Crime in Ireland 1945–95*

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The State of Criminological Research in Ireland

ON ANCIENT MAPS, CARTOGRAPHERS USED TO DESCRIBE those territories whose boundaries they did not understand or whose people they knew little or nothing of, and did not much care to find out, as places where 'here be dragons'. It is a phrase synonymous with any unexplored and unknown issue, something easily and readily dismissed, and not seen as worth addressing. Ordinary crime in Ireland is a modern example, mapped by criminologists only by reference to terrorism, everything else about which to do with crime is ignored and unexplored. While there was some research in the manner of the Continental 'moral statisticians' during the mid-nineteenth century, when agrarian crime in Ireland was at its zenith, and some initial research by people in the criminal justice system in the Irish Republic in the 1960s when crime in modern times first began to rise, there is no tradition of academic criminology in Ireland; Rolston and Tomlinson (1982: 25) consider criminology Ireland's 'absentee discipline', and criminologists in Britain have completely ignored Ireland, including Northern Ireland.

Thus, there are remarkably few studies of crime in Ireland, with comparative studies between North and South non-existent (McCullagh's 1996 volume on crime in the Irish Republic, the first book of its kind, makes no mention of the North). One exception is Rottman (1989) who provided a brief but instructive overview of crime both before and after partition, making some comparisons between North and South, urban and rural,

and Belfast and Dublin, using both recorded indictable crime statistics and victimisation survey results. Rottman's earlier study (1980) provides a comprehensive summary of statistical trends in crime in the Irish Republic from 1951 to 1972. O'Mahony (1993) followed this up and reported results for the Republic of Ireland for the period 1973 to 1991. McCullagh (1996) covers the period 1961 to 1991. Thus, in the case of the Republic, we have a fairly complete commentary on crime trends during the period 1951 to 1991. This contains mainly descriptions of crime trends in major crime categories but also attempts to link these to broader socio-economic change. This material is supplemented by other publications, such as Dooley's (1995) analysis of homicide in the Republic of Ireland during the period 1971 to 1991 and another recently published victimisation survey by O'Connell and Whelan (1994). This survey allows some comparisons with an earlier survey by Breen and Rottman (1985).

The reporting and analysis of crime trends in Northern Ireland is even more bleak than for the Republic, because there has been no criminological research (one exception is the edited collection by Tomlinson, Varley and McCullagh, 1988, which includes some references to the North; the North also features in van Dijk, Mayhew and Killias, 1990). Most information on crime trends comes from officially published government sources. Northern Ireland has not had an equivalent to the British Crime Survey, which is carried out on a regular basis by the Home Office in England and Wales (although a survey of a similar nature was carried out in early 1995 and is currently undergoing analysis). The nearest equivalents have been the basic questions on crime contained in the Continuous Household Survey and the Northern Ireland Social Attitudes Survey, which are undertaken on a regular basis.

The dragons, as it were, have been removed recently by the authors' research (Brewer *et al.*, 1996) on comparative crime trends in Ireland between 1945 and 1995. The comparative focus was made possible because both parts of Ireland come from a common legal system which was in place before partition, resulting in broad concordance on crime classification, particularly up to 1987. The major index of crime used was indictable crime, which, since 1987, has been called notifiable crime in Northern Ireland, to bring recording measures in line with England and Wales.[1] In addition to

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[1] Indictable crimes are crimes, usually of a more serious nature, which have to be recorded by the police, whether a suspect is charged or not, and while they have limitations as a measure of the 'real' level of crime, no other measure exists to permit comparisons over long periods of time. Summary crimes, for example, are usually those of a less serious nature (including assaults, minor offences of dishonesty, and road traffic offences) which are dealt with in a Magistrates Court or the District Court in the Republic of Ireland. They are often only recorded officially when a person is charged. They are even less reliable as an indication of levels of crime and ignored here. Since 1987 the Northern Ireland figures refer to notifiable

examining crime profiles at the national level we also compared similar trends for Belfast and Dublin, and for specific categories of crime over time, such as homicide, rape, burglary, drug offences and juvenile crime. Crime figures were located in a sociological profile, which included demographic changes, industrialisation, urbanisation, unemployment, the development of consumership, changes in transportation and other larger social changes, enabling us to examine the social indicators of crime in Ireland.

The problems of using official police statistics on crime are well known (for an overview see Bottomley and Pease, 1986; Breen and Rottman, 1984; Maguire, 1994; O'Mahony, 1993) and the practice of using officially recorded police statistics as an index of the real level of crime is highly suspect. Thus, it was necessary to supplement the official statistics with data from other sources where they existed, such as victim surveys and self-report delinquency studies. Although these measures are not without problems, their incorporation allowed a more critical assessment of the official figures and a better understanding of crime trends. Even so, statistics do not capture people's experiences of crime or how they manage crime locally in the absence of reporting it to the police. Thus, an important dimension of our study was ethnographic research in two closely matched areas of Belfast, enabling us to contrast largely Protestant east Belfast with largely Catholic west Belfast.[2] This research design enabled us to address crime in Ireland at national, city and local levels.

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crimes — these are similar but slightly different from indictable crimes. The variation is marginal. Indictable crimes in the Republic are essentially those for which proceedings can or must be heard before a Crown Court. These include indictable motoring offences, such as reckless driving, which are excluded from notifiable crimes in Northern Ireland. Similarly, all criminal damage is included as indictable crime whereas only those where damage exceeds £200 are included as notifiable. The effect of this is that the number of notifiable crimes in Northern Ireland will be somewhat lower than in earlier periods when indictable crime was used to measure crime levels. Notifiable crimes are, nonetheless, the only measure available and are a useful proxy for the indictable classification used in earlier years. Furthermore, while indictable crime in the Republic of Ireland excludes some commonly committed crimes, it is the only measure on which there is a time series permitting comparison between the North and South of Ireland. Trends in crimes which are excluded from the indictable category in the Republic are dealt with fully elsewhere (see Brewer, Lockhart and Rodgers, 1996). References throughout the text to indictable crime are taken to include the change in nomenclature in Northern Ireland to notifiable crime.

[2] Ethnographic studies of criminal activity are common place, but research on related issues, such as how communities deal with their criminals in the absence of reporting them to the police, are less so. The ethnographic part of the study focused on issues such as people's perceptions of the crime problem in their locality, levels of fear of crime, people's reporting behaviour, local crime management in the absence of reliance on the police, the frames of reference through which people approach crime, such as perceived levels of crime in other societies or historical comparisons with the past, and people's fears about future crime in their areas after the ceasefire.

