

‘SUCH MISCONDUCTS DON’T MAKE A GOOD RANGER’: EXAMINING LAW ENFORCEMENT RANGER WRONGDOING IN UGANDA

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Wildlife crime has been recognized to be an important topic of study by criminologists in recent years. Prior research has highlighted the detrimental impact of corruption on conservation-related issues. Law enforcement rangers are often the primary protectors of protected areas and wildlife. Yet, like other law enforcement agents, they are not immune to misconduct and corruption. The present study offers an in-depth examination of rangers’ experiences with and perceptions of wrongdoing in a specific Ugandan protected area. Findings indicate that ranger wrongdoing is driven by a myriad of factors and manifests in various ways. These findings have implications for the understanding and prevention of ranger misconduct.

Keywords: wildlife crime, wildlife law enforcement, corruption, conservation criminology, policing

Introduction

Wildlife crime is an under-researched topic in criminology. Research on the topic, however, is growing, particularly from the foundational work by green criminologists (White and Heckenberg 2014) and conservation criminologists (Gibbs *et al.* 2009). Three main topics have dominated the wildlife crime literature within criminology: poaching (Pires and Clarke 2011; Clarke and de By 2013), trafficking (Warchol *et al.* 2004) and the current study’s focus on law enforcement activities (Walsh and Donovan 1984; Forsyth 1993; Oliver and Meier 2006; Warchol and Kapla 2012). The goal of our research is to examine a specific aspect of wildlife law enforcement, which has received little attention: ranger misconduct.

Regarded as a challenging area of study (Skogan and Meares 2004), decades of police research have stressed the importance of investigating various forms of police wrongdoing. As law enforcement rangers have primary responsibility for monitoring many of the world’s protected areas (and species), a better understanding of ranger deviance is needed, especially since the inappropriate or illegal behaviour of front-line rangers undermines enforcement capabilities, effectiveness and legitimacy. The present study investigates in-depth, rangers’ experiences with and perceptions of ranger wrongdoing in Uganda. First, we draw from the relevant policing, conservation and corruption literature to identify the manifestation and prevalence of inappropriate and corrupt practices related to wildlife crime and its enforcement. Second, we present our findings drawn from interviews with law enforcement rangers, and participant observations of

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daily ranger operations and activities. Last, we discuss the theoretical and policy implications of our findings.

Literature Review

Wildlife law enforcement

Wildlife offences are generally considered low priority when compared to other crimes (Cook *et al.* 2002); thus, it is not surprising that criminological research on its monitoring, enforcement and prevention is sparse. Moreover, there is limited research on wildlife law enforcement efforts compared to other forms of policing. In general, research on rural forms of policing is relatively uncommon (Falcone *et al.* 2002). Scholars attribute the paucity of police research taking place outside urban contexts to the perception that such initiatives do not constitute ‘real’ police work (Palmer and Bryant 1985). Of the empirical research conducted, the majority has occurred in western, developed countries and has focussed on occupational duties, responsibilities, and enforcement styles (Palmer and Bryant 1985; Shelley and Crow 2009), job satisfaction (Eliason 2006), stress and concerns (Walsh and Donovan 1984; Oliver and Meier 2006), dangers (Forsyth 1993; Eliason 2011) and discretion (Eliason 2003; Carter 2006).

Few studies have specifically examined wildlife law enforcement operations in African settings. Of these studies, the majority has focussed on analysing various factors associated with law enforcement efficiency and effectiveness in protected areas (Jachmann and Billiow 1997; Hilborn *et al.* 2006). Only a handful of studies have examined the lived experiences of ranger personnel. In a recent study on rangers in South Africa, Warchol and Kapla (2012) examined a wide array of topics, including training, field operations and responsibilities, and perceived threats. In another study, Ogunjinmi *et al.* (2008) investigated Nigerian rangers’ job satisfaction, revealing age, number of wives, family size, monthly income, and work experience each as relevant factors. The authors also found that most respondents were poorly motivated and dissatisfied with their occupation.

For the current study, we focus on actions that explicitly undercut the efficacy of wildlife law enforcement practices and negatively impact the image of front-line rangers and the organization as a whole. We believe that identifying activities that may hinder the effectiveness and legitimacy of law enforcement authorities (i.e. corrupt behaviour) is a worthwhile endeavour given the far-reaching consequences of such activities (i.e. the poaching and trading of endangered species products). As there have been few empirical attempts to examine ranger indiscretion, we draw from the larger corruption and conservation literature, as well as the police deviance literature to guide our study.

Corruption and conservation

Corrupt practices threaten the maintenance, monitoring and protection of the world’s biodiversity and natural resources (Laurance 2004). The threat of corruption is especially problematic in developing countries that often have high levels of biodiversity, but lack the capacity to effectively monitor and protect such resources (Smith *et al.* 2003). Furthermore, the issue of corruption exacerbates the paradoxical nature of resource-rich countries experiencing poor economic development and low quality

of life, otherwise known as the ‘resource curse’ (see [Auty 1993](#)). Recent research has shown that corruption has a potentially harmful impact on a number of conservation-related issues, including recreational hunting ([Leader-Williams *et al.* 2009](#)) and illegal logging ([Miller 2011](#)).

Perceived ranger corruption can also have an adverse impact on community involvement on conservation-related issues by reducing the legitimacy and trustworthiness of authority figures. Research has shown that perceptions of trust and legitimacy are strongly associated with compliance with the law ([Tyler 2006](#)), including within conservation initiatives ([Kahler and Gore 2012](#)). This issue of voluntary compliance is particularly important as a limited number of law enforcement agents are responsible for monitoring and protecting scores of land. Simply put, in settings where communities surround or are within protected areas, villager cooperation is crucial to the effective management of such spaces. As such, the legitimacy framework is particularly relevant. For instance, [Stern \(2008\)](#) found that perceptions of trust and legitimacy had a stronger impact on local villagers’ voluntary compliance compared to deterrence-based approaches. Given the wide range of potential harms stemming from official corruption on conservation-related issues, more research is warranted ([Smith and Walpole 2005](#)).

