

Editors' Introduction: Volume 8, Issue 3

The most recent good news is that the South African Government has certified the *International Journal of Rural Criminology* and all the other journals in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). This means that scholars will earn “publishing points” if published in journals like IJRC, encouraging them to submit to and refer to “free quality content” in open access journals. So, to quote the now famous and often cited song title by the Nobel Prize Winner in Literature and pop/folk song writer, Bob Dylan, “the times they are a-changin”.

IJRC too is “a-changin”, perhaps “adjustin” is the better word, in two ways. First, on the *About* page are now warning statements about plagiarism and AI-generated content. Both are not acceptable. We now use Turnitin on all submissions, and the AI checker as well. Second, this is the third issue in volume 8, and it is expected there will be a fourth issue published late in 2024. That will allow us to publish IJRC with each volume corresponding to the calendar year, beginning in 2025.

A more substantive way IJRC is “a-changin” is in the publication of two very distinctive articles in this issue, with both to be found in the section on *Policy and Practice: Notes from the Field*. One is by Willie Clack (South Africa) who wrote a “Journey” article about how he transitioned to rural crime and criminal justice studies. The editor of the “Journey” series is Emmanuel Bunei (University of New England, New South Wales). Affectionately referred to as the “guinea pig”, Willie Clack is the first entry in what we hope will be a long series of “Journey” articles written by many noted rural scholars about how they became interested in rural criminology. Who influenced them to travel an intellectual path in the direction of rural criminology? What research studies and what theories shaped their own rural scholarship? We shall be inviting contributions but welcome unsolicited Journey statements, but they must be about an intellectual journey to examine crime and criminal justice issues in a rural context.

A second distinctive article in this issue of IJRC is the account of his continuing work as an expert witness in trials involving rural women convicted of homicide by Walter S. DeKeseredy. His testimony enlightens judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys about why some women who are the victims of vicious and continuous physical and mental abuse by their partners eventually strike back and/or become co-offenders. DeKeseredy’s testimony, which relies on empirical and theoretical criminological scholarship, helps reduce their sentences as the circumstances of their actions become better understood.

Volume 8, Issue 3 leads off with three articles focused on farm crime and its impact on farmers and their families. They are from very diverse localities and employ diverse ways of collecting data. The first is by Adetunji Sanjo Olanrewaju and colleagues about rural banditry and other economic crimes from the view of male pastoralists living in the north-central Nigerian



state of Kwara. The authors conducted extensive field research through both focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The second article is by Robert Smith, who discusses a relatively new phenomenon in the United Kingdom, which is the use of e-bikes employed for stealing farm property. Citing the National Farmers Union, these e-bandits, who wear ski masks to hide their faces, now have the nickname “rural wraiths”, a reference to the ghostlike, faceless figures in Tolkein’s *Lord of the Rings* series. The third article focusing on farm crime is by Willie Clack (of Journey fame) who discusses trends in the theft of livestock in South Africa based on an analysis of existing literature and government statistics. Anyone interested in farm crime, especially in an African context, needs to scan the list of references by both Clack and Olanrewaju et al. Wow! Together, they present a long and rich list of published scholarship about farm crime in both Africa and beyond.

Three other articles in Volume 8, Issue 3 are centered on the criminal justice system within a rural context. One is by Wendell Wallace, a senior lecturer with the University of West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago. Wallace interviewed male law enforcement officers working in rural locations about their views of policing and police work. Meanwhile, Christine Poole and her colleagues at the University of Alabama examined the work of parole officers in rural counties from the perspective of “proximal affinity”, that is, the degree to which perceptions of others in a community shape their supervisory relationships with parolees. Finally, drug crime concentrations across rural and urban areas of the US state of Delaware was assessed from research by Jascha Wagner from the Thünen-Institute of Rural Studies, Braunschweig, Germany.

Finally, Matt Bowden (Technological University Dublin) and Alistair Harkness (University of New England) wrote a rejoinder to a review of their Bristol University Press edited book titled *Rural Transformations and Rural Crime*. The false and misleading review was published in a journal whose editor refused to publish Bowden and Harkness’ rejoinder, likely because of a relationship with the reviewer. It is important to make this rejoinder available to rural scholars in order to correct very erroneous claims contained in the review itself. In the previous issue of IJRC, an article also addressing erroneous claims about rural criminology was published. It was titled ““Johnny Come Lately”” – An Essay on Latter-Day Myths about Rural Crime and Justice Studies”. The good news about these scholarly tussles is that rural criminology has grown, matured and developed to the extent that there are now a great many honest and ethical contributors, and a few dubious detractors.

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