The recent emphasis in social science on the process of globalisation is affecting criminology, so that crime is increasingly being understood as part of a global process. Modernity, however, is at once both a globalising and localising process because it throws into sharper relief the differences that remain locally under broad social transformations, and criminology also stresses the importance of locality and place on crime ('environmental criminology' gives fullest expression to the importance of place on crime; for summary statements see Bottoms 1994; Bottoms and Wiles 1996). This paper considers some of the environmental dimensions to crime trends in Ireland. After a brief reference to crime at the beginning of the century, it concentrates on a statistical comparison of crime rates for indictable crime in the North and South of Ireland, and Belfast and Dublin, between 1945 and 1995 in order to illustrate some broad convergences in the experience of crime in the island. However, a comparison of crime rates North and South points to a paradox which highlights some of the peculiarities of Ireland. Brief reference is made to the ethnographic material, where we consider the influence of locality on experiences of crime and its management in Belfast. This suggests that criminological attention in Ireland should, in future, be focused as much on localities as on national trends.

Crime in Ireland at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

Irish crime trends at the beginning of the twentieth century show the pattern that reflects crime at the end: it is overwhelmingly urban and dominated by property crime. In this, Ireland is typical of industrial societies generally. Rottman (1989) points out that in the nineteenth century, crime in Ireland was largely agrarian in origin and location, with many disputes over land tenure and boundaries. Interestingly, Irish urbanisation at the beginning of the twentieth century coincided with an initial decline in overall crime rates, although the pattern of crime reflected the influence of urbanisation, with a switch from violent crimes, such as murder and assault, towards property crime and a concentration of crime in urban areas. The large ports of Dublin and Belfast, indeed, had amongst the worst crime rates in the United Kingdom. In 1910, only Liverpool exceeded the indictable crime rates in Dublin and Belfast; Dublin's rate was three times higher than that for London, related to the fact that it was a garrison city and port. But because there were so few urban areas in Ireland, the overall level of crime for the country as a whole was low. Judicial statistics for the year 1915, for example, show a total of only 7,873 indictable offences for the whole of Ireland. Of these 31 per cent occurred in the Dublin Metropolitan Police District and 21 per cent in the Belfast city area. This meant that just over

half of all the crime recorded in Ireland occurred in two urban areas. Extrapolating to the land areas which now form the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, 5,231 (66 per cent) indictable crimes occurred in the South and 2,642 (34 per cent) in the North. Dublin accounted for 47 per cent of the crimes in the South and Belfast 66 per cent of the crimes in the North.

National Trends in Crime 1945 to 1995

Total levels of indictable crime in both jurisdictions for the period 1945 to 1995 reveal that at the beginning of the period, the figures for Northern Ireland were only about one third of those for the Republic (with 5,709 and 16,786 crimes respectively), which is similar to the case in 1915 and to be expected since Northern Ireland is much smaller in population. However, as the period progresses the differential becomes much less. Overall there was no substantial change in either jurisdiction between the late 1940s and the early 1960s, from whence crime increases markedly, although faster for the North. This rise continued almost unabated until 1983 in the Republic, when a peak of 102,387 indictable crimes was recorded. This was by any standards a huge increase from 1945 of more than sixfold. In Northern Ireland a peak came a little later in 1986, when a total of 68,255 indictable crimes was recorded. Since that time there have been modest drop backs, although by 1995 the total had again risen to a new peak of 68,808 crimes in Northern Ireland and 102,484 in the Republic of Ireland.

For comparative purposes, however, it is conventional to compare crime between countries or over periods of time in terms of the crime rate per 100,000 population. This gives a clearer picture than simply using incidence figures. Population estimates can be derived at any given time from census figures.[3] Figure 1 shows a graph of the number of indictable crimes per 100,000 population for both Northern Ireland and the Republic over the period 1945 to 1995. For most of the period up to 1960 the rates are fairly similar, after which Northern Ireland has had a consistently

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[3] There have been regular censuses carried out in both parts of Ireland since the Second World War. In the Republic censuses have taken place every five years since 1946, with the exception of 1976 when the census was delayed until 1979; it resumed its five yearly cycle in 1981. In the North it was carried out every ten years during the period concerned, with an additional one in 1966. It is possible to retrospectively estimate population sizes on a mid-year annual basis by adjusting for births, deaths and migration figures. Clearly such adjustments can introduce a source of error. However, of greater concern is the considerable under-enumeration for the 1981 census in Northern Ireland when, because of civil unrest, large sections of the community refused to make census returns. Nonetheless, the estimates subsequently released are believed to be sufficiently accurate for estimating crime rates per 100,000 population.
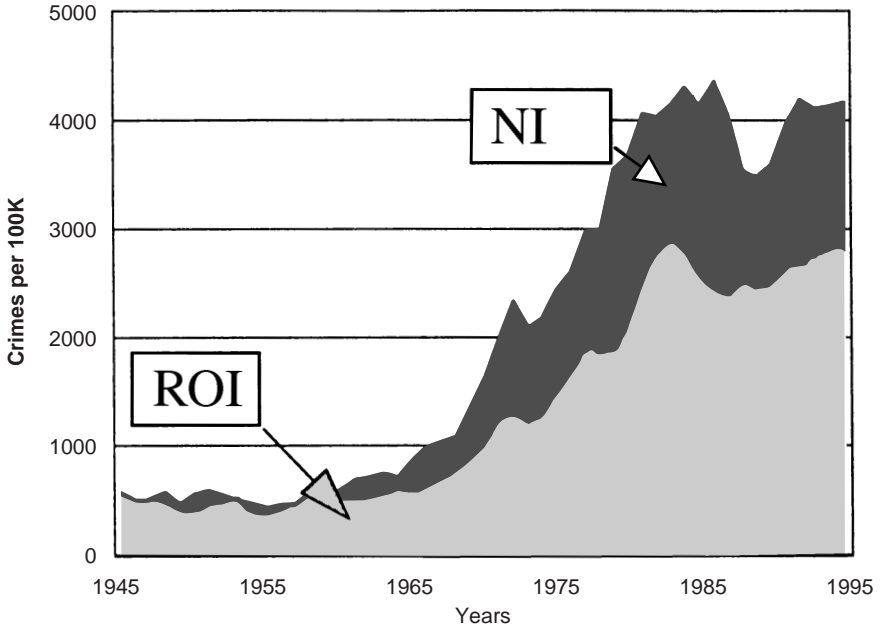
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Figure 1. Indictable/notifiable crimes per 100K population: ROI and NI 1945–1995. *Note*: NI = Northern Ireland, ROI = Republic of Ireland. *Sources*: RUC Chief Constable's Report and Gardai Report on Crime.

higher crime rate, although there have been substantial increases in both jurisdictions. Interestingly, in spite of the common belief that crime in Northern Ireland really only began to increase after the advent of 'the Troubles' in 1969, the rate in 1965 was already 53 per cent greater than that in the Republic. This differential grew to 60 per cent by 1985 and has remained at between half and two-thirds greater than that in the Republic throughout the period since 1965. The crime rate thus suggests there are some divergences in Northern Ireland's experiences of crime compared to the Republic.

Overall the indictable crime rate in the Republic grew by a factor of almost fivefold between 1945 and 1995, while that for Northern Ireland increased by almost ten times during the same period. By any standards these represent very considerable increases in both countries, and even more so for the North, although they would not be out of keeping with rises in the crime rate in other industrial societies over that time span. Comparable figures in England and Wales, for example, are 1,094 crimes per 100,000 in 1950 and 9,465 in 1995, an increase of almost ninefold. The

comparative profiles of indictable crimes per 100,000 population for England and Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are shown in Figure 2.