Although misconduct involving wildlife law enforcement personnel can occur at various organizational levels, we focus exclusively on park rangers’ activities. Since front-line law enforcement personnel represent and enforce legal statutes and regulatory procedures, positive interactions with community members is central in successfully achieving community compliance, participation and involvement in resource monitoring and protection. Therefore, negative perceptions of and experiences with rangers potentially thwart the effectiveness of state-based policies. [Sundström’s \(2012\)](#) research with small-scale fishermen confirms that regulatory compliance is strongly linked to major and petty forms of corruption. Similarly, [Gore *et al.* \(2013\)](#) found that community non-compliance with conservation rules was influenced by the behaviours of authorities, including corrupt practices like omission of duty.

Since corruption can be considered as a ‘negotiated classification of behaviour’ that is ‘dependent on specific social contexts and embedded stacks of knowledge’ and ‘open to a variety of interpretations according to which set of criteria is considered appropriate in a given situation’ ([Chibnall and Saunders 1977: 139](#)), it would be appropriate to first situate and contextualize the current study. Thus, we now provide a snapshot of low-level corruption in Africa, as well as the general public perception of corruption in Uganda.

Low-level corruption in Africa and public perceptions of corruption in Uganda

Considered to be ‘everyday corruption’ due to the ‘unconscious and automatic’ nature of such activities ([Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2006: 5](#)), low-level forms of corruption in African states have mainly been studied by anthropologists, economists and political scientists. Unlike high-level forms of corruption (also known as ‘grand’ or ‘political’ corruption), that involve politicians, ambassadors and other top state officials ([McMullan 1961](#); [Haywood 2009](#); [Lowenstein 2013](#)), low-level forms of corruption comprise of interactions between lower state officials (e.g. police) and the public. Much of the literature has focussed on the pre- and post-colonial existence

and appearance of corruption, as well as theories related to its development and sustenance (McMullan 1961; Heidenheimer 1990; Olivier de Sardan 1999; Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2006).

In general, low-level corruption in Africa has been found to be common and routine (Olivier de Sardan 1999), embedded within a 'climate of corruption' (McMullan 1961), governed by complex formal and informal exchange transactions and obligation relationships (Heidenheimer 1990; Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2006), and fluctuate in terms of social and moral legitimacy and illegality (Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2006). Although petty forms of corruption may vary by setting, similarities between African countries have been acknowledged. For example, an extensive study conducted by Blundo and Olivier de Sardan (2006) found similar corrupt behaviours (e.g. bribery, nepotism, misappropriation, etc.) and justifications in three West African countries.

Corruption is a major area of concern in Uganda (Inspectorate of Government 2008). In fact, the 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Uganda 140 out of 177 countries.¹ With regard to the current study, recent public opinion research conducted by Afrobarometer² found that 34% of Ugandans believed that some police officers were involved in corruption, while 35 and 28% of respondents believed that most or all of police officers were involved in corruption, respectively.³ Table 1 shows that most respondents reported that some, if not most, government officials were involved in wrongdoing. Further, citizens believed the police as the most corrupt institution. In fact, the East African Bribery Index 2013 notes that the police were found to be the most bribery prone institution in Uganda. Moreover, 62% of respondents believed that the Ugandan government was not doing enough to fight corruption, which partly explains why 93% of respondents did not report incidents of bribery (Transparency International 2013).⁴

TABLE 1 *Public responses on government body or institutions and corruption**

Percentage of responses (<i>n</i> = 50,404)					
Government body or institution	None	Some of them	Most of them	All of them	Don't know; Haven't heard enough
Members of parliament	5%	62%	21%	7%	5%
Local government councilors	7%	59%	21%	9%	4%
Judges and magistrates	6%	57%	20%	9%	8%
Government officials	3%	52%	30%	10%	4%
Tax officials	3%	45%	26%	19%	7%
Police	2%	34%	35%	28%	2%

Source: Afrobarometer (2014).

¹ Retrieved on 25th January 2013 from: <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/>.

² Afrobarometer is 'an independent, nonpartisan research project that measures the social, political, and economic atmosphere in Africa' (Afrobarometer 2012). Surveys collected by Afrobarometer are standardized allowing for systematic cross-country comparisons.

³ Retrieved on 23 August 2014 from: <http://www.afrobarometer-online-analysis.com/aj/AJBrowerAB.jsp>.

⁴ Other identified reasons also included that the person giving the bribe was a beneficiary of the incident, they did not know where to report, and fear of intimidation/reprisal, among others.

Negative public sentiments regarding perceptions of police misconduct are not surprising given citizens' overall perception that corruption among Ugandan government officials is pervasive (see [Flanary and Watt 1999](#)). For instance, [Lowenstein \(2013\)](#) described how '[c]orruption in Uganda is severe, well-known, cuts across many sectors, and is frequently debated and discussed in media' (2). Notably, a study by the [Inspectorate of Government \(2008\)](#) found that respondents considered low-level forms of corruption (e.g. bribery) prevalent in Uganda. As the report noted:

Findings indicate that the demand for and payment of bribes are no longer secrets. People seemed to glorify those who acquire wealth through graft while they ridiculed those who upheld principles of integrity and moral values. This shows that corruption is becoming an acceptable way of life ([Inspectorate of Government 2008](#): xiv).

As much of the police deviance literature derives from Western, industrialized countries, we are cognizant of the potential limitations presented by the socio-political, economic and cultural differences between these studies and the current study area. Despite these differences, we believe it is vital to discuss the relevant literature on police deviance in order to identify important similarities and differences that may arise from the present study.

Defining police deviance

Police deviance has been recognized as the violation of established rules and boundaries that dictate acceptable and appropriate police behaviour ([Ivkovic 2005](#)). It is prudent to differentiate between various forms of alleged police wrongdoing since some prohibited activities may not violate legal statutes. Given our purposes, we draw from [Punch's \(2000\)](#) typology of police deviance: corruption, misconduct and police crime. *Corruption* refers to officers receiving money, gifts or services in exchange for performing (or failing to perform) specific actions, while *misconduct* refers to the violation of internal agency rules or procedures (e.g. sleeping on duty). Such misconduct often results in internal sanctions through disciplinary regulations. *Police crime* refers to criminal activities committed by police officers (e.g. burglary). Due to space constraints and since much of the literature on police deviance has been examined under the guise of corruption and misconduct; we focus our attention on the police corruption literature.

