justice (NSRJ) for young offenders intended to divert cases from the court system into community-based forums.² Youth who take responsibility for their offenses may be referred to a community non-profit agency responsible for organizing restorative justice (RJ) session in which offenders meet victims or their representatives, explore the harms done by their actions, and arrive at an

¹ An early version of this paper was presented at the 14th Annual Conference of the International Institute for Restorative Practices, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 16 June 2011. The author wishes to thank Lisa MacDougall for her research assistance.

² Bruce P. Archibald and Jennifer Llewellyn “The Challenges of Institutionalizing Comprehensive Restorative Justice: Theory and Practice in Nova Scotia” 29 *Dalhousie Law Journal* (297) 2006; Don Clairmont, Tony Thomson, Scott Kenney and Janet Graham “Restorative Justice: Final Process Analysis Report” (Dalhousie University: Atlantic Institute of Criminology, 2003).

agreement to make amends. Most cases that are handled through the NSRJ programme are referred by police agencies. Crown Attorneys (prosecutors) may also decide to refer cases to RJ that are outside police discretion or are left for the decision of the Crown. Very few cases are referred to RJ by the courts and by corrections officials.

The NSRJ programme is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice, which is based in Halifax, the provincial capital. Eight community-based agencies run the RJ programme throughout Nova Scotia. Their jurisdictions coincide with county boundaries, generally covering more than one of the eighteen counties. Geographically, Nova Scotia consists of two regions: a peninsular mainland attached to the neighbouring province of New Brunswick by an isthmus and Cape Breton Island. The largest metropolitan area in NS is Halifax Regional Municipality, with a primarily urban population of about 390,000 out a provincial total of close to one million. The other relatively large population centre is the Cape Breton Regional Municipality with about 100,000 people. Defining these two centres as “urban,” Nova Scotia may be considered to be between 53 and 60 per cent rural.³

The fundamental strength of the NSRJ programme is that it is centralized by the provincial government and is implemented province-wide. The Department of Justice has tried to create uniformity through regular training, close contact between the Department and agency administrators, and by implementing a common checklist for case decision-makers. The programme depends on receiving referrals from the various agents of the criminal justice system and, consequently, individual and structural factors influence local decision-making. Referral decisions are made on a case by case basis, first by individual police officers. They may then be subject to oversight by local police administrators, such as Detachment NCOs or Chiefs of

³ Statistics Canada, 2011 Census, Province of Nova Scotia. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-pr-eng.cfm?Lang=eng&GK=PR&GC=12>. Accessed 21 March 2013.

Police. Cases that are initially sent to the courts are subsequently reviewed by the Crown. At every stage, decisions may be affected by the proclivities of individual agents. Police officers, police Chiefs or Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachment commanders, for example, as well as individual Crowns, may have vastly different ideas about the proper means to administer youth justice and the desirability of diverting offenders from the typical route of formal charges and court hearings. Even in cases in which a centralized police agency such as the RCMP supports NSRJ as formal policy, individual differences may skew the process; for example, police officers who accept diversion only for first-offenders involved in non-serious property crimes undermine the wider mandate of the programme. Not everyone working in the criminal justice system accepts the philosophy of practice of restorative justice.

Rural and urban community and communities

The philosophy of restorative justice emphasizes the role of the community in post-crime intervention.⁴ The concept of community, however, has changed. A long-standing theoretical approach in sociology has emphasized the distinctive characteristics of traditional, rural communities and large urban, metropolitan cities.⁵

Zehr argues that crime is harmful to both individuals and to relationships among people.⁶ Until the modern era, crime occurred in an interpersonal context, which implied that that the wrong had to be made right. Resorting to violence was dangerous in small, close-knit communities where the chief requirement was to maintain relationships. The offence breached a

⁴ P. Haley "Six of the Best" *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 42 (3) 2000 at 389. (Hereinafter Haley)

⁵ A. Vidich and J. Bensman *Small Town in Mass Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968) at 22-28; A. Cohen "A Sense of Time, a Sense of Place" A. Cohen ed. *Belonging* (St Johns: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1982) at 27-38; J. John Braithwaite, "Restorative Justice" M. Tonry ed. *The Handbook of Crime and Punishment*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 323-344; D. Peachey, "The Kitchener Experiment" M. Wright and B. Galaway eds. *Mediation and Criminal Justice: Victims, Offenders and Community* (London: Sage, 1989) at 14-26.

⁶ H. Zehr *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005) at 99-101. (Hereinafter Zehr)

communal relationship, which was in need of being restored. Since offenders were likely to remain in the community following their sentence, negotiation and compensation made more sense than violence. Church and community leaders often played central roles by negotiating settlements, which were attended by family and community members.⁷

Restorative justice may be particularly applicable to small, rural communities in which people have long-standing and multi-generational residence with relative stability over time, which are assumed to be homogeneous, cohesive, and closely-knit rather than fragmented, where people tend to know each other and engage in more face-to-face or intimate communication rather than anonymous interactions, share a similar set of values, and are relatively isolated from cultural centres or have a strong local culture that is to some extent distinct from mass, urban culture. Putnam says such traditional communities have many networks of civil engagement and social trust, which open lines of communication, amplify personal reputations, and facilitate the resolution of collective problems.⁸ Typically, many offenders remain part of the community, are dealt with informally, and are reintegrated.

Wilson, Huculak, and McWhinnie reviewed a variety of restorative justice programmes and concluded that community involvement is connected to diminished recidivism. Their example, however, were primarily drawn “from relatively tight-knit circumstances where, perhaps, ‘community’ means something different than it does in larger, urban settings with a greater degree of anomie.” They suggest that “[l]arger communities appear to be at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to hands-on, community-based risk management.”¹⁰

⁷ Zehr at 49.

⁸ R. Putnam Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1) (2000) at 65-78.

¹⁰ R. J. Wilson, B. Huculak and A. McWhinnie (2002) “Restorative justice innovations in Canada” *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 20, (4) 2002 at 379. (Hereinafter Wilson et al.)

The clearest examples of restorative practices in rural areas are developed in small, often remote, aboriginal communities, which have their own customs of justice. While justice practices in aboriginal settings are much wider in scope than what has become restorative justice in Canada, many of these interventions are restorative in a modern sense.¹¹ Restorative justice, as we know and practice it, did not originate in aboriginal communities, but some of the conditions of these communities suggest they may be appropriate places to use restorative principles.