The comparison with England and Wales is worth emphasising. Crime rates rose in Ireland's nearest neighbour at nearly double the rate of the South, and on a par with the North, despite the quarter-century of civil unrest experienced in Northern Ireland. And the rise starts from a larger base in terms of gross number of crimes. If we look at the profile for recorded crime in England and Wales from 1946 to 1995, there are differences from that for Ireland. Crime has not risen in the two Irelands to the levels in England and Wales, and the rate began to rise steeply almost a decade later in Ireland. This reflects Ireland's late social and economic development; socio-economic changes into which rises in crime have to be located in industrial society occurred later in Ireland. This is characteristic of other islands on the fringe of Europe (for example Cyprus, Malta and Iceland) which have low crime rates in comparison to mainland countries. As another comparative case, crime in Sweden, in some respects a society similar to the Republic and also on the edge of Europe, saw an increase in recorded crime from the early 1950s, fifteen years or so before the Republic, although the rate of increase has been similar (Adler 1983, discusses Ireland as a low crime country).[4]

Variations in Crime at the City Level

It is worth examining trends at city level to demonstrate a further convergence in crime trends in both parts of Ireland and one which shows continuity down the century and further differences with crime trends in England and Wales. Patterns of urbanisation in both parts of Ireland are very similar, with a disproportionate amount of the urban population living in the capital city and surrounds, and crime trends in Belfast and Dublin dominate their respective national profile. The Gardai Commissioner's annual report normally cites the figures for recorded indictable crime in the Dublin area. From this it is possible to build a time series which allows the levels of indictable crime in Dublin to be compared with the levels recorded in the Republic as a whole. This has been done in Figure 3. The two profiles are very similar, demonstrating how strongly the incidence of crime in Dublin influences the profile for the whole country.

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[4] The rate of increase in Sweden between 1950 and 1988 was fivefold, similar to that of the Republic but less steep than for Northern Ireland and England and Wales.
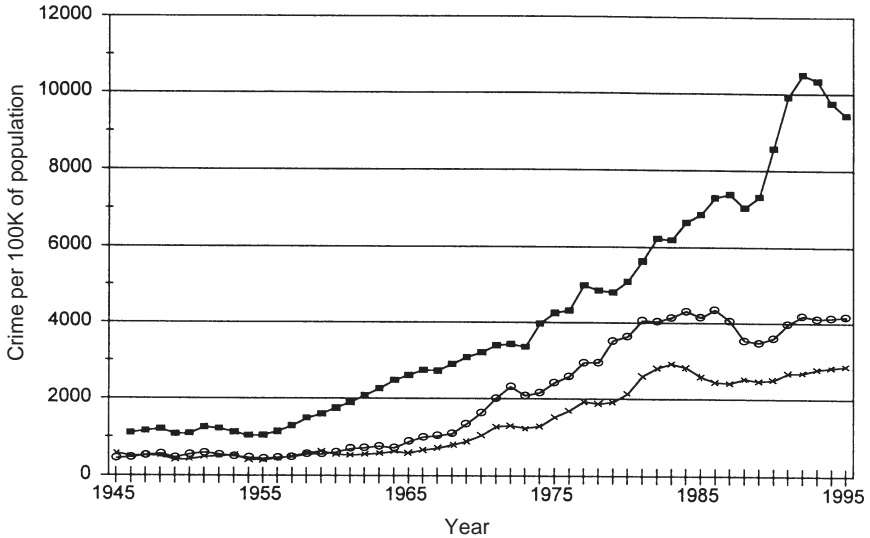
Figure 2. Indictable/notifiable crime per 100K of population: 1945–1995. (■) England and Wales, (○) Northern Ireland, (×) Republic of Ireland. *Sources*: Home Office Crime and Criminal Justice Unit: Research and Statistics Directorate.

Typically the incidence of crime in Dublin has been running at around 50–60 per cent of that of the whole country whereas, based on the 1991 census of population, the Dublin metropolitan area accounts for only 29.8 per cent of the total population.

It is instructive to convert the crime figures into prevalence rates per 1,000 population. Clearly the areas covered have changed boundaries over time, thus working out the population living there can be awkward. In more recent years the Gardai Commissioner's report has given indictable crime rates per 1,000 population by each police division. This is presented in modified form in Figures 4 and 5 for the period 1980–95 covering six geographic areas.[5] As expected the Dublin area has by far the greatest indictable crime rate per 1,000 population, followed by Cork East, which

[5] These areas were chosen to give a spread of different types of division. Limerick and Cork East represent the next largest cities to Dublin; Louth/Meath offers a reasonable sized east-coast division located North of Dublin and going right up to the border with Northern Ireland. It contains the sizable towns of Drogheda and Dundalk, the latter significantly affected by civil unrest in the North. By contrast Mayo is included to represent a large rural division in the West, without any large urban population centres.
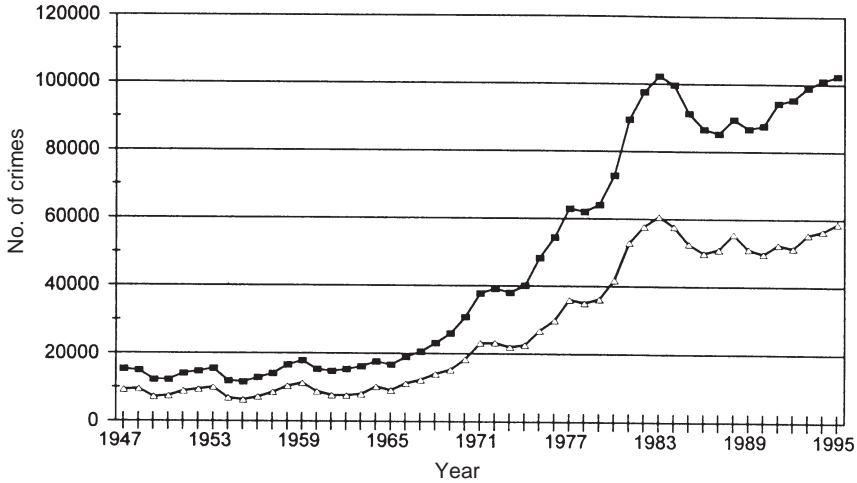
Figure 3. Indictable crime Republic of Ireland and Dublin: 1947–1995. (△) Dublin, (■) Republic of Ireland. *Sources*: Gardai Report on Crime and RUC Chief Constable's Report.

appears to have been experiencing substantial recent increases after a dip in the mid-1980s, which superficial evidence suggests might be due to police action against drug users and pushers. Limerick, by contrast, after peaking in 1982/83, has been showing significant decreases since then. Louth/Meath has had a fairly steady rate, averaging around 20 crimes per 1,000 during the period but still tends to be somewhat higher than the average for the rest of Ireland (excluding Dublin), perhaps reflecting both its relatively high urban population and the fact that the main road between Dublin and Belfast passes through a number of its urban centres. The police division with by far the lowest crime rate is Mayo. The crime rate has been uniformly low during the period and has not risen above 7.95 crimes per 1,000 population (in 1995) and was as low as 4.5 crimes in 1989. Although not shown in the figure, the only police division to rival the low crime rate of Mayo was Clare which had a crime rate of 11.8 in 1995. It is very apparent that crime tends to concentrate in large urban areas in the Republic. This is true for the North as well.