Correlates and impact of police corruption

Drivers for corrupt activities have varied in the existing literature. Early examples of police corruption emphasized the objective of achieving personal gain or economic-based corruption ([Sherman 1974](#); [Goldstein 1977](#)), while subsequent explanations focussed on occupational, departmental, or organizational benefits associated with a 'noble cause' ([Punch 1985](#)) due to the 'the dirty harry problem' ([Klockars 1980](#)), in which the perceived ends justify the means. Scholars have long argued that the potential for corrupt behaviour is pervasive within policing due to the opportunities, temptations, discretionary powers and limited supervision of officers ([Sherman 1974](#); [Goldstein 1977](#); [Skogan and Meares 2004](#)). In addition, it has been argued that officers' day-to-day experiences can directly impact their perceptions of and participation

in inappropriate behaviour. Similar to police perceiving certain crimes as ‘normal’ within a particular jurisdiction (see [Niederhoffer 1967](#); [Rubinstein 1973](#)), it is possible that corrupt practices may be recognized as normative behaviour given particular circumstances.

Although early policing scholars attributed police deviance to individual-level shortcomings (‘rotten apples’), it is now widely recognized that such deviant behaviour is a multi-faceted issue influenced by a number of micro- and macro-level elements as well, including systemic (‘rotten orchards’) ([Punch 2003](#)) and social ecological factors ([Kane 2002](#)). Moreover, the strong influence of an informal police culture may also produce environments where deviant behaviour is tolerated, accepted, reinforced and even expected. As police culture provides an informal avenue for learning and transmitting *how* to be an officer ([Paoline 2003](#)), it also potentially influences police deviance through the establishment of a ‘blue code of silence’ ([Sherman 1974](#); [Skolnick 2005](#)).

Police deviance has a number of implications, especially as it relates to police-community interactions and public confidence in the police ([Gau and Brunson 2010](#); [Tankebe 2010](#)) and diminished public support and loss of ‘moral authority’ ([Bayley 2002](#): 143). Such a loss of moral authority can have a detrimental impact on community perceptions of police legitimacy ([Skolnick and Fyfe 1993](#)). Furthermore, incidents of questionable police behaviour can adversely impact opinions towards the police resulting in negative attitudes from the public, particularly if such events are highly publicized ([Weitzer 2002](#)).

Current Study

Study area

Established in 1952, Queen Elizabeth National Park (QENP) is one of ten national parks in Uganda.⁵ The Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) is the governing body responsible for the management and monitoring of Uganda’s protected areas, and managing wildlife species. In addition to its headquarters, QENP is home to 25 ranger posts, gates and sub-headquarters located within six sectors.⁶

Unfortunately, relations between community members, park management, and rangers have been strained in part to changes in law enforcement strategies ([Risby *et al.* 2002](#); [Nampindo and Plumptre 2005](#)). Due to the increasing population of nearby communities and related pressure on park resources, QENP management shifted from a ‘carrot’, whereby communities were afforded permit-based resource access and limited cattle grazing rights, to a ‘stick’ approach, which restricted communities from all resource use in 1969 ([Risby *et al.* 2002](#)).⁷ Additionally, evidence suggests that local communities may not perceive park regulations or wildlife laws to be legitimate or fair. For example, villagers are not compensated for loss of crops or livestock due to problem species ([Moghari 2009](#)). Like other protected areas in Uganda, QENP is susceptible

⁵ QENP is home to 11 fishing villages.

⁶ Law enforcement rangers are stationed and are responsible for various activities at these locations. Posts and sub-headquarters are often located near park boundaries, while gates are entrance points to game drives or other access roads. Rangers are responsible for patrol, guarding duties, problem animal control, escort or guide duties and gate collection at these locations.

⁷ Recently, however, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreements have been established between the UWA and specific communities who wish to gain monitored access to particular resources (e.g. firewood).

to various threats, including poaching. Notably, poaching in QENP is a multi-faceted problem, driven by a wide range of factors including, necessity, profit, tradition, and socio-political and legal (Moreto and Lemieux, *in press*).

Study objectives

The current study hails from a broader examination of law enforcement ranger culture and operations in QENP. With relevance to the current study, Olivier (2000; as cited in Moghari 2009) provided a general overview and management plan for the protected area and documented the 'recent increase involving UWA rangers, Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF), and local defense units' in poaching and/or illegal fishing (173). He observed:

[...] Abuse of office, corruption and in some cases, the involvement of [protected area] staff in illegal activities was frequently reported. [...] This problem is most pronounced amongst junior enforcement staff. They are usually poorly paid, based far from supervisory staff, and are quickly co-opted by the very people they are meant to police.

In his study examining human–lion conflicts in QENP, Moghari (2009: 151) found that some community members held negative perceptions of law enforcement officers as a result of 'verbal hostilities, alleged beatings, and attempted extortion'. Moghari's findings highlight the detrimental and counterproductive impact of inappropriate ranger behaviour on park management and community relations.

We seek to advance prior research by focussing on rangers' views of misconduct with the primary goal of providing better understandings of activities that weaken the effectiveness and legitimacy of law enforcement personnel, and to suggest policies for preventing and disrupting such behaviours. In order to achieve these objectives, we separate the study into two main research questions: First, what types of wrongdoing do law enforcement rangers and supervisors report taking place? Second, what factors do law enforcement rangers and supervisors identify as contributing to ranger wrongdoing?

Methods and Data

We used purposeful sampling to select law enforcement rangers and supervisors, and our study design involved both face-to-face interviews and hours of participant observation. In total, 24 law enforcement rangers were interviewed in private. Our sample size while perhaps modest is appropriate given the total number of law enforcement rangers working within the protected area (30.4% of a total $N = 79$ rangers). Further, as with most qualitative studies, there often comes a point when theoretical saturation is achieved and additional interviews and/or observations produce diminishing returns (Ritchie *et al.* 2003). We believe that theoretical saturation was reached.

Data was collected between September and October 2012. The interviews were voluntary, and respondents were promised confidentiality.⁸ Study participants were paid Sh25,000 Ugandan shillings, which equals approximately \$10 USD at the time of data

⁸ We assigned all study participants pseudonyms.

collection. Interviews lasted between 1 and 3 h. Unless study participants objected, the interviews were audio recorded.