The situation appears to be different in the typically anonymous blocks of metropolitan areas, where people are strangers, justice is formal, and no assumption can be made about shared values. Braithwaite suggests, however, that, non-aboriginal communities likely evolved restorative practices that might be retrieved or rebuilt. Community churches and schools, in both rural and urban areas, played a restorative role in the past, and some families have disciplined children in a restorative and reintegrative way rather than emphasizing punishment and stigmatization.¹² In urban areas, Braithwaite points out, schools construct a type of intense community interaction for students and for many parents who are active in school programmes.¹³ In the community-like structure of the neighbourhood school, restorative practices are given a strong, social basis. Even if social support for offenders and victims “in the alienated urban context” may be relatively weak, it is in the cities that “the gains that can be secured from restorative justice reform are greatest.”¹⁴

Outside the aboriginal context, restorative justice has another of its roots in small, cohesive, and religious communities. Churches, however, are not only rural institutions, and

¹¹ R. B. Cormier (2002). *Restorative justice: Directions and Principles – Developments in Canada* (Ottawa: Solicitor General Canada, 2003) at 3 (Hereinafter Cormier); see E. J. Dickson-Gilmore and C. LaPrairie *Will the Circle be Unbroken: Aboriginal Communities, Restorative Justice, and the Challenges of Conflict and Change* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press (2005).

¹² John Braithwaite “Restorative Justice and a Better Future” *Dalhousie Review* 76 (1) 1996 at 21-4. (Hereinafter Braithwaite)

¹³ Braithwaite at 22.

¹⁴ Braithwaite at 24.

various churches form sub-communities of members in urban settings. What is generally recognized as the first restorative programme in Canada, the 1974 Mennonite Victim-Offender Mediation project, began in urban Kitchener, Ontario.¹⁵ Haley disputes the view that the characteristics attributed to close-knit communities are found only in small towns and not in atomized urban settings.¹⁶ Similarly, Griffiths and Corrado disagree that only rural and remote communities with strong cultural identities and foundations are characterized by substantial community participation.¹⁷ Community partnerships can also be built in urbanized areas, and they report that, “there are a number of successful restorative justice initiatives currently operating in urban and suburban areas of Canada.” For Walgrave, the revival of restorative justice practices in urban areas is “a reaction to individualism and fragmentation in our (post)modern societies” and a plea for their revitalization.¹⁸ While the binary opposition of rural and urban has a long-standing history in social science analysis, in the developed part of the world, the binary scheme has been less and less useful in the analysis of social change. As rural communities change and as they adapt to the more formal justice system (for example, calling the police rather than dealing with trouble in a customary way), informal control systems atrophy.¹⁹

Over time, the meaning of community has changed. According to McCold (2004: 155-6), community can “range from a local area or neighbourhood to the world or international

¹⁵ Cormier at 3.

¹⁶ Haley at 237.

¹⁷ C. T. Griffiths and R. Corrado “Implementing Restorative Youth Justice: A Case Study in Community Justice and the Dynamics of Reform” G. Bazemore and L. Walgrave eds. *Restorative Juvenile Justice: Repairing the Harm of Youth Crime* (Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press, 1999) at 249.

¹⁸ L. Walgrave “From Community to Dominion: Search of Social Values for Restorative Justice” E. Weitekamp and H. Kerner eds. *Restorative Justice Theoretical Foundations* (Portland, Or: Willan Publishing, 2002) at 72. (Hereinafter Walgrave)

¹⁹ G. Bazemore, S. O’Brien, and M. Carey “The Synergy and Substance of Organizational and Community Change in the Response to Crime and Conflict: The Emergence and Potential of Restorative Justice” *Public Organization Review: A Global Journal* 5 (2005) at 301.

community, or from a geographic place to a group whose members have a common interest or occupation.” He refers to the local level as having micro communities. In restorative justice, a micro-community entails those who are most directly affected by a specific crime: a “community of harm” can arise out of a specific incident. It was among such micro communities that restorative practices first originated, whether in aboriginal communities, conferencing in New Zealand and Australia, or Victim Offender Mediation in Britain and North America.²⁰ The micro-community is not defined by geography but consists of “our individual communities of care, comprised of those family members, friends and others with whom we have meaningful personal relationships...whose opinions are most likely to influence our feelings and behaviour.” In the micro-community, “crime harms specific people and relationships” and this relational aspect presents the opportunity to adopt a restorative approach. In urban areas, Wilson, Huculak, and McWhinnie say, the question of community is relational rather than geographic.²¹ A micro-community may exist only briefly, brought together precisely to address a specific situation; and it may disperse just as quickly. Zehr says that crime may increase a sense of community “but it is a defensive, exclusive, threatened community.”²²

The macro-micro community distinction is useful only to a point; but the question of temporality makes a difference. The urban micro-community may be ephemeral; in rural communities, the relationships within the micro-community may be more likely to persist over time, as members continually interact and maintain relationships. Crime in the rural context may have a longer-term destabilizing effect, especially when offenders maintain actual relationships

²⁰ Dean Peachey “The Kitchener Experiment” Martin Wright and Burt Galaway eds. *Mediation and Criminal Justice: Victims, Offenders and Community* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1989) T 15; Rupert Ross *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1996).

²¹ Wilson et al. at 368.

²² Zehr at 59.

with the community of harm. It may be the case that restorative practices are especially important to such communities.

On the other hand, relatively close-knit communities may be conventional and conservative. Deviance in such a situation may threaten long-standing and cherished values, and the community response may be negative and punitive, Rural areas are places in which people guard their privacy in the face of local knowledge about them and the constant spinning of the gossip mills; where informal handling of offenders can take nasty turns; where people may be targeted because they are not anonymous, but are all too-well known; where the stability of residence can be accompanied by long-standing feuds between individuals and families. According to Dignan, what he calls “local sectarian communities” may be “authoritarian, intolerant and unrestrainedly punitive” towards deviants.²³ Walgrave warns that a community may be “a hotbed of suffocating social control inside, and exclusivism towards those outside.”²⁴ Crawford and Clear make a similar point about stable communities and ask whether people should be reintegrated into a community “that has abused them, marginalized them, or merely not valued them.”²⁵ They argue that a moral and consensual unity ought not be taken as given but, rather, should be “constructed through nuanced and complex negotiations.”²⁶

In addition, the rural/urban binary does not reflect many changes in living patterns over space and time. The hollowing-out of inner city cores through suburbanization caused urban life to sprawl over adjoining land and created an intermediate space between rural and urban. In urban greater Halifax, NS, suburban pockets such as Portland Estates have won awards for their

²³ J. Dignan “Restorative Justice and the Law: The Case for an Integrated, Systemic Approach” L. Walgrave ed. *Restorative Justice and the Law* (Exeter: Willan Publishing, 2002) at 178.