From the inception of the Northern Irish state in 1921 until 1970, the RUC was organised on a county basis, with the addition of two administrative areas for Belfast Borough Council and the Derry city area. There appear to be no published statistics based on these eight administrative areas, making it impossible to dissaggregate crime on a county
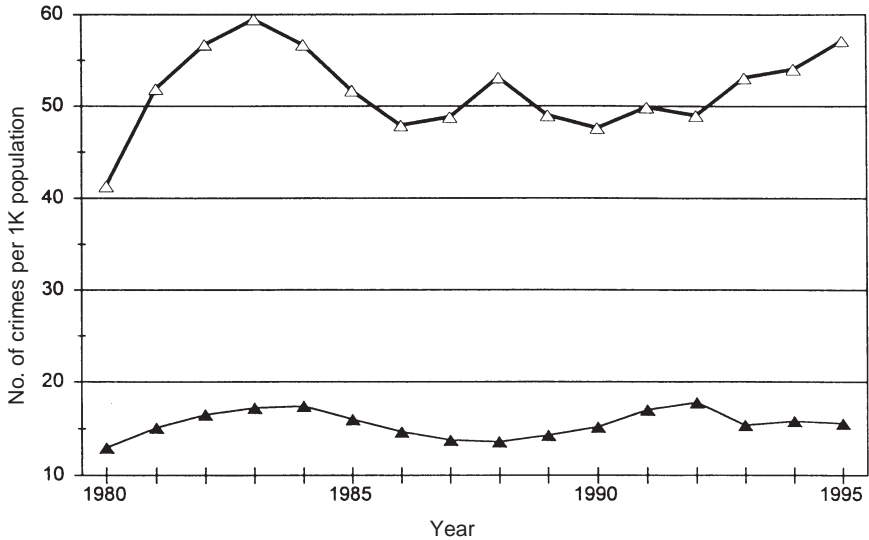
Figure 4. Indictable crime rates per 1K Republic of Ireland: Selected garda divisions. (△) Dublin MA, (▲) Outside Dublin MA. *Source*: Gardai Report on Crime.

basis.[6] Consequently, it is only since the restructuring of the RUC in 1970 that it is possible to get a break down of crime by police divisions. These divisions have been subject to significant changes in boundary since 1970, especially in 1990, which means that it is very difficult to construct a meaningful time series by region. This has been done for 1991 (after new divisional boundary changes) and 1995, as shown in Table 1.

The rank order by division for each year is largely similar. 'A' division recorded the highest number of notifiable offences in both 1991 and 1995, and covers the commercial centre of Belfast and also has a large number of public houses, clubs and places of entertainment. In both years the divisions covering the rural West of the province ('K' and 'L') had the lowest incidences of notifiable crime. If one combines the scores for the four Belfast divisions, Belfast accounts for 61.5 per cent of the total notifiable crime recorded in 1991 and 55 per cent in 1995 while having 42 per cent of the total population of Northern Ireland.

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[6] It is known that at the opening of each county assizes the County Inspector of the RUC would give a report on crime to the presiding judge; however, extensive enquiries with the Public Records Office and the RUC Museum have unfortunately failed to uncover any of these reports.
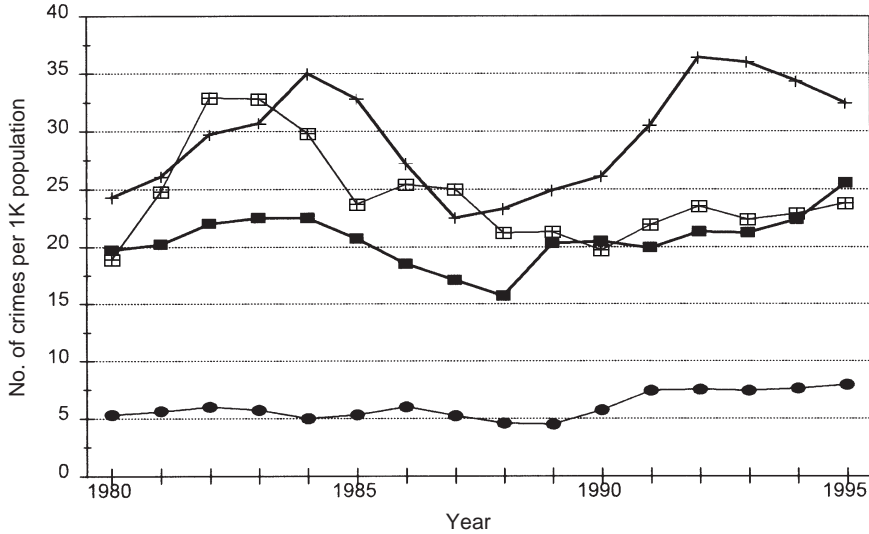
Figure 5.   Indictable crime rates per 1K Republic of Ireland: selected garda divisions.
⊞ Limerick, (+) Cork East, (■) Louth/Meath, (●) Mayo. *Source*: Gardai Report on Crime.

Table 1.   Breakdown of notifiable crime by RUC police divisions 1991 and 1995.

	Police division	Crimes known 1991	Crimes known 1995
A	(Musgrave St, Belfast)	13,838	12,252
B	(Grosvenor Rd, Belfast)	6,469	7,257
D	(Queen St, Belfast)	12,407	10,917
E	(Strandtown, Belfast)	6,315	7,133
G	(Newtownards)	3,429	5,073
H	(Armagh)	3,138	3,657
J	(Portadown)	3,546	3,603
K	(Cookstown)	1,630	2,310
L	(Enniskillen)	2,204	3,301
N	(Strand Road, Derry)	3,700	5,259
O	(Coleraine)	2,729	3,394
P	(Ballymena)	4,087	4,352

Source: Chief Constable's Reports.