The overall interview instrument contained open-ended, semi-structured questions that allowed for considerable probing and elaboration. In order to elicit detailed responses and facilitate discussion when inquiring about ranger misconduct, the lead author referred to a recent incident at a nearby protected area, as well as indirect questions regarding ranger misbehaviour. The lead author did not ask whether respondents participated in ranger misconduct themselves as such an approach might be misconstrued as an allegation and/or might result in untruthful responses. Furthermore, by shifting the focus to the behaviour of others, it was believed that respondents would be more forthcoming in their perceptions regarding ranger misconduct compared to direct questions regarding their own wrongdoing. Lastly, by examining the behaviours and motivations of others, the lead author was able to expand the breadth of inquiry beyond respondents' own experiences by including vicarious experiences as well.

The lead author also conducted approximately 500 h of participant observation of rangers throughout the course of their daily lives, including participating in routine day foot patrols. Through direct, naturalistic observations, we gained a greater understanding of the general context in which study participants lived and operated (Patton 2002; DeWalt and DeWalt 2011). Additionally, participant observation also helped to build rapport, facilitating candid and open discussion between the lead author and study participants.

We used these combined data sources to produce a holistic picture of law enforcement rangers' perceptions on ranger misconduct, while also reducing the limitations associated with single method designs. The ethnographic data was primarily captured through extensive note taking. Narratives were also completed in order to document as much information as possible and to reduce the potential threat of memory loss. This 'end-point' approach was useful in providing an overall description of an event by having more information *after-the-fact* rather than simply information about the event at that point in time (Emerson *et al.* 2011).

Information from the interviews and participant observations were transcribed verbatim. The data were coded first by hand and later using QSR International's NVivo 10. We then performed initial or open coding (Saldana 2009). Initial coding involves separating transcribed data into sections and carefully examining each part for commonalities and differences. Afterwards, we used pattern coding to identify underlying and overreaching themes or constructs useful for classifying segments of data into theoretical categories (Miles and Huberman 1994; Maxwell 2005). The quoted material presented herein emerged as the most salient to and representative of respondents' experiences.

As can be expected, a potential drawback of ethnographic case studies is the limited transferability of study findings. Essentially, observed findings may not translate or be applicable to other people, settings and/or situations. While the current study may not be appropriate for statistical generalization, our findings are potentially 'generalizable (sic) to theoretical propositions' (Yin 2009: 15) and provide a solid foundation for future research on ranger misconduct. Furthermore, we recognize that our own cultural biases could potentially influence the analysis and presentation of our findings. We believe, however, that the extended time spent by the lead author *in situ* interacting with study participants helped minimize such ethnocentrism. Moreover, the lead

author kept in contact with informants and study participants after data collection and this was useful in clarifying confusion or misinterpretation during analysis.

All respondents were male and ranged in age from 23 to 54, with a mean age of 35. The vast majority of respondents reported being married (87.5%) with children (83.3%). The time spent with the organization and working in the study area both ranged from 6 months to 18 years. Specifically, the average time spent working for the organization was 9.27 years, while the time assigned to the study area was 7.60 years, respectively.

Study Findings

The current study supports, refines and extends prior research on the broader topic of law enforcement deviance, resulting in an improved and more holistic understanding of underlying elements influencing ranger misconduct, as well as the range of such activities. For ease of discussion, we first investigate respondents' detailed accounts of ranger malfeasance, specifically: dereliction of duty, ancillary or incidental involvement in criminal activities, and principal transgressor of criminal activities.⁹ Second, we analyse rangers' perceptions of various motivations for wrongdoing to emphasize the heterogeneous nature of ranger misconduct.

Types of ranger misconduct

Dereliction of duty

Failure to report for duty or 'absconding' was repeatedly mentioned by respondents as a form of ranger wrongdoing. Rangers would abscond after they had been given official leave for a short period of time or would simply leave without formal permission. Bill reported how rangers would 'add days' to 'given days off', while David noted, '[Rangers] disappear. You look for them, they are nowhere to be seen. They have gone to their homes. Then others, they get permission to go home and they don't come back'. Given the limited on-hand personnel at the park, respondents perceived absconding to be particularly problematic for day-to-day operations, especially for rangers living at outposts since typically only two to five rangers are stationed there. Brian believed that such absenteeism had a direct negative impact by 'distracting the organisation's work' and that 'such misconducts don't make a good ranger'.

The vast majority of study participants considered drinking on the job as a typical form of ranger misconduct as well. Since rangers live on-site and are required to be ready for duty at any given time, excessive alcohol consumption detrimentally impacted daily law enforcement operations. For instance, intoxicated rangers may not show up for their respective duties. Brian discussed how 'some rangers drink and fail to respond for their work [because] by the time he's called, he's totally drunk'. Likewise, Adam, a supervisor, observed, 'We the administrators, you're with rangers. They've escaped. They've gone for drinking [...] You say, 'Now there is work!' They say, 'Me *afande*, (Sir)¹⁰ I'm sick!' Because he's drunk!'

⁹ Although most respondents reported having heard of, witnessed, or participated in some form of misconduct, a few respondents stated that they had never experienced or knew of such behaviour occurring. Additionally, respondents were often consistent in their responses, atypical scenarios also surfaced during several interviews, including mishandling of suspects, fraudulent documentation of patrol activities, and exploiting prior incentive organizational programs.

¹⁰ *Afande* is a Swahili term to respectfully address higher ranking officers.

Respondents also recalled incidents where rangers performed their duties while under the influence of alcohol. In particular, participants described how fellow rangers would go on patrol intoxicated. Benjamin explained, 'They were drunkards [...]. When he has gone to town, he's taking booze [...] You find he wants to go and work when he's drunk'. Further, participants also reported how rangers would immediately go to a nearby bar after patrol operations rather than going home first to change into civilian clothing. Although drinking after the completion of a patrol is not necessarily frowned upon, drinking while in uniform in the community is considered to be inappropriate and unprofessional, especially while armed. David referred to such activities as a 'negligence of duty'. He explained, 'You've gone out for patrol. Instead of concentrating on patrol and reporting on patrol and reporting back to station, you first branch (go) in the bar and drink when you are in uniform'. Respondents were acutely aware of the negative image that accompanied rangers spending leisure time in uniform, especially given the at times tenuous relationship between rangers and the surrounding communities.