²⁴ Walgrave at 76.

²⁵ A. Crawford and T. R. Clear (2001). “Community Justice: Transforming Communities through Restorative Justice?” G. Bazemore and M. Schiff eds. Restorative Community Justice: Repairing Harm and Transforming Communities (Cincinnati, Ohio: Anderson Publishing, 2001) at 136-8. (Hereinafter Crawford and Clear)

²⁶ Crawford and Clear at 144.

community-mindedness and collaborative projects. Immigration from ethnically diverse regions creates pockets of closely-knit communities within urban cores. Gentrification transforms older, inner-city block into potentially self-consciousness neighbourhoods (the formerly working-class, Hydrostone area of Halifax, for example). An agency worker participating in a focus group noted that, “within those smaller city segments (and within the city as a whole) the public spaces—the parks, playgrounds, streets—all the common areas create unification. ... We are relational beings and, no matter where we live, we interact with others.”

Beyond the urban core and the suburbs, ribbons of highway meander away from the city centre, like cracks in pond ice, and commuters follow these routes daily into the city from homes in small communities or spread along rural by-ways in a typically unplanned form of string development. But these are largely citified people in the (increasingly urbanizing) countryside. Communities within a hundred kilometre radius of the Halifax urban core are increasingly oriented to urban life. Many otherwise rural counties are increasingly within the community orbit of the Halifax Regional Municipality. In the more specifically rural parts of the province, such as Guysborough and Shelbourne counties, amalgamated high schools create new types of relationships and communities. Everywhere the spread of mass culture invades more rural areas and displaces long-standing local cultures. And, inevitably, where there is change there is resistance. Small communities in the commuter zone, for example, may consciously attempt to reiterate what are defined as local values, cherish their distinctive identities, and reinforce community solidarity, just as the ideal of community is consciously reconstructed in urban pockets.

While, for a variety of reasons, differences between rural and urban areas may be on the wane, rural Nova Scotia in its traditional sense continues to exist in places—in Guysborough

County, along the Fundy shore in Annapolis County, or out on Digby Neck—where the non-urbanized nature of the countryside is unmistakable. Life chances, opportunities, development, education—all are affected by space. Second, people still talk about rural and urban differences; they are believed to exist, often in terms similar to the stereotypes about small and big communities noted above.

Rural and urban

Given the complicated social change that is transforming both urban and rural spaces, and the relationships that potentially form within these contexts, the question arises whether rural and urban differences may be found in the discourse or practice of restorative justice in Nova Scotia. Do the contextual factors of density and spatial organization offer relevant insights into the experience of the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program despite the province-wide implementation of the program and its centralized organization?

In my exploration of the rural/urban dimension of restorative justice in Nova Scotia, I draw on four data sources, three quantitative each of which is analysed in terms of an urban/rural binary, and one qualitative data source from focus groups. The data analysed were not developed specifically to address the issue of potential rural and urban differences. The binary definition derives from the nature of the available data.

The quantitative data are analysed for mainland Nova Scotia (exclusive of Cape Breton Island). Mainland NS is divided into fourteen counties, thirteen of which are assigned to the rural category. Small towns of between 5,000 and 15,000 people can be found within the rural segment of mainland NS, but no distinction is made between rural and small-town Nova Scotia. It is assumed that living in long-standing, small towns and communities in Nova Scotia is more similar to living in the rural countryside that surrounds them (and for which they are local service

areas) than to living in an urban metropolis. Rural Nova Scotia is policed either by the RCMP or by stand-alone municipal police departments in some small towns. Rural data on restorative justice referrals comes independently from the RCMP and municipal police sources.

The fourteenth county is now Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), previously Halifax County. HRM consists of a metropolitan core with about 300,000 people centred around the city of Halifax. For most of the quantitative data sets analysed below, HRM as a whole is defined as “urban.”²⁷ The urban centre of HRM is surrounded by rural HRM consisting of small communities and countryside. It is important to note that the same variation in policing agencies found in rural NS also characterize *urban* policing in HRM, where the policing jurisdiction is divided between RCMP detachments (in Sackville and Cole Harbour, for example) and the Halifax Regional Police.

Data sources

This paper is based on several data sources. The Nova Scotia Department of Justice releases annual summaries of RJ ‘traffic’ in Nova Scotia. These Traffic Reports summarize referrals and outcomes of the work of the RJ agencies in the province, separated by agencies. In the analysis of Traffic Reports below, I combine data from the years 2006, 2007, and 2010 to avoid anomalous annual variations. The source of these reports is annual data sent to the central Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program by each RJ agency in the province.²⁸

Second, the Department of Justice has created a database consisting of the information from the checklists that criminal justice personnel complete for each youth justice case they encounter and also information on RJ referrals from other courses (for example, Crown

²⁷ For the third quantitative data set analysed, the RJIS, it is possible to distinguish the urban core of HRM from the rural areas also within HRM. In this case, urban Nova Scotia is defined only as the metropolitan core of HRM and rural Nova Scotia consists of the thirteen rural counties combined with the rural areas of HRM.

²⁸ The released RJIS data was converted into an SPSS file and partly re-coded by Dr. Diane Crocker, the research methods coordinator of the NSRJ-CURA.

Attorneys), and session information submitted by the NS community-based agencies. This de-identified Restorative Justice Information System (RJIS) data set was released by an Order-in-Council for use by researchers working through the federally (SSHRC) funded, community-university research alliance (NSRJ-CURA). It should be noted that the Checklist data is submitted independently by the various criminal justice agencies in the province. Information on RJ referrals and sessions is collected from the eight RJ agencies.