This is characteristic of industrial societies generally because modern crime is overwhelmingly urban. However, the crime rate in Ireland's urban areas is still lower than in Britain's cities. If we compare the crime rates per 100,000 population in Belfast and Dublin in recent years, with those in Liverpool and Manchester, for example, we find that Irish cities have considerably lower rates. Figure 6 shows a
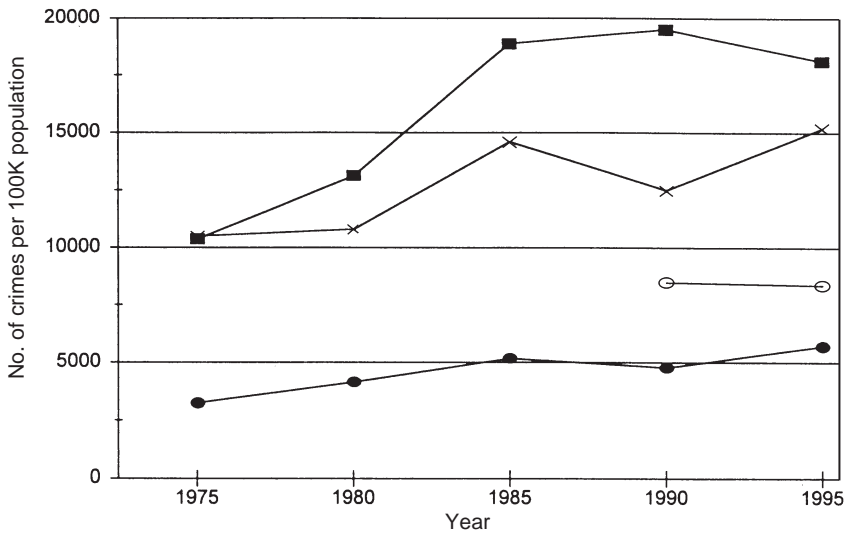
Figure 6.   Indictable/notifiable crimes per 100K: Liverpool, Manchester, Belfast and Dublin. (×) Liverpool, (●) Dublin, (○) Belfast, (■) Manchester. *Sources*: RUC Statistics, Garda Report on Crime, Greater Manchester Police and Liverpool Constabulary.

plot over five-year intervals since 1975 for the four cities concerned, although the Belfast figures only start in 1990 because radical boundary changes from that year make it impossible to construct a time series before this. It can be safely concluded that the lower Irish crime rates are not simply a reflection of lower urbanisation in the island as a whole.

Victimisation Surveys

The crime rate for Dublin may be affected to an unknown degree by the exclusion of some popularly committed crimes, like drug offences, from the classification of indictable crime (although this does not distort statistics for Belfast), and by the under-reporting of crime that occurs in all official statistics. Victimisation surveys, however, support the contention that crime is lower in Ireland than elsewhere in the British Isles and under-reporting appears to occur less in Ireland than in Britain. There is no established tradition of victimisation studies in either part of Ireland, and nothing to compare to the regular national British crime surveys. Summarising the results from successive sweeps of the British crime survey, Maguire (1994) showed that there has been considerable under-reporting

of crime in Britain, although much of the unreported crime is very petty in nature, with roughly one in every four crimes being reported to the police. Crime surveys in Britain also indicate that the increase in crime has been less steep than official statistics suggest, indicating that rapid rises have tended to occur more in those crimes that people feel are serious enough to report or have to report for insurance purposes (such as burglary and auto crime). Crime surveys and official statistics are both dominated by auto crime and both show low levels of violent crime; the main difference is that vandalism is much more prominent in crime surveys than in police statistics, reflecting its annoyance value to members of the public.

There are no time series victimisation surveys in Ireland, but Breen and Rottman (1985) did a pioneering snap-shot study in 1982/83, which allows some conclusions to be drawn. Comparing the victimisation results with Gardai figures for six specific crimes, they estimated that 88 per cent of burglaries are reported, 91 per cent of car theft but only 46 per cent of theft from around dwellings, for example, and 64 per cent of theft from persons. Comparing the incidence of crime in victimisation surveys in Ireland and Britain for four specific crimes, they concluded that the rate of incidence was higher in the Republic in all, save for theft from vehicles. Police statistics suggested the opposite, although differences in comparability of the surveys led them to qualify their remarks and their findings only related to four crimes. More recent surveys confirm the phenomenon of under-reporting but suggest, if anything, that crime rates in the Irish Republic flatter Britain rather than Ireland. Describing research undertaken in 1994, O'Connell and Whelan (1994) estimated that in Dublin the crime rate was 170 per 1,000 rather than the 49 suggested by Gardai figures. However, they argued that the level of disparity between victimisation survey data and official statistics on crime was less in Ireland than in Britain, estimating that one in three crimes are reported in the Republic compared to one in four in British surveys. Indeed, McCullagh claims that reporting in the Irish Republic is even higher than this but the Gardai fail to record many of the reported incidents (1996: 17). Thus, a comparison of crime rates in Ireland and Britain minimises rather than exaggerates the 'real' levels of crime in the two countries.

There is comparable data on Northern Ireland. Data from the Continuous Household Survey, which has fragmentary evidence on crime, shows that crime is under-reported, but suggests that more crime is reported than British surveys reveal. The Northern Ireland Office's 1986 commentary on Northern Irish crime statistics, for example, compared the data from Northern Ireland and Britain on four crimes in the early 1980s. Official statistics in Northern Ireland may under-estimate theft of vehicles

by a factor of two and a factor of three for theft from vehicles. Similar under-reporting occurred in burglary for example, but the comparison shows that three-quarters of crime is reported in Northern Ireland, compared to 68 per cent in Britain, while 55 per cent of the reported incidents were recorded by the RUC compared to 48 per cent by local constabularies in Britain. Victimisation data showed that Northern Ireland experienced much less theft of, and from, vehicles than in Britain and slightly less burglary. This supports the conventional picture of lower crime rates in Northern Ireland compared to Britain. However, caution must be exercised in interpreting these results because the Continuous Household Survey is not designed as a victimisation survey. There are also important differences in methodology and procedure in all surveys, which makes comparison suspect.

Convergences and Paradoxes in Irish Crime Trends

Leaving aside comparisons with Britain, there are noteworthy similarities in crime between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Rates of crime in the two parts of Ireland have a similar profile in incidence and rate of change. Crime rose in both Irelands at nearly the same time, from the late 1950s in the North and the mid-1960s in the Republic. Although increases occurred well before they are believed to have done by lay people, the rise was slightly later than other industrialised societies because of the slower rate of social change in Ireland. Levels of violent crime are higher in Northern Ireland than the South, linked to 'the Troubles' in the North; offences against the person, for example, comprise roughly one per cent of Dublin's total recorded crime, but are about 7 per cent of all recorded crimes in Northern Ireland. Rates for homicide, robbery and rape are all lower in the South. However, overall crime profiles in the two jurisdictions are similar because property crime so dominates crime trends in both societies. This ensures that most recorded crime in both societies is urban based and is not against the person. The main urban conurbation in each society has a disproportionate amount of the nation's crime because they provide an opportunity for property crime, but this skewed effect is about the same for Belfast as for Dublin. Violent crime is not disproportionately skewed toward the conurbations because its opportunity is unaffected by urban concentration. While crime is rising in both parts of Ireland, set in comparison to their European and Western neighbours, crime rates in Northern Ireland and the Republic are still lower, despite the fact that under-reporting of crime occurs in Ireland on a large scale. However, despite these convergences, there are critical differences in the crime rates

of Northern Ireland and the Republic which point to some peculiarities within Ireland.