Respondents also reported how drinking on the job sometimes led to other forms of ranger misconduct, including physical fights with community members. Ivan mentioned how such 'small quarreling' may occur due to rangers 'drinking excessively and at the end, starting fights with civilians'. Sam described how he had heard of rangers 'drinking in a bar' and had later 'fought with somebody', while Daniel mentioned how rangers would be 'drinking alcohol on duty' which led to 'fighting while on duty' and the 'misuse of firearms'. Richard also recalled hearing about a particular incident involving drinking on duty and firearms. He explained, '...I heard the rangers, they shoot the bullets. See? So the people in the community complained [...] Shoot in the community. Just shooting in the air'.

Another example of how rangers would neglect their duties involved 'sister agencies', especially the UPDF since they live within and near the park. While there are agreements between the UWA and the UPDF for sanctioned resource access, there are times when soldiers would go beyond such agreements. Indeed, on one observed patrol, bundles of firewood were found nearby an army camp. After inquiring whether the bundles originated from a nearby community, the patrol commander informed the lead author that army soldiers were illegally accessing firewood within the area. On a different patrol, the lead author witnessed soldiers' illegally cutting firewood within the protected area. During his interview, Brian, who also was part of that particular patrol, reflected on the incident and explained that while he wanted the lead author to 'see the information' he did not arrest the soldiers because 'they are our friendly forces'.

Ancillary and/or incidental involvement in criminal activities

The next category of ranger wrongdoing involves rangers collaborating or conspiring with villagers. Unlike direct criminal involvement (discussed later), such indirect behaviour involves rangers conspiring with villagers in order to facilitate the commission of an illegal act, rather than rangers committing illegal acts themselves (i.e. poaching committed by a villager rather than the ranger). One example identified by respondents' involved rangers providing community members with confidential information on patrol operations. For instance, rangers would use their knowledge of patrol operations to notify family members and/or friends in the community about the location of patrol groups. Michael referred to one situation 'where a ranger was conniving with the

community members in poaching’ and was found to be giving [patrol] information. He explained: ‘When they go for patrol, he say [to them], ‘People have gone for patrol [...] Don’t go there!’ David also mentioned how villagers would get information from their ‘staff’ within UWA:

Yes, sometimes it happens. Like the cattle keepers, whenever you go there [to] arrest them, they communicate [with the rangers]. At which time you find nobody there, but the cows are grazing. But the people have disappeared. That’s because of communication from *their* staff who are here.

Notably, the potential threat of rangers providing information has led to changes in tactical operations. In particular, drop-off locations of patrols (which require deployment as opposed to originating directly from an outpost, gate, or headquarters) are kept secret from the involved patrol group members. The lead author observed this during the patrols he participated in, and Adam remarked on this precautionary tactic explaining, ‘This is why we don’t want to reveal to rangers before we take them to the [patrol] position’.

In other situations, rangers would directly coordinate with poachers in the development of patrol operations in order to reduce the potential for encountering one another in the bush. As exemplified by Douglas’ who explained, ‘We connive (scheme) with the poachers, then they go to the park [...] You can allow the poacher to enter, [and say to him] ‘You go such a place, maybe on such a time.’ They agree, [and the ranger might then say], ‘I will not be there, so get what you get’’. In addition to providing poachers with covert patrol information, respondents described how rangers would ‘arm’ poachers with the necessary equipment to hunt. Respondents described incidents during which rangers provided poachers with their agency guns, ammunition and traps. Paul referred to a particular situation where a ranger at an outpost gave his brothers confiscated wire snares obtained from previous patrols, ‘This ranger could recover the wire snares [and] instead of forwarding them to the headquarters here, he could keep them in his room. Then, gives [the snares] to the brothers. Then, the brothers again go and plant these wire snares, so it was like a cycle’.

Participants also detailed a number of scenarios where rangers had ‘connived’ with community members in order to access the protected area (PA) and get specific resources or cultivate the land without formal permission. Benjamin recalled one situation in another PA that involved rangers allowing community members to cultivate within PA boundaries, ‘There was encroachment. Rangers could allow people to give them something [in return], then [the people] go and dig part of the park’. Additionally, Ivan explained that while he personally had not seen rangers allowing community members to access firewood, he did suspect that it occurred. He surmised:

What I think [rangers] can connive about is firewood [with the] communities. Because communities can come crying, “We have nothing to use for cooking at home and trees are dry there (referring to the protected area). They’re dead.” So, maybe [rangers] can let the community to go and get firewood. Of course, to say thank you, they give [the rangers] a bunch of *matoke* (a type of banana), or bunch of potatoes.

Respondents also described how some rangers would allow pastoralists to illegally graze their livestock within PA borders. Felix recalled a situation where a ranger ‘had allowed people to graze in the park and [the community members] paid him money’. Likewise, Dennis described an incident where it was believed that rangers were collaborating

with community members due to the close proximity of grazing cows to an outpost. He commented, ‘...if the camp is just 500 metres [away] and cows are grazing. In your opinion, what do you think? What do you really think if they’re grazing just 500 metres away?’

Some respondents also indicated that rangers would contact villagers to sell trapped wildlife found during the course of a patrol. For instance, Paul recalled a situation during one of his early patrols when instead of following procedure and calling headquarters, the ranger-in-command called someone from the nearby community to exchange the animal for money. Paul offered, ‘While we were patrolling, we got a giant forest hog on a wire. What my supervisor did then instead of say, maybe, calling [and] reporting this [incident], what he had to do was to call other people, [The supervisor likely said,] ‘Okay, man, pay me some money!’”

Respondents also referenced ‘rumors of poaching’ involving rangers colluding with community members. In these circumstances, rangers allowed poachers to enter the park to hunt, and upon their return, the poachers would provide rangers with money or meat. Brian said rangers would ‘connive with communities [and] allow them to go and kill the animals’. Similarly, Benjamin recalled how suspected rangers were ‘helping [the poachers] to enter’ the park in order to hunt. Michael also referred to situations where rangers connived with community members. Note how he distinguished between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ poachers in his response:

Conniving with the community members! [...] And when you get poaching, a ranger, direct chasing (dismissal of a ranger from the organisation) We chase you! But when we chase you we also monitor you there [in the community], because we know you will be an external *poacher*. That one [here] we call, “internal poacher.”