Third, the research group on restorative justice, the NSRJ-CURA, has collected several sets of data. One set provides qualitative data from a series of focus group meetings held in 2009 with individuals involved in a variety of capacities with restorative justice including practitioners, academics, and collaborative members of the justice system.. Five of the groups meetings focussed on the question of community. The issue of rural and urban differences came up in discussion in a number of contexts. In addition, Diane Crocker, the research methods coordinator for the NSRJ-CURA, collaborated with other researchers (including the author) to construct and implement a quantitative survey of about 125 RJ agency Board members, workers, and volunteers. Dr. Crocker entered the data and it was made available to collaborative researchers.

Referrals to restorative justice

The Department of Justice's Restorative Justice Information System (RJIS) data was recoded into rural and urban, excluding Cape Breton with "urban" referring to the metropolitan core around Halifax while "rural" included the thirteen mainland counties in addition to the rural areas of HRM. Of the 11,575 recorded cases, 6209 (53.6%) were rural and 5366 (46.4%) were urban. There was a small variation in types of offence. In urban HRM, 18.7% of the offences were violent compared with 13.9% in rural NS. Similarly, in rural NS, proportionately more

cases were property crimes (57% urban, 61.1% rural). About one-quarter of offences in both regions were classified as “other” although, of these, more drug offences were reported among rural juveniles (7.6%) than in urban HRM (2.7%).²⁹

Considering the juvenile cases that are recorded in the RJIS data, cases involving youth in NS that are handled formally require completing a checklist that includes the decision that is taken by the justice official, who may be a correctional officer, a Crown Attorney, a judge, or a police officer. Two of the possible outcomes that appear as options on the NSRJ checklist are the issuing of a formal police caution and the laying of a charge by the police. Checklist data from the RJIS are available from 2002 to 2010, but formal cautions and police charges are listed only from 2002 to 2004. Thereafter the RJIS records only RJ referrals. Considering only the year 2003, the year in which formal cautions and police charges appear to be most consistent, 2245 checklists are available and it is possible to examine the distribution of decisions and referrals among the criminal justice agencies and separate them into rural and urban jurisdictions. In 2003, of the checklists entered, 1117 were urban and 1128 rural. Of these, urban police charged young offenders in 565 cases (50.6%) while rural police lay charges in 368 cases (32.6%). In addition, rural police referred youth in 2003 to RJ in 30.9% of cases compared with 14.1% of cases in urban HRM.

While on the surface this finding may suggest that rural police may have “bought-in” to RJ earlier or more thoroughly than police in HRM, the story is more complicated. In rural NS, various RCMP detachments and small town police forces were not equally compliant in completing or returning checklists. Those more favourable to RJ may have been more likely to comply. In urban HRM, the Halifax Regional Police Service centralized youth cases, a structural

²⁹ RJIS data includes a large number of cases. In most cases using correlations, differences of even 5%, such as reported in these findings, are significant statistically. Whether the differences are substantively significant is related to numerous questions of variations in reporting, recording, or interpretation.

difference that likely led to more consistent recording, although as a whole, urban HRM is also policed by several RCMP detachments. There is also the possibility, mentioned by one focus group participant, that police officers who are sympathetic to the existence of RJ and to the programme, “may not refer the more difficult cases because they don’t want to send them [the agencies] the asshole kids. Therefore you end up with fewer and easier referrals. Maybe hard cases don’t get sent to RJ in rural areas.” The data, however, may suggest otherwise.

Considering *only RJ referrals from the police and the Crown*, the RJIS data indicate that Crowns make almost half of all referrals to RJ in urban HRM (49.2%) but in rural areas of NS, Crowns make less than a third of the referrals (29.8%) with police making 70.2%. Turning to a second source of data, consistently, the Traffic Report data also indicate that the proportion of cases referred by Crown Attorneys is higher in HRM (as a whole) (47 per cent) than in the thirteen rural counties outside HRM (31 per cent). These findings highlight the important role played by Crown Attorneys.

In both urban and rural NS, property offence referrals are more likely to come from the police than the Crown, although proportionately there is a rural/urban difference. Of the rural property offences that are referred to RJ and are recorded in the RJIS checklist data, police make the referrals in 74.9% of the cases compared with police in urban HRM who make 59.7% of these referrals—the remainder come from the Crown. Even in property cases, urban Crowns make 40.3% of the urban RJ referrals compared with 25.1% of Crowns in rural NS.

Crowns may tend to refer to RJ more serious offenders or repeat offenders, or cases that have a lower likelihood of successful completion. Beyond the question of individual attitudes, however, is an important structural difference. Halifax Regional Police have a relatively more centralized clearing house for youth referrals, which is distinct from the more typical constable-

level discretion outside this section of HRM. Furthermore, restorative justice is more thoroughly institutionalized in HRM, which has a highly-integrated Youth Court in which numerous stakeholders have a significant presence, including representatives from the Halifax RJ agency, social welfare, and health agencies. Informal integration can certainly be effective in rural areas, but success is reliant on specific individuals and is less stable over time than a more institutionalized mechanism, such as found in HRM.

One other interesting finding emerges from the Traffic Report data on Crown referrals. Although the average proportion of Crown referrals in rural agencies is lower than in HRM (Halifax County), there is considerable variation among the rural agencies. In the Tri-County agency in south-western NS, for example, 57 per cent of referrals over the three target years came from the Crown. In Cumberland County and on the South Shore, however, fewer than 20 per cent of referrals originated from the Crown. The question of inter-agency variation highlights the importance of individual agents in local areas.

One of the factors that may be taken into consideration when deciding to refer a case to RJ is whether the offender has had a prior session with RJ. It has been suggested that police sometimes regard RJ as a once-only option for offenders. It would be expected, then, in cases where individuals have had a previous experience with RJ and are now facing another potential charge, that RJ would be a less likely option. There were, however, urban/rural differences in the way police and Crowns handled this determination, although the data is inconclusive because of inconsistent numbers. The RJIS Checklist data appears inadequate because only 59 cases overall in urban HRM appear to have had prior RJ experience, while rural Checklists include 869 cases. Accepting these serious comparative limitations at face value, and considering only referrals to RJ from the Crown and the police, the results appear in Table A. Overall, among the police,

having a prior RJ experience is a deterrent to being referred more than once. But rural police are more likely to refer cases with prior RJ experience than urban police. Of the 59 cases in HRM recorded as having a prior RJ session, the urban police referred 20 (33.9%) while the urban prosecutors referred 39 (66.1%). In comparison, a total of 869 cases from rural NS were recorded as having a prior RJ session. Of these, the police referred 552 (63.5%) and the Crown 317 (36.5%). Tentatively, it appears that rural police are more likely to refer to RJ cases with prior RJ experience than urban police; and urban Crowns are more likely to refer cases with prior RJ than rural Crowns.