Between 1945 and 1960, the crime rate per 100,000 population in both parts of Ireland was very similar; it was never more than one third higher in one than the other and mostly only marginally different. They oscillated, sometimes annually, between who had the highest rate. However, from 1960 crime in Northern Ireland grew faster than in the Republic, so that the rate of crime per 100,000 of the population in the North rapidly outstripped that in the Republic, and it has been consistently greater ever since. The outbreak of civil unrest in 1968/69 reinforced what was already an identifiable trend, only widening the gap between their crime rates that had existed for a decade before. For a very long time, Northern Ireland was more industrialised and modernised than the Republic. Today it still remains more urbanised. The Republic's economic and cultural modernisation really only began in the late 1950s, at precisely the time when its crime rate was outstripped by Northern Ireland. Crime rates in the South rose as a result of these social and economic changes (see McCullagh, 1996: 30–59), but they rose faster in the North. There are two puzzles within this one conundrum: why the Republic for a long time had a similar crime rate while ostensibly being a more traditional society than the North, and why they diverged just at the point when the Republic began to throw off its vestiges of tradition. This is paradoxical, for crime rates in Ireland appear to contradict conventional wisdom in the criminological literature that higher crime rates occur with industrialisation and modernisation.

However, the 'traditional' versus 'modern' dichotomy has long been abandoned in the development literature and its application to understanding social change in Ireland is particularly suspect. More complex transitions were occurring which help to explain the paradox of Irish crime rates. This divergence in crime rates must be set against a whole array of socio-economic, demographic and political changes which differentiated the two parts of Ireland. Northern Ireland's industrial development was characterised by its narrow economic base, dependent on the staple industries of shipbuilding, engineering and textiles. While these prospered, so did the Northern Ireland economy relative to the Republic's. Industrial output in Northern Ireland between 1950 and 1959 was almost double that of the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland had up to 75 per cent higher average income per head (O'Dowd, 1995: 140), although comparisons with Britain were to the disadvantage of the Northern Irish, with Northern Ireland always being the United Kingdom's poorest region (see Wichert, 1991: 66). Impressive though it was compared to the South however, Northern Ireland's industrialisation took on traditional forms, being structured by two solidaristic communities segregated by religion. Modernisation

expressed itself in traditional form because it was structured by Northern Ireland's sectarian divide (a view particularly associated with the work of O'Dowd, 1986; 1995). Religious differences ensured the survival of separate communities, and through such processes as endogamy, residential segregation, distinct cultural and political associations and a segregated school system, the social organisation of the two communities ensured their effortless self-perpetuation in traditional forms. Industrialisation helped reproduce these traditional forms by reproducing sectarian division through largely segregated work-forces and communal patterns of recruitment, often reinforced by industrial development being located in one or other of the segregated communities. Industrial development in Northern Ireland thus took place in a way that helped to reproduce two close-knit, homogeneous, traditional communities divided by religion. Relative economic advancement compared to the South, from the 1920s onward, does thus not affect the judgment that Northern Ireland had deep elements of traditionalism, despite its impressive economic growth and development relative to the Irish Republic.

Moreover, the image of the Irish Republic up to the 1960s as a traditional society, often based on outdated anthropological studies of rural Ireland, is overdrawn (for a critical review of this anthropological literature see Fahey, 1995; Hannan, 1979; Tovey, 1992). Peasant proprietorship in rural Ireland was a very recent invention and undermined by massive depopulation. By 1960, researchers found demoralisation in the west of Ireland rather than a strong sense of tradition (see Gibbon, 1973). The typical peasant society of the west of Ireland had been in decline from the 1930s (Hannan, 1979: 18), class differences in rural areas had sharpened and depopulation ensured little continuity or stability in family and occupational structures (something evident in ethnographic fieldwork in the west of Ireland in 1975, see Curtin, 1988). There was massive internal migration to Dublin from rural areas in search of work, and a big turnover in the Dublin population due to emigration. Dublin holds a dominant position in Irish urbanism; half of the entire urban population resides in Dublin and surrounds, and its population is many times higher than the next largest city (see McKeown, 1986: 365). The transitory nature of Dublin's population due to emigration and seasonal labour migration can be unfavourably contrasted with the more stable Belfast population. Similarly, Irish Catholicism was a more 'modern' phenomenon than its continental counterparts in terms of moral and social attitudes and practices. Southern industry was not comprised of the substantial staple traditional sector, with stable patterns of communal recruitment, but more volatile smaller firms, often with short lifespans. The contrast in the crime

rates of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic up to the 1950s can thus be located in the different dynamics of their respective modernisation.

During the 1960s, however, Northern Ireland's industrial sector changed significantly with the decline in Northern Ireland's old staple industries and the growth of the service sector. With the decline of the traditional industries there simultaneously began an erosion of the traditional communities they helped to reproduce. The traditional forms in which industrialisation had up to that point occurred began to be replaced in the 1960s by a service and public sector that did not so readily reproduce close-knit, segregated traditional communities. Recruitment patterns were not so communally based and tended toward the employment of women and part-time labour. The religious social boundaries which defined these traditional communities also started to change as sectarian patterns were challenged in the 1960s by the rise of the Catholic middle class, improvements in Catholic access to higher education and the emergence of campaigns for civil rights. Therefore, Northern Ireland's move from traditionalism was as profound at this time as was that of the Irish Republic. This challenge to tradition in the 1960s coincided with social changes of other kinds. The North was more receptive than the Republic to the influence of British mass popular culture because of television, media and other cultural links with Britain, and thus also to the social changes in which Britain's own crime rise in the 1950s are located. The Republic of Ireland's susceptibility to British popular culture was inhibited, for example, by the fact that television was not introduced until 1962, and then there were only 127,000 television licences purchased in the entire country (McCullagh, 1996: 36), roughly 4.5 per cent of the total population, although the number of licences is likely to have an uncertain relationship to the number of sets.

There was also intensified emigration from the Republic in the 1950s, particularly of young adults, who are also the most likely to offend. The rate of emigration from the Irish Republic in this decade was the highest since the 1880s, and the 1956 population figure was the lowest recorded for any previous census. The South's total population decreased by 5 per cent between the census of 1951 and 1961 compared to an increase of 3.9 per cent in the North; the number of males decreased by 6.2 per cent in the South and increased by 4 per cent in Northern Ireland. Table 2 provides a comparison of the 1951 and 1961 census data for age distribution and shows that the proportion of young males was always smaller in the Republic than Northern Ireland and fell more dramatically in the ten-year period in the South; the number of males in the 25–9 cohort rose by two-thirds between 1951 and 1961 in Northern Ireland and fell by a fifth in the Republic.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of males in age groups 1951–61.

	15–19 years		20–24 years		25–29 years	
	1951	1961	1951	1961	1951	1961
Irish Republic	8.3	8.5	7.0	5.7	5.1	6.6
Northern Ireland	8.3	8.7	7.3	6.8	7.2	11.9

Source: Census 1951, 1961, Northern Ireland and Irish Republic.