In addition to providing community members with access to park resources, respondents described how some rangers would also simply accept bribes in order to let a suspect go free. For instance, Felix recalled a situation where a ‘ranger had got a suspect and they gave him money [so] he left the suspect without taking them in court’.

Principal transgressor of illegal activities

Respondents also commented on situations where rangers actively engaged in illegal behaviour for personal financial benefit and used their privileged access as a means to offend. One type of ranger wrongdoing identified by respondents’ involved fraud—specifically, rangers collecting park entrance and other fees and keeping it for themselves. Daniel explained how rangers would ‘allow the tourists to enter the park’ and provide them with ‘fake receipts’. Referring to his own personal situation, Douglas explained how he had once been removed from the organization because of suspected fraud following a herdsman’s allegation that he had been pocketing paid fines. As he explained, his accuser believed that he had ‘ate that money’ (kept it for himself).

Some respondents referenced incidents involving rangers selling confiscated materials from patrols and investigations. One particular case involved a ranger who was responsible for overseeing the evidence storage room. Referring to the aforementioned incident, Chris heard that the ranger was ‘involved in stealing [elephant] tusks in the store (evidence room)’, while Alex added that the ranger ‘connived’ in order to ‘sell the ivory’. Paul recalled the incident:

The other person has actually lost his job. The ivory got lost from the store. Then, after getting lost, there was no explanation. And yet, that person did not report that the store had been broken [into] [...] The person in charge of the store could not account for the whereabouts for the ivory.

Respondents also referred to incidents where rangers were directly involved in poaching. Such incidents involved rangers taking advantage of their unfettered access, availability of weapons and knowledge of the park to hunt wildlife. Adam recalled one situation at an outpost:

So with him when he was left alone, he went and shot a hippo and sold it [for] 300 [thousand shillings] to the community [...] When we was in the camp alone, he killed a buffalo. He sold it to the community. When we realised it beyond [a doubt], then he was dismissed, eh.

Paul referred to two situations of ranger misconduct: one where a ranger 'shot elephants' and another where a ranger collaborated with his brother, a police officer:

[Another] ranger had a brother who's a police officer. So, the police officer could give him extra bullets, because he had a gun. When he was patrolling, he shoots an animal. Shoots for poachers, then poachers take the animal [...] It was a fountain of illegal activities!

It is apt to question why the ranger in Paul's latter example would receive additional bullets from his brother when rangers are armed with bullets of their own. However, during the course of the interviews and through the lead author's observations, such a tactic makes sense since rangers are required to document when they have discharged their weapons and explain any missing ammunition.

Drivers of ranger misconduct

We now present the drivers that participants identified as influencing ranger misconduct. In general, respondents discussed several personal, organizational/systemic and contextual factors. It should be noted that the drivers for ranger deviancy are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, ranger misconduct is not a static phenomenon and rangers do not subscribe to, nor are they potentially influenced by only one category type.

Personal factors

One explanation for ranger wrongdoing provided by respondents was individual upbringing, personal habits and education. As Michael said, 'every person is created differently. We don't have the same mind', and Dennis explained that 'we as human beings, we have different level of understanding'. Respondents believed that rangers who were involved in excessive drinking suffered from 'addiction' or 'habit', while those involved in poaching were driven by traditions because such behaviour 'has been in their family'. For instance, Benjamin believed that ranger misconduct could be attributed to 'how one has grown up' and 'where he has grown up from'.

Lack of education was identified as another important correlate of ranger misconduct. Respondents believed that limited education led to the development of poor decision making and hindered fellow rangers' ability to exercise appropriate conduct when tempted to engage in wrongdoing. Brian speculated, 'When you get somebody, a ranger who has poached, if you ask them education background, you'll find that it is low'. Moreover, study participants believed that earlier hiring practices, which did not

take into account applicants' educational levels, resulted in the UWA hiring individuals ill-equipped for the job.

Association and familiarity with relatives or friends in nearby communities was also recognized as a driver for ranger wrongdoing. Felix surmised that rangers would 'close one eye because of [their] relative', while Adam noted how some relationships would particularly influence rangers who were 'very weak in [the] mind'. Brian inferred that such relationships influenced why community members would want to become rangers. He commented on this 'concealed interest' or 'hidden agenda' of villagers becoming rangers in order to 'collaborate with their relatives'. David further elaborated:

If [the UWA] recruit rangers from the same community here, [the community members] expect these rangers to assist them [...] Others want them to be there in order to cover [for] them in case they have done something bad. "These are my relatives." So, they don't report. And also to get [information] when we are going to do operations. To get information that [we] are coming [and] to get out of the park. Which is a challenge to us.

In general, most respondents attributed ranger misconduct to greed. Referring to rangers who were involved with collaborating with community members, Richard stated: 'They're money-minded. They like money very much', while Daniel simply said that such rangers were 'money hungry'. Ivan explained this inherent nature: 'If someone is a thief or has been a thief, even if you train him? They are meant to be a thief. So, if one has greed for money, they are more likely to get bribed'. And Frank described how he believed that particular forms of ranger misconduct depended 'on one's heart' and whether they were 'satisfied'. Alex also referred to the 'heart' of a ranger and explained how those who became involved in forms of deviance did not internalize the objective and mission of the UWA, but rather placed their own personal goals ahead of the organisation. He noted:

All of us here we have different hearts. There are those who like bribes. There are those who like being rich faster [...] They don't have the heart of the organisation [...] *Some* they have those hearts of conniving [and] bribing.

Interestingly, some respondents explained how particular forms of ranger misconduct resulted from compassion or altruism. For example, Frank justified some wrongdoing as 'merciful'. As indicated in Ivan's response, rangers would empathize with specific community members, namely elders, who may not be familiar with laws governing protected areas, alternatives to legally access resources (e.g. Memorandums of Understanding), or who may simply fear or hate interacting with the UWA:

Those who are not educated, who can't come and write, and [be] given memorandums of understandings to collect firewood. Who fear [the rangers], the old women, the old men. So, when you're someone at the outpost, [you] get a good relationship from the people [...] Still it's bad [...] But as I've told you, this is what is taking place [...] Maybe they get in relationship with community about firewood [...] People can't stay here near the park and they lack firewood and water [...] How will they survive? And not all, as I told you, they're not ready to come here and ask officially. No. The people, their hatred. They fear.