Table A Urban and rural difference in police and Crown RJ referrals by prior RJ (RJIS Checklist Data)

Prior RJ		Crown Ref	Police Ref	n
No	Urban	48.9	51.1	3691
	Rural	28.3	71.7	3753
Yes	Urban	66.1	33.9	59
	Rural	36.5	63.5	869

The same pattern holds true if the offender was recorded as having a previous conviction. These limited data are consistent with the expectation that the Crown is more likely than the police to refer difficult cases to RJ, and that this is particularly true in urban HRM. If the victim wants the offender to go to court on the grounds that any other option does not reflect the seriousness of the offence, the police are likely to oblige or, in cases in which they have doubts, leave the decision and responsibility to the Crown.

One difference that appears from the Traffic Reports is that the rate of unsuccessful completion is higher in the more urbanized HRM in contrast to more rural counties: 38 per cent of referrals in HRM were not completed successfully, compared with 17 per cent in the rural, mainland counties. It may be that many young offenders in HRM are more mobile, less easy to track (not in school, not consistently at a permanent address), frustrating agency workers attempts to complete the important pre-session. Further examination of the Traffic Reports suggests at least part of a system-level explanation for the difference. Much of the variation is accounted for by referrals that don't make it to the Conference stage; that is, by cases that fail to be completed prior to a session (46 per cent urban vs. 30 per cent rural).

The data reported above indicate some differences in the practice of RJ in rural and urban areas of mainland Nova Scotia. Through the analysis of the focus group data, however, it became clear that there were many important similarities between rural and urban areas. For some group members, the rural/urban dichotomy existed in perception, but the differences were more complex than could be captured by the binary terms.

Closely-knit communities

Several participants in the focus groups commented that rural areas are more likely than urban ones to have a closely-knit community. In particular, they believed, people in small communities tend to know each other and there is less anonymity. Both offenders and victims are more likely to be known or to be connected to people who are known. On the other hand, one consequence of closeness mentioned in the group is that crime in small communities, which does not impact a resident personally, can still be traumatizing: Some incidents that happen in rural areas have a profound impact on the whole community: "they just sort of rip at the heart of the community."

One way this difference apparently affects restorative justice practice is the difficulty people in rural areas have in persuading volunteers to take part in the process. One group member who works in small communities said that, in “the smaller the community it’s actually harder to get a community rep in because they’re related or there’s something” personal and, therefore, “they just don’t want to go. So I think a main challenge is just getting them to go, and I see a few heads bobbing because it’s hard.” Another group member suggested the difficulty arises because, in rural areas, “everybody knows everybody else.” People’s reticence is not “so much that they don’t want to be part of the process, it’s that they know the parents and they feel bad for them and ‘I don’t want them to know that I know.’” In explanation, another participant said that, “A community member that has been selected to go to the meeting might be the cousin of the victim or the offender or whatever. That’s quite common.”

The reticence was also linked to a culture of privacy in rural areas, which may be a reaction to regular close interactions. As one group member said, “everybody’s private business is their own and no one should know, and all that sort of thing.... It could be, ‘I don’t really want to know this stuff. I don’t want to be in your business, I know that happened but I don’t really want to be in that room because I go to darts with you and I do this with you.’” On the other hand, personal knowledge may be negative. One rural agency worker said that she sees “a lot of stigma against not only the youth who committed the offence but against his/her whole family. If the victims believe the parents are not good parents or didn’t like the grandmother or feel the youth is handled too leniently at home, then they have pre-conceived ideas – and we know how hard it is for people to break out of those.”

Part of this view of widely-shared personal knowledge about local people is the fear that, as a participant, you will be identified, and this will elicit negative reactions: “[T]heir reasons

could be fear of retaliation.” Personal conflicts among people who know each other can take the form of clandestine property damage. In one smaller community, after a string of home break and enter offences, residents worried, “if they get involved and their face is known, that they’re going to be the next victim.” In one small community, one offender victimized seventeen people and not one was willing to come to the session; “being in a small town, I think, all those people didn’t want to have any more contact with the person.”

Another case worker in small communities agreed that a crucial difference was that offenders were not anonymous in small communities. Consequently, the labelling effect is more challenging than “perhaps in a big city you don’t necessarily know... the person that you’ve caused the harm to. In small communities you know everybody in one way or another and it effects so many generations. It goes from the grandparents right down to the kids in the school.”

This case worker tells the offender,

Well you’ve been charged with breaking into this home and everybody knows because it takes 5 minutes to get from one end of the community to the other so in two weeks time if someone else’s home gets broken into you know who’s going to get the finger pointed at them? You are. You’re going to be labelled. So how are you going to make it up to yourself so that you can remove that label?

The offender being labelled and known is the reverse side of the potential volunteer being known to the offender and feeling vulnerable.

The difficulty in finding community representatives, however, is not only a rural issue. Group members living in urban areas claimed to have a similar difficulty. One urban member said that, “we have a much more transient nature now to our urban population. Even ... the [neighbourhood community] where my folks are, was an inter-generational community. [That

community] today is very transient ... in the sense that you don't have three and four and five generations living there.”

One member agreed it would be easier in a small community than in an urban area to identify people who would be appropriate representatives. In urban areas, even when they are divided into zones, each zone is still too big: “Where's the community there?... You don't know you're neighbours, you really don't know who's next door. Unless you've been there 30 years or something and even then” it's difficult:

So community is harder, I think, in some ways if you're in a bigger area.... [In] the larger communities there's a larger number of people to resource to get involved. Whereas in the smaller communities its quite obvious that, when you want something done, you ask a busy person; so you know there's only so many busy people out there that are, they're so involved in so much that, one more thing, they sometimes just don't have the time.