Other demographic variations within the island are important. Differences in age structure of the populations can be a significant factor in explaining variations in crime rates. If one country has a higher proportion of children (defined officially as between 0–14 years) in the population it could have a lower rate of crime because such children are less likely to engage in indictable crime (as distinct from anti-social behaviour). The proportion of children (0–14 years) in both parts of Ireland at each common census between 1951 and 1991 reveals that the Republic has had a consistently higher number of children per 100,000 population than Northern Ireland, although the size of the difference is too small to be the major factor in explaining the large divergence in crime rates which emerged from the 1960s onwards.[7]

Political change also differentiated the two Irelands at this time. Once civil unrest broke in Northern Ireland at the end of the decade, the escalation in ordinary crime provoked by the violence widened the gulf in the crime rates between Northern Ireland and the Republic, although, paradoxically, the continuance of sectarian strife ensured that the remnant of these traditional close-knit communities survived, reducing the criminogenic effect of civil unrest. The Irish Republic surged ahead in terms of industrial development in the 1970s and 1980s: the industrial centre of gravity of the island shifted to the South by the mid-1970s, while Northern Ireland experienced continued deindustrialisation. Yet the crime rate in the Republic did not catch up that of the North because of civil unrest in Northern Ireland which increased the levels of ordinary crime. Therefore, crime in the South was on a par with the North before 1960 because its traditionalism was more apparent than real and because of the North's deep elements of traditionalism despite its apparent modernisation and urbanisation, and crime grew slower after 1960 because of the socio-

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[7] Furthermore, the relatively large difference in number of children in the 1981 census should be treated with caution because of the under-enumeration which occurred in this census for Northern Ireland.

economic, demographic and political circumstances which differentiated it from Northern Ireland.

Locality and Place in Belfast

This section reports on some aspects of the ethnographic data.[8] It will not discuss criminal activity in Belfast but the related issue of crime management, which is much neglected in the criminological literature. This focus helps to inform interpretation of crime trends in Ireland because it illustrates how crime in Belfast is differentially experienced among people and places and how crime statistics are socially constructed by the public's willingness to report crime to the police. This is of particular importance in Northern Ireland because crime management is contested. 'Official' crime management by the RUC is challenged by 'popular' or local forms, and a consideration of 'popular' crime management in Belfast confirms the marked differences that exist in the local experiences of crime within one city, let alone in Ireland as a whole compared to other industrialised societies. It illustrates that some areas within the same city have had different fortunes under modernity, making them better able to respond to or cope with criminogenic processes. The local experience of crime in Belfast is that the criminogenic tendencies of social change are being mediated in some localities by social processes which reflect the persistence of social control, slowing the rate of social breakdown, with obvious effects on crime and its management.

In effect, very traditional communities have persisted in the North, based on the traditional forms within which its modernisation occurred in earlier decades. This helps to explain why Belfast, for example, has a lower crime rate per 100,000 of population than Liverpool or Manchester, despite a quarter-century and more of civil unrest, although the rate is higher than that of Dublin. It is not just the case, therefore, that the persistence of traditional communities in Belfast displaces crime elsewhere (which it does), it also helps relatively to suppress it and thus counter-act

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[8] Data were collected exclusively by the use of in-depth interviews, which were conducted solely by one of the authors. Interviews were conducted with 115 individuals and with ten groups. Interviews were recorded on tape, except where people objected. There are ninety-two hours of tape recordings. Two closely matched study areas were selected, based on police sub-divisional areas, one each in largely Protestant east Belfast and largely Catholic west Belfast, although we also gave attention to enclave areas within each. We worked through local community groups, enabling us to select a cross-section of client groups and avoid political unrepresentativeness. Both study areas included a variety of housing areas, extending from inner city to suburban areas. Interviews took place over twelve months between 1994/95, with six months spent in each area. The paramilitary ceasefire pertained for most of this period, facilitating candour amongst respondents.

the criminogenic tendencies that exist in the city. These traditional social forms have a profound effect on crime management. By the local management of crime, we mean those structures in the local neighbourhood and community which have a role in preventing and suppressing crime and offer alternative ways of dealing with it once committed. Not all localities in our two study areas contained these structures, so that popular crime management is a localised phenomenon, structured by processes embedded primarily in the communal structures and class dynamics of certain neighbourhoods within our two study areas. Most elderly respondents sensed a loss of community, but other respondents in certain neighbourhoods recognised that community structures in the locality had survived, such as extended family kinship patterns, a strong sense of neighbourliness and a vivid sense of locality and community identity. It is within these social processes that 'popular' crime management is sociologically embedded, illustrating that it extends beyond the policing role of paramilitary organisations.

Senses of community and neighbourhood identity are very localised, contingent upon the frames of reference people use, the locality in which they live and personal experiences of the quality of relationships that exist in their neighbourhood. Local experiences of community were mediated by class, being stronger in the inner city and working-class neighbourhoods in our study areas, and by the senses of community that survived in these localities. Social change, population relocation and housing redevelopment have affected localities in varying degrees, but not everywhere have they destroyed a sense of community and local identity.

People from most west Belfast neighbourhoods portray the areas as having a strong sense of community. Community is not experienced in the same way as it was in the past, but most people in west Belfast, save the elderly, recognise that it has not been lost. This sense of community is on the whole weaker in parts of east Belfast, where there is a sense of greater social change, housing relocation and social dislocation. Neighbourhoods there have not lived under the same sense of siege. Far greater numbers of residents from the east Belfast study area reflected on a decline in the sense of community in their neighbourhood. A resident said, 'I think the community spirit is not as strong now. People tend to keep themselves to themselves. Years ago everybody minded everybody else's business, if you saw a child misbehaving you disciplined it'. However, there are localities in east Belfast where people commented that community structures had survived. Some people live in working-class neighbourhoods where the old streets have not been redeveloped. One resident described his area: 'a lot of good living people, close-knit families, not a lot of movement, so people have been here for several generations, there is a stable social fabric.'

Local crime management is rooted in the social processes related to community and local identity, neighbourliness and an extended family kinship pattern. These processes provide, first, for the survival of a local moral economy. The values of this moral economy were expressed most frequently in the form that 'you don't steal from your own'. This runs entirely counter to local crime surveys in Britain, which show that most crime is committed by locals from the neighbourhood. In summarising results from crime surveys, Maguire (1994: 265–6) argued that most crime in Britain is predatory, it involves a continuing relationship between offender and victim, and the most vulnerable are people in council-owned dwellings primarily from people like themselves. Members of a mother and toddler group on a large housing estate in west Belfast explained, however, that 'you would get people in the private estates to talk more about crime, they're more burgled than we are. Off the record, we are sort of cocooned from criminals, they don't steal from their own'. An east Belfast worker with young offenders repeated the view: 'individuals who commit the crime have a lot of respect for the area that they live in, they don't break in in their own area.' This moral economy therefore rules out crime in certain close-knit areas, at least by its own local criminals, displacing it elsewhere. But it also rules out crime against certain categories of people who are protected by the local moral economy. Thus, several people identified that crimes against children, the elderly and Church property were defined as beyond acceptable bounds locally. An east Belfast community worker said of his neighbourhood: 'this is a parochial community around here and if the crime is against a pensioner, nobody will be spared. I have known a case where a parent actually contacted the police when they found out that their son had broken into a pensioner's house.'