Ivan also discussed how providing community members with unauthorized access to specific resources may lead to better working relationships. By participating in low-level infractions, rangers might be able to get more information from community members

on more serious offences, including poaching. This highlights the complexity of ranger misconduct and raises questions regarding the interaction between authority perceptions of moral and legal legitimacy, specifically, how such perceptions impact job performance, community relations, and in this case, ranger deviance.

Organizational/systemic factors

In addition to such personal factors, respondents identified a number of organizational/systemic aspects that led to ranger misconduct. Unlike greed and personal gain, which is meant to go beyond basic necessities, respondents explained how rangers would connive with villagers in order to supplement 'little payment', 'under payment', or 'low salary'. As private law enforcement rangers currently make Sh500,000 Ugandan shillings per month (approximately \$200 USD), respondents ventured that bribe money would be used to pay for school fees for rangers' children, other family bills, and/or to address an unexpected 'crucial problem'. Chris posited that such 'influences' would result in 'some of the staff to automatically be involved in the illegal activities'. Jude readily admitted that since 'the salary is not enough', he himself could be 'tempted to receive that bribe to finish my problems at home' and Richard, referring to this own situation, frankly said: 'If I kill a buffalo, my children can go to school'.

In addition to low salary, some respondents believed that constantly being on the job, the difficulty of the job, and an overall lack of resources (e.g. equipment) also led to ranger misconduct by demoralizing rangers, resulting in higher stress and decreased job satisfaction. Bill stated that the acceptance of bribes was related to 'someone's welfare' and that wrongdoing is committed in order to 'sustain them'. He believed that such welfare was affected by the 'low salary, nature of the work, and standards of living'. Likewise, Richard surmised that rangers have 'no morale' because they feel 'overworked'. This lack of motivation or low morale was believed to be an important component in ranger misconduct. Another respondent explained, 'If rangers are not motivated, they will start misbehaving. Looking for money for motivation'. In agreement, Paul further explained the link between salary and staff morale, offering how it could result in inappropriate behaviour:

These people are getting very little money [...] So that thing alone, administratively, We looked at it as [a] really vulnerable position [...] If you want someone to deliver, then he should be very happy. But if you want a gambler to deliver, then you are giving him room to gamble.

Respondents also reported that inadequate supervision and limited training contributed to ranger misconduct. In particular, respondents explained that the autonomy exercised by the rangers often provided an avenue for wrongdoing. David, a supervisor, discussed the link between wrongdoing and lack of oversight: 'If rangers are not supervised well, they do not have good supervisors to be in touch with them. They feel they have power in their own. [If] they feel they do not have supervisors, they take power in their own hands and do whatever they want'.

Not surprisingly, respondents attributed this lack of supervision to be especially problematic at the outposts and gates since supervisors were stationed at the headquarters. For example, Ivan remarked how supervisors needed to be 'close to [their] rangers all the time so that you know how they behave'. Focussing on outposts, Ivan further suggested that the combination of being away from headquarters and living in close proximity or within local communities would result in inappropriate behaviour

or conflict. Felix also believed that ranger misconduct was more likely to occur at the outposts because at the headquarters 'you are with the higher authorities [and] you are fearing'. Paul, a supervisor, exemplified this belief in his response: 'When they're in the outpost, they end up becoming poachers. They end up becoming drunkards [...] But those things rarely happen [at headquarters] [...] It is easy to supervise them when they are closer'.

It was clear that Paul was concerned about the behaviours of rangers stationed away from the headquarters. Indeed, prior to this interview, the lead author accompanied Paul to one of the outposts. Paul had been adamant about taking wire snares found on patrol back to the headquarters. He reflected on the incident during his interview:

That's why, remember the other day, when we're moving [and] checking these outposts? When I saw a wire snare, I picked it [up]. That is the point I was trying to avoid, eh? When they keep there [at the outposts], they give to the person, they give back. So the same wire snare, you can keep recovering.

Further, respondents offered that improved training was needed in order for rangers to become better equipped to handle their roles and responsibilities. Such training could also address problems related to inexperience. Indeed, Patrick speculated that ranger misconduct may occur because of 'ignorance', and Jude similarly attributed such misbehaviour to 'lack of knowledge'. He added how some rangers 'are just not aware' and may simply 'fail to know the rules and regulations governing the organisation'.

This lack of training and knowledge could also influence rangers' appreciation for and understanding of the occupation. Respondents reported that some individuals simply became rangers because of necessity rather than a genuine desire to be a ranger. Dennis explained how individuals by 'coincident' became rangers, while others 'really look for the job'. Isaac also referenced this 'lack of conservation spirit'. When asked what he meant, he explained: '[The ranger might be] working for conservation, but really, you can see that somebody is not a conservationist. How can you connive with a poacher? You are the one who is supposed to protect the animals, but [instead] you're the one selling them?'

Since rangers patrol in groups, the potential involvement or at least complacency of other rangers may occur in situations of ranger wrongdoing. This reality leads to the potential existence of a veil of secrecy and solidarity similar to what has been identified within the police culture literature (Sherman 1974; Skolnick 2005) and may result in the development and reinforcement of informal rules associated with personal and occupational wrongdoing. Such secrecy, solidarity and compliance may point to systemic problems extending beyond individual misgivings as well. Furthermore, a sense of familiarity or favouritism, possibly as a result of a deepened sense of camaraderie, may facilitate a context open for misbehaviour. In his response, Adam provided an example of how patrol groups may be susceptible to bribery:

Those suspects have money with them. So, when they have money [and] if you are money conscious, and if your leader, the patrol commander is money conscious, then he will look [for] a way to convince the other team to make sure that they get this money out of the suspects and they release them.

Reflecting on his own personal experiences, Paul described when he and another young ranger were introduced to the 'system':

We were like training still. [The ranger-in-command] said, “You know the system that you need to get use to: when we’re in the bush, we don’t eat beans.” So he scouted and shot a kob, eh. When he shot this kob, he called us to carry [...] We had to carry [the kob]. What else could we do?

Similarly, and as mentioned earlier, one type of misconduct involved neglecting ones duties, including the arrest or citation of soldiers or officers from sister agencies. While this can be partly attributed to a sense of compassion (i.e. rangers empathizing with the difficulties of living within the park), some respondents raised their concerns about possible reprisal resulting from taking action. Brian explained this contentious issue:

So I become the enemy [...] I know they’re friendly forces, then for them they take it as a bad message that I’m tarnishing their UPDF image [...] They can retaliate. And in doing so, they can do anything. Maybe somebody may not bad you today, but maybe tomorrow [...] I know that they’re saying there, “You know, I’ll come back and get you.”