The potentially close connections between offenders and the community were seen by some, however, as beneficial. It works both ways; that is, as one worker explained, the discomfort offenders feel when dealing with people they know is linked to accountability, and seen as “a natural consequence of poor choices.... When somebody said, ‘That's my cousin,’ we were, like, ‘Oh great! Perfect.’... [T]hat relational piece really worked well in those communities that we were working in. And we still do our case work in that community in that way.” Overall, one common element, from people with both urban and rural experience, is that getting representatives takes a great deal of work, perhaps for different reasons. If people in urban areas bowl alone and therefore seldom volunteer, in rural areas people bowl, or play hockey, or go to church with the same small set of people and face volunteer burn-out. Finally, there is overall a

considerable absence of effective education around restorative justice and practices in Nova Scotia, which also likely affects volunteering.

Access to resources was an important difference between rural and urban areas. The work of the rural agency is spread over a large distance and sessions are held, as much as possible, in or near the community of harm. Consequently, there is a need to identify and contact people who are more likely known only locally, who can volunteer in these areas, and also to find facilities such as meeting rooms and church halls, in many locations over the wide area covered by the agency: “We’re always, we’re outsourcing. OK, we can’t use the church hall, what can [we] use now? We can use the Town Hall or, ‘Oh I know somebody,’ and ‘Somebody mentioned to me the other day that we could use this location.’”

The other commonly mentioned difference was variation in access to services, such as counselling, housing, transportation, victim’s assistance, and more specialized requirements. More urbanized areas were better equipped for RJ because, as one person said, “it’s easier maybe to access [resources], in some respects.” Spatial variations made the logistics considerably different in rural and urban areas. A rural agency worker said, “it seems that our HRM affiliates find anger management programs and such much easier. Here we create the programs—and have recently lost the Law Foundation grant to do so, which means [another case worker] and I will have to assume the responsibility if we intend to keep offering such programs to the youth we deal with.”

Despite the differences in discourse uncovered in the focus groups, however, there was hardly any difference between urban and rural respondents who answered the NSRJ/CURA Board/Staff/ Volunteer survey, who were asked whether they “find it difficult to get the community involved with our work.” There was statistically no rural/urban difference. The slight

variation was in the expected direction: 6.3 per cent urban and 1.7 per cent rural said that they strongly agreed with the statement that it was difficult to get the community involved.³⁰

Focus group members argued that you can't see an urban area as a single mass. It is made up of neighbourhoods, some of which are self-conscious communities that share many of the traits that were identified as typically rural. The culture of small communities, whether rural or, for example, immigrant neighbourhoods in urban centres, is that, as one member said, "the culture of many of those communities is they keep it quiet. They take care of those things in their own little communities or in their own homes or whatever." They are relatively isolated within the larger urban setting.

When the survey respondents were asked whether they found it difficult to get the community involved in their work, there was hardly any contextual difference. Only a very slight rural/urban variation emerged: 6 per cent urban vs. 2 per cent rural strongly agreed that it was "difficult." It should be noted, however, that 3 in 5 respondents from both samples (64 per cent urban, 61 per cent rural) agreed that it was difficult. There was no difference, however, in the survey responses to the question whether the community was "highly involved" in RJ processes, although it is worth noting that about 43 per cent of both groups disagreed that the community was "highly involved." In some cases, agency workers may perceive themselves as "community" representatives, a tendency that may be linked to training in restorative practices based on a model developed by the International Institute for Restorative Practices, which was recently employed in HRM training.³¹

³⁰ The NSRJ-CURA survey of Board members, agency workers, and volunteers was coordinated and entered by Diane Crocker of Saint Mary's University, the research methods coordinator of the NSRJ-CURA..

³¹ See Ted Wachtel, Terry O'Connell and Ben Wachtel *Restorative Justice Conferencing: Real Justice*. (International Institute for Restorative Practices/Pipers Press, 2012).

The conclusion seems to be that, whatever way the case was handled, preparatory work was the key factor in success, particularly to get beyond the potential barrier of knowledge and connections that were thought to be more characteristic of small rather than large communities. But people in neighbourhoods may also have knowledge of local kids and local troubled families, and when incidents happen in a neighbourhood, the same kind of personal reticence to get involved in the process could be in play.

Is RJ better suited to or more effective in rural/small communities?

Staff, board members, and volunteers in the agencies were asked how strongly they agreed with the statement “RJ is better suited to rural communities than urban”, and “RJ is more effective in small communities than big communities.” Despite the leading nature of both questions, the answer categories also allowed people to disagree, and the majority (80 to 90 per cent) disagreed.

Considering the seven agencies on mainland Nova Scotia, excluding Cape Breton, only 10 per cent (n = 11) agreed that RJ was “better suited to rural communities.” Among the individuals who agreed, people from the rural agencies were more likely than those from urban to agree that RJ was “better suited” to rural communities (2 per cent urban vs. 16 per cent rural). Among those who disagreed, however, slightly fewer urban respondents (16 per cent urban vs. 20 per cent rural) disagreed strongly. Overall, considering the differences, more rural than urban respondents agreed (CC = 0.27).

The second question was worded a bit differently, distinguishing between “small” and “big” communities. The answers were also somewhat different. There may be “small” communities within a metropolitan area (a neighbourhood, for example), so the difference isn’t that the “community” is rural or urban, it is that it is “small” rather than big. The direction of the answers was similar to the previous question, however, (“more suited in rural areas”), with

somewhat more variation. Only 20 of 110 (18 per cent) people agreed with the statement that RJ was “more effective” in small rather than “big communities.” Again, however, within this overall trend, rural respondents more likely agreed (8 per cent urban vs. 27 per cent rural) that RJ was more effective in small communities ($CC = 0.29$).

Among victims’ supporters, Clairmont found more urban than rural respondents were satisfied with the RJ agreement and were also more likely to express the view that they had benefited from the RJ experience. On the other hand, he also uncovered somewhat contradictory findings: respondents in the more rural/small town areas were more positive about using the RJ option for similar cases and also about thinking that the offender was less likely to re-offend.³² Clairmont found the lowest percentage of victim supporters was found, not unexpectedly, in metropolitan Halifax where there has been a higher proportion of accountability sessions (those with no victim participation) relating to minor property crime, especially shoplifting. The majority of participants continued to be supportive after six months. At that point, however, there was a somewhat greater likelihood that rural respondents would be less supportive.³⁴ This is the opposite of what would be expected, on the assumption that RJ was more suited to rural communities than urban ones.