This moral economy only works for criminals who are from the area and who share the code. Local crime is often perpetrated by outsiders who are escaping the constraints of the moral economy in their area or by people who do not subscribe to the code. The anti-social behaviour by local youths inflicted on elderly people, for example, seems to suggest that the values are not shared by all. Changes are occurring in the moral economy as structural adaptations to the changed circumstances young unemployed people find themselves in, and some people comment on the decline in the ethical code of local lags. But even if local criminals defy the code, the existence of a moral economy results in greater outrage, with its knock-on effects of increased effort to apprehend them by the community itself or by the paramilitaries, or successfully overcoming resistance to involve the police in official crime management.

Another factor involved in local crime management that arises from the survival of community structures is the existence of a 'local grapevine', a

network of informal contacts which passes on knowledge about perpetra-
tors, the whereabouts of stolen property, and of the sorts of people who can
best apprehend or provide immediate satisfactory justice in the absence of
reporting it to the police. The grapevine is also the mechanism by which the
local moral economy is socially disseminated. As a resident from west
Belfast said, 'if a crime happened against an old person or a child, maybe
if it happened in [name of area], everybody would be talking about it'. A
young adult from west Belfast indicated how the grapevine worked even on
a large estate. 'Although this is a large estate, there is always somebody who
knows something, always somebody. There is not too many people that
keep things to themselves. There is always "did you hear about that", and
then it works its way around the grapevine.' The grapevine ensures that
knowledge is passed on to victims or even the relatives of perpetrators,
which is where neighbourliness and an extended family kinship network
come in particularly useful in local crime management. A very young girl,
associated with a youth club in west Belfast, described how this network of
contacts constrained her. Referring to possible victims of crime she said,
'they would always know who you are or know your ma or something. This
is a close knit community and people often do tell your ma or friends of
your ma sees you'.

This permits do-it-yourself policing. Many respondents told of how
they responded as victims when they knew the perpetrator as a result of
the local grapevine. Some went straight to the paramilitaries, some to the
police. Others, however, used the neighbourhood's network of informal
contacts to confront the parents. A member of a women's group in west
Belfast, explained how she would respond: 'you wouldn't like to see a child
get punished in a beating, you wouldn't like to see your own harmed, so we
went around and let the parents know.' A women from east Belfast said the
same, 'you would just go to the family'. Do-it-yourself policing thus
depends for its efficacy precisely on the survival of neighbourhood
networks.

Because a sense of community survives, the neighbourhood is able to be
readily mobilised to manage crime locally. One of the resources that can be
mobilised is the remnant of legitimate authority which community repre-
sentatives still possess, such as teachers, priests and pastors, and commu-
nity and youth workers. This authority has diminished compared to the
past, since many people experience social change as a decline in respect for
authority among the young, but the data reveal that many of these figures
are still drawn into the management of crime. A youth worker in east
Belfast, for example, explained how local people have come to her to
deal with specific incidents concerning youngsters rather than go to the
police. Clerics repeated the point. A priest in west Belfast said he was like a

policeman sometimes, being called out before the RUC: 'the people wouldn't ring the police, they'd ring you directly, you got out and you went and dealt with it.' Other community resources that can be mobilised in local crime management are the skills, finances and manpower of community organisations in the development and servicing of local initiatives against crime.

Social changes wrought by twenty-five years of civil unrest therefore have clearly not eroded some forms of social control in certain parts of Belfast, furnishing effective mechanisms for popular crime management in some localities. Social change has facilitated local crime management in another way, because different mechanisms have developed as adaptations to new structural conditions. Most notable of these new mechanisms are the paramilitary organisations. Their role in local crime management is heavily conditional upon the social processes associated with community structures. These networks disseminate the information that makes paramilitary policing possible and efficacious, and provides the push for the paramilitary organisations to engage in it in the first place.

Some respondents extolled the contribution made by the paramilitaries to the relatively low crime rate in their area: 'I think it is to the credit of the IRA that crime has been kept so low, because it has nothing to do with the RUC, absolutely not.' In east Belfast the paramilitaries were described by several people as the unofficial police force. 'The paras get things done', said one youth worker, 'things are done'. Some of the policing methods by which paramilitaries 'get things done' depend in part upon social processes associated with community structures in local neighbourhoods. One method is that of 'shaming', particularly associated with Republican paramilitaries, which requires for its effectiveness that communal disgrace will be experienced as a constraint by offenders. In west Belfast people have been forced to stand in public places (especially outside churches and supermarkets) with placards; some are tied to lamp posts to ensure they stay put. There is also a primitive 'house protection scheme', whereby paramilitary organisations place a sticker in the window of a house warning that criminals enter at their peril. Mostly, however, people perceive force as the main policing method of the paramilitaries. Some people perceive that this force comes in proportional degrees depending on the circumstances of the crime and the criminal background of the perpetrator, although others claim it to be quite arbitrary (on the gradation in paramilitary punishment beatings see Thompson and Mulholland, 1995). These informal disciplines almost appear as a form of customary law in a situation where state law is deemed to be without legitimacy or effect, making them similar to disciplines used by indigenous groups in North America and Australasia.

Local crime management is thus a phenomenon embedded in communal structures that are localised to specific places in Belfast, depending upon experiences of class, communal development, population relocation and other social transformations locally. Civil unrest, however, has also played its part in differentiating local experiences of crime management. In certain neighbourhoods 'the Troubles' have had the effect of inhibiting the processes of social dislocation and community breakdown. In some areas where it is most intense, civil unrest has produced a voluntary ghettoisation by restricting geographic mobility and population relocation, producing socially homogeneous districts in religious, ethnic and class terms. In-group solidarity has been reinforced by conflict with an out-group. This cohesion is reflected in structures such as the survival of extended kinship networks, close-knit neighbourhood structures and a sense of living in solidaristic communities, with their own local moral economy. Other ethnographies of crime in working-class neighbourhoods, for example, show them to be less vibrant and communal as equivalent localities in our study areas (see, for example, Robins, 1992, and Williams, 1989). Some of this is due also to benevolent housing policy (Northern Ireland has not seen the infamous tower block to any great extent) or employment restrictions on geographic mobility. Northern Ireland is also small, so families tend not to be disrupted even where geographic mobility occurs. For all these reasons, some localities in Belfast have not experienced social dislocation and breakdown.

Conclusion

Crime rates in Ireland have some interesting features when set against those of neighbouring countries, and a comparison between the two parts of Ireland illustrates how crime needs to be located in the socio-economic, demographic and political circumstances which differentiate North and South. Crime trends in Ireland, however, also need to be contextualised by understanding the social behaviours and communal structures which differentiate localities in modern Ireland. The local experience of crime in some areas of Belfast, for example, is that the criminogenic tendencies of social change are being mediated by social processes which reflect the persistence of social control, slowing the rate of social breakdown, with obvious effects on crime and its management. The future of criminological research in Ireland lies in identifying these micro-environmental variations in order to better understand the social behaviours that go to make up trends in Irish crime rates.

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