Socio-cultural context and moral cynicism

Lastly, some respondents referred to the overall Ugandan context influencing ranger misconduct. In particular, study participants described how corruption had plagued the nation at various levels. Respondents noted how the socio-cultural context could impact rangers’ perceptions of corrupt practices, including their own. Explaining how the social context can influence ranger misconduct, Paul said:

I would say that from the national level. First of all, corruption is denting our country. We don’t have a strong stand against corruption. So [the rangers] see it happens everywhere [...] It’s like a normal thing [...] Because now there is this thing that they call the 11th commandment: “Somebody eateth where they worketh.”

The corrupt activities of other government officials, including the police, would also contribute to a normative context where inappropriate behaviour and wrongdoing is tolerated, if not expected. For instance, respondents explained how a recent ivory investigation was hindered by police corruption ‘because [the police] got more money’. Further, Sam explained how the corrupt behaviours of police officers would augment the low salary of the rangers:

At times, you find when [the ranger] accepts the bribe, you find the salary is low. And at times, it comes when you take a suspect to police. Then, police takes bribes from those suspects and then they do what? They act as advocates for the suspects! Then, at times you find a ranger getting tempted, “Now, if I arrest, then I’m just making money for other people. Now, why can’t I also take this [bribe]?”

Lastly, respondents also described their frustration with hearing about corrupt practices occurring with local community leaders. Specifically, rangers raised concerns over revenue sharing funds¹¹ being absorbed by such leaders when these assets are supposed to be re-distributed to the villagers. Richard observed how these leaders were ‘embezzling the fund’. And Adam further explained:

¹¹ Established after the enactment of the Uganda Wildlife Act and the UWA, revenue sharing was developed as a policy for neighbouring communities around PAs to obtain 20 per cent of the revenue collected from park entrance fees.

A problem is when we use to give them money for revenue collection from the park. We give it to LC5, at the district level. Then, the district level would chew (take) the money. It don't reach the community surrounding along the park boundary. It doesn't reach them.

Discussion

Our findings support prior literature on police deviance, while extending the scope of wildlife law enforcement research. We offer that the current study extends the literature by casting light on the complexity of ranger wrongdoing and more generally low-level forms of corruption within the scope of conservation. We found that ranger misconduct, like police wrongdoing, is a multi-faceted problem manifested in various ways, ranging from absconding to direct involvement in poaching activities. Although our findings suggest that there may be personal elements that result in misconduct, a number of organizational/systemic and socio-cultural factors were identified as well. Indeed, ranger deviance does not operate in a vacuum and various contributing elements coalesce to create an environment where inappropriate behaviour is established, tolerated or even expected. Moreover, the existence of a normative 'system' based on informal rules, practical customs, and tacit codes could lead to the development and transmission of inappropriate behaviours.

Further, given the rural and at times isolated settings that rangers operate and live in, the opportunity to participate in inappropriate or illegal activities is rife. Limited or lax supervision coupled with the challenging living conditions may provide ample justification in participating in unscrupulous or irresponsible acts. Since rangers not only witness, but also experience, difficult living conditions, perceptions of specific forms of low-level corruption may become altered to justify or neutralize feelings of guilt. For instance, rangers may empathize with villagers who are attempting to survive under harsh conditions but are legally prohibited from doing so. As a result, the moral legitimacy of rangers' behaviours (i.e. allowing villagers to access firewood in order to survive) outweighs the legal legitimacy of park regulations. In fact, the question of how authorities perceive the legitimacy of the laws compared to their own personal or social perceptions of moral legitimacy should be investigated in future research. Moreover, future research examining ranger wrongdoing should also take into account the transactional nature of such activities and examine how corrupt behaviours may be instigated and sustained by community members in order to establish a mutually beneficial relationship (Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2006).

As it is difficult to gauge the severity and extent of ranger misbehaviour within the study area or within the overall organization, various preventive measures have been established by the UWA in order to curtail such behaviours. Such measures include the use of investigative internal operations, the establishment of disciplinary committees at the PAs and at headquarters in Kampala, changes in hiring procedures (i.e. hiring individuals with higher education), modifying tactical operations (i.e. not informing rangers where they will be deployed), helping establish credit for business venture loans, ranger rotations and an increase in salary. While not discussed here, it was clear that respondents realized the importance of reducing inappropriate and illegal activities by rangers and were familiar with the attempts by the organization to curb such behaviours.

We propose, however, that other preventative measures should also be considered when responding to ranger misbehaviour, particularly since current practices do not necessarily address situational elements that facilitate opportunities for rangers to digress. For example, preventative approaches similar to those suggested within the policing literature would be of use, including building internal capacity with a focus on organizational integrity and leadership, as well as the development of a separate internal affairs section might be helpful in curbing corruption (Punch 2000). Additionally, the use of a crime-specific approach based on situational crime prevention, which is focussed on reducing opportunities to offend, may also be useful in addressing corruption (Gorta 1998). Given that rangers have a considerable amount of discretion and often operate outside the direct gaze of their supervisors, altering the conditions for indiscretion may yield effective results. Indeed, we believe that such approaches are favourable since other strategies (i.e. investigating a ranger who is believed to have poached) may only occur after an animal has already been killed.

Although the findings cannot be generalized to other protected areas within or beyond Uganda, the exploratory nature of the study provides an important foundation for future work. Furthermore, the methods used in the study exhibit the value of conducting qualitative research, especially in order to examine sensitive topics that may not otherwise be revealed through other obtrusive measures. The study also extends the interdisciplinary and international scope of criminological research by establishing the role that criminologists have in researching wildlife crime in African settings.

The study involved a novel attempt to bring an important and contentious issue to the forefront of the conservation debate. Given the unique role that law enforcement rangers play, it is imperative to better understand factors that may influence the behaviours and activities of humans responsible for the protection of the world's wildlife. Furthermore, identifying the drivers and indicators of ranger wrongdoing provides an avenue to better understand the applicability, feasibility and likelihood of success of prevention measures.

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