It is possible that decline in the more positive evaluations would be more likely to occur in rural areas because of the greater visibility of offenders and as a consequence of the closer degree of interaction among community members. The greater visibility of offenders in small communities might lead to greater cynicism about the effectiveness and appropriateness of RJ. If the offender appears unchanged, for example, hanging around with the same people in the same

³² D. Clairmont (2005) “The Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Initiative: Draft Final Evaluation Report (Bedford, NS: Pilot Research, 2005), at 76-8. (Hereinafter Clairmont)

³⁴ Clairmont at. 10.

places, then support for RJ might be a victim of greater community knowledge and interaction in rural areas.

Strengthening community and community building

How important is strengthening community as a goal of the NS restorative justice program?

Respondents to the NSRJ-CURA survey from urban areas (HRM as a whole) were somewhat more likely than people from rural areas (62 per cent urban, 49 per cent rural) to rate strengthening community as a very important element of RJ practice. On another question, only 6 per cent disagreed that RJ *could* strengthen communities, with slightly more rural people agreeing that RJ could have this effect (33 per cent urban vs. 42 per cent rural). Urban respondents were somewhat more likely than those who were more rural to see ‘community building’ as an important element of RJ. While most responses were positive, seeing community building as ‘important’, 62 per cent of urban respondents and 48 per cent of rural respondents said it was ‘very important’. In an almost identical result, more urban respondents also rated ‘strengthening community’ as an important element (62 per cent vs. 49 per cent rural). The difference is in line with the supposition that urban more than rural communities are in need of the construction of community. As noted in the literature, such practices in civil society as restorative justice may play a role in this construction of community in either rural or urban areas.

RJ Sessions

RJ sessions include a variety of formats. Most sessions may be classified in four types: accountability conferences (an offender without a victim present); group accountability (more than one offender but no victim representative); family/group conference; and victim/offender conferences. Some urban/rural variation can be seen in Table B from the RJIS data. Just about

exactly half of the four most common session types in urban HRM involve accountability sessions, compared with about a third (33.2%) of sessions held in rural NS. Family / group conferences are more likely in rural NS (43.2% urban, 56% rural), as is the victim/offender conference, although the difference is considerably smaller (6.3% urban, 9.9% rural).

Table B Session Type by Rural \Urban (RJIS Checklist Data)

	Accountability Conference	Family / Group Conference	Group Accountability	Victim / Offender Conference	n
Urban	27.2	43.2	23.2	6.3	3111
Rural	25.8	56.0	8.4	9.9	4154

Considering the type of victimization (see Table C), the RJIS “victim data by victim” information indicates that the largest difference is in the proportion of victims identified as “corporate-retail” in urban areas, but this difference is partly offset by the largest number of “business” victims. Combining the first two (private business) categories, 29.3% (urban) and 22.6% (rural) of victims were private businesses. Somewhat more rural victims than urban experienced a personal offence (64.9% urban, 68.7% rural).

Table C Type of Victimization by County: Halifax County vs. Rural NS (RJIS Victim Data by Victim)

	Business	Corp-Retail	Person	Public Prop	Schools	n
Urban	3.5	25.8	64.9	2.7	3.1	4744
Rural	8.3	14.3	68.7	4.5	4.2	7833

Responding to the offender

The RJIS data (see Table D) indicates there was virtually no difference between rural and urban victims in their wish to lay charges or in their stated wish to “punish the offender” although slightly more urban victims wanted charges laid while slightly more rural victims wanted the offender punished (respondents given a no/yes choice).

Rural victims were more likely to wish for resolution, to want an apology, to hope for change in the offender, to wish for counseling for the offender and to be less concerned about their “dignity”. Slightly more rural victims, however, wanted the offender’s Guardian to be held responsible (94.1% urban, 97% rural). Finally, more urban victims wanted restitution, likely reflecting the larger proportion of “business” victimization in Halifax County.

Table D Victim Attitude Data by County: Halifax County vs. Rural NS (RJIS Victim Data by Victim)

	Urban	Rural
Wish to lay charges	99.1	97.8
Wish to punish offender	95.7	97.0
Wish resolution	94.1	79.8
Wish apology	87.8	76.6
Wish change	93.4	74.1
Wish counseling	97.4	88.5
Wish dignity	96.2	90.2
Wish Guardian responsibility	94.1	97.0
Wish restitution	91.0	81.8

Rural respondents to the NSRJ-CURA survey tended to be more punitive than their urban counterparts. They were more likely than urban respondents to believe that punishing the offender was very important (12 per cent urban vs. 23 per cent rural) while 39 per cent of urban RJ practitioners viewed punishment as ‘not at all important’ (vs. 20 per cent rural) (CC = 0.30). For sociologist Emile Durkheim, a strong consensus leads to a greater emphasis on punishment. The assumption that rural people are more conservative than urban is consistent with the traditional, long-standing nature of rural communities and the smaller degree of mobility with a resulting over population of older people. Among conservative values, for example, the importance of law and order tends to rank high. There may be less tolerance of diversity and difference, and less forgiveness for transgressions. It is possible that some social attitudes, such as the response to juvenile justice, are more conservative in rural than urban Nova Scotia.

On the other hand, rural people were somewhat more likely than urban to strongly agree that RJ provided “adequate consequences for offenders” (8 per cent urban vs. 18 per cent rural) and, similarly, somewhat more urban people disagreed that the consequences were adequate. These attitudes might relate to perceptions of whether there was adequate follow-through or whether restitution was forthcoming. Rural participants were also somewhat more likely than urban people to see “reintegrative shaming” as very important. In short, rural people were slightly more likely than urban people to believe that punishing the offender was important, but not in the sense that they considered RJ insufficiently punitive. Although the results by agency are somewhat mixed, overall 57 per cent of rural respondents and 40 per cent of urban respondents believed an apology to be a “very important” element of RJ practice, suggesting a more personal relationship.

The respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of a number of RJ practices, including victim-offender mediation, victim-offender conferences, and RCMP Community Justice Forums. The conferences typically include a larger number of people, such as supporters, officials (e.g., police), and community members. Only 7 respondents viewed Victim-Offender mediation as *not at all* or *not* restorative. The majority saw mediation as very restorative. The overall results may be surprising because part of the philosophy of NSRJ is that it is not a “mediation” programme, a term which may suggest there are mutual wrongs that need to be reconciled, rather than a specific victim and an acknowledged offender. Considerably more urban respondents (85 per cent) than rural (59 per cent) agreed that mediation was ‘very restorative’ ($cc. = 0.25$). Urban respondents were also slightly more likely to see victim-offender conferences as “not at all” or “not restorative” (10 per cent urban vs. 2 per cent rural).

Conclusion

Qualitative data indicated that at least some people involved with RJ in Nova Scotia perceived important rural urban differences, and analysing several available data sources further suggest some rural/urban variations. While defining urban and rural is problematic spatially, physical distance poses greater difficulties in rural areas. Transportation is more likely private than public, and people who are economically disadvantaged cannot access resources as easily as in an urban setting with mass transit. In addition, urban centres tend to be resource- and specialist-rich compared with outlying areas. For many specialized services, in terms of quantity and quality, rural people have to travel to the city. In addition, the program funding formula favours urban areas because it is based on volume not complexity, and it does not reflect basic work that needs to be done with the community regardless of the number of referrals.

One way the problem of human resources plays out is the difficulty finding volunteers to take part in RJ sessions, or to supervise the work of offenders in cases where community service is a requirement of the session agreement. It is frequently pointed out that rural areas operate with a small resource base of people who are active and they tend to be active in more than one area. Burn-out is high and rural RJ workers complain that they find it difficult to get people involved in RJ. However, the same complaint surfaces among urban RJ workers: getting people is never easy. The greater availability of potential volunteers may offset by being equally busy with the greater number of offenders. In any agency, success appears to depend on the effort expended. One difference, however, did stand out. Rural people debated whether the greater local knowledge in small communities made it more difficult to get volunteers. In general, RJ agencies should engage in more consultation about increasing the number and effectiveness of volunteers.

While the majority of people surveyed did not agree that RJ was better suited to and more effective in a rural rather than an urban setting, more rural respondents than urban ones were more likely to agree with the statement. This difference may be partly explained by the different contexts in which the respondents viewed the question. When you live and work in a rural part of the province, the most tangible and immediate comparison point is the urban centre closest to you: HRM in Nova Scotia. When you work and live in HRM, however, you may be less likely to judge what you do and what you think relative to rural parts of the province, and be more inclined to compare your work with other urban areas—with London, Ontario, or Hull, England perhaps, but not with small towns in rural NS. The urban/rural comparison is more salient for people living in rural than urban contexts.

It should be noted that, at the outset of the RJ programme, little was done to connect to the public at large. Communication was limited initially to stakeholders and the dominant Boards. It is likely the Province wanted to maintain close control at the time that RJ emerged to manage the response, which might have been largely negative. Now that schools are becoming involved in restorative practices through a new, province-wide project, there will be more opportunity for a wider dissemination of RJ principles. While the actual willingness to take part in school-based RJ is affected by the usual fear and desire to not be singled out, it appears from the experience so far that once people get involved, they experience an attitude change and are more likely to support restorative initiatives generally

An important caveat should be noted, however. Data from the RJIS, which is used for part of the analysis, appear to have significant anomalies and omissions. In particular, checklist and referral data from police sources vary from agency to agency, reflecting individual and institutional biases for and against restorative approaches to juvenile justice. Conclusions from the RJIS data, then, should be understood only as tentative and suggestive.

Analysing RJ processes rather than attitudes reveals some rural/urban differences. The role of the Crown in referring RJ cases is more important in urban HRM than in rural NS. A higher proportion of potentially less likely cases may be referred in HRM. The difference in referrals and outcomes partly also reflects the greater degree of institutionalization of RJ in HRM. Some of the difference may reflect differences in recording rather than differences in practice. Compliance numbers were lower in HRM, but these data are complex. It may be the case that the compliance is not actually noted or the offender does not check in, show up at the office for debriefing, etc. Of those who show up, there is a 90% completion rate; the question is whether they show up at the agencies. The lower rate of success may, however, suggest that

HRM has a less stable, more mobile and floating population of young offenders who are difficult to bring into the system for logistical reasons.

Demographics are important in both urban and rural areas. Overall, the number of RJ referrals was higher in the early years of the programme than later. The decline is especially threatening to smaller, rural RJ agencies experiencing a shrinking client base. Part of the answer to the dilemma facing agencies is to move to adult RJ. The Province is presently (2013) implementing a pilot project involving restorative justice as adult diversion from the criminal justice system in some counties. The impact of expanding restorative justice to adult offenders remains to be evaluated.

Finally, however, while Crown referrals overall tended to be higher in HRM than in other mainland agencies, there was considerable variation within the rural areas. This factor points to a significant difference between rural and urban areas in Nova Scotia. Effective RJ may not require institutionalization, although the stable success of the programme over time may require relatively permanent insertion into the justice system (and other systems affecting youth). But unofficial interaction, among role-players who know each other, work in close proximity, and more frequently interact socially (as might be the case in more rural areas), might also lead to differential restorative justice effectiveness. The difficulty with more unofficial and less institutionalized practice, however, is that much is dependent on individuals. A supportive Chief in a small town has a great deal of influence over referrals; conversely, where the police don't refer, the onus is placed more on the Crown. Agency workers note that RCMP officers are constantly coming in and leaving detachments and their attitudes to RJ vary. Some come from a northern posting and may have taken part in sentencing circles; others are transferred from

jurisdictions where RJ is merely the diversion of shop-lifting cases. These findings suggest training implications, both for the police and community workers.

In smaller areas, idiosyncrasies among the significant role players may be exaggerated in rural areas and play a significant role in the differential use and effectiveness of restorative justice. In rural Nova Scotia, complex local relationships develop among RJ agencies, the major players in the criminal justice system, and political elites (mayors and councillors). In urban HRM, the implementation of RJ was supported by the then Chief of Police, and the Halifax Regional Police Service adopted a centralized reporting system for youth offenders. While RJ in rural areas *may* be well connected to local politics and CJS agents, in some cases in HRM, the connections are more institutionalized (in recording practices and in youth court) and therefore likely to be more consistent over time and somewhat less dependent on idiosyncratic, personal factors.

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