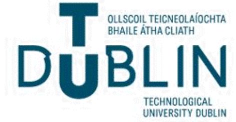

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'Still Playing that Game'

An Ethnography of
Young People, Street Crime and Juvenile Justice
in an Inner-City Dublin Community

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Dublin Institute of Technology

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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October 2007

Abstract

Crime must be understood as a facet of class-cultural interaction, given that the majority of the convicted are young, urban, disadvantaged males, while the criminal law enshrines and enforces what could be viewed as middle-class behavioural expectations. Class-cultural dynamics have become increasingly complex in late modernity, however, with traditional certainties and class boundaries becoming blurred and indistinct. This thesis examines the social and cultural factors underlying youth offending and justice in an inner-city Dublin community through an ethnographic treatment of the various actors in a locality which has undergone significant change in recent years. *The Crew*, a group of young offenders, are shown to adhere to a 'rough' or 'street' variant of working-class values, born of the experience of particularly intense disadvantage and exclusion. The group's base is in the *Northstreet* community, which historically condoned a level of petty criminality as a response to the absolute poverty experienced by its residents. Internal divisions, economic resurgence and urban renewal have altered the way of life for the majority of the residents of this public housing complex, which has rendered the young offenders both a symbolic reminder of the past, and an obstacle to community leadership attempts to represent contemporary *Northstreet* as a 'respectable' area. While developments in policing strategies have in turn blurred the traditional opposition between the Gardaí and working-class communities, *The Crew* and the police force nevertheless continue to construct each other as opponents, engaging in a game-like conflict fuelled by the clash of 'street' and 'decent' values. In turn, the state's attempt to divert *The Crew* from offending through 'welfare' juvenile justice represents an effort to replace 'street' values with 'respectable' attitudes to crime, education and employment. Youth crime and justice can thus be understood as a 'game': an interaction between opposing, class-based value systems complete with encultured responses to the behaviour and beliefs of the 'other'.

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of PhD, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for an award in any other Institute or University.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the Institute's guidelines for ethics in research.

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Signature ______________________ Date 05/02/08

Jonathan Ilan

'Those they leave behind on the streets, who experience "real life", find heroic status eluding them in the daily grind of survival, while the ethnographer, who was nearly arrested, almost beaten up, and didn't quite go crazy, builds a career on a brief youthful flirtation with the terrible immediacy of life amongst the lower orders.'

Dick Hobbs in Dick Hobbs and Tim May (eds.), *Interpreting the Field: Accounts of Ethnography,* 1993.

Dedicated to:

Adam, Mano, Wacker, Macker, Paddy, Byrnesy, Keano and Philo

'The Crew'

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The PhD 'journey' is solitary, though I was heartened along the way by fellow 'postgrads' at the DIT and elsewhere: Kalis Pope, Cathy Kelleher, Siobhan Keegan, Mary O'Kane, Sinead Freeman, Denis McCrann, Maria McDermott, Tara Lehane, Michael Egan, Matt Bowden, Anne Brunton, Rosie Meeks, Dr Michelle Butler and numerous others. Without exaggeration I can say that this thesis would never have been completed without the love and encouragement of my mother Helen Aufochs, and my sister and father: Natalie and Yossi. I am grateful also to Anne Maree Barry for her striking photography and Emma O'Flaherty for her insight into youth culture and consumption patterns. Finally, a mention for my own 'male peer group' who are a source of insight in and of themselves: Eddie, Paddy, Skec, Dave, Charlie as well as Trisha, the 'peripheral members' and my friends elsewhere.

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Chapter 1
Still Playing that Game: Crime, Class and Justice

All names used in this study are pseudonyms, to protect the identity of participants, street names have been altered and wherever possible employment positions obfuscated.

1.1 Crime as Class-Cultural Interaction

Crime is inextricably linked to social class. Perceptions and definitions of behaviour as acceptable, or otherwise, are mediated through norms and values, which themselves are shaped by 'class-cultural' positions. Differing social realities over numerous generations have moulded distinct sets of cultural norms within the various classes and these continue to shift as socio-economic change occurs. All members of society are subject to the same criminal law, yet these laws represent a specific value system in and of themselves. Within the rather oblique categories of 'guilty' and 'innocent' that are so significant to their function, little cognisance is given to the complex class-cultural exchange that underpins the bulk of criminal convictions. The criminal law is designed to safeguard society's dominant behavioural norms, preserving hegemonic notions of social order. Crime is constructed as threatening social stability and quality of life and is predominantly the domain of the young, urban and disadvantaged male.

What underpins this criminological truism? Is there something within the experience of young working-class males that encourages criminality, or is it that wider society has singled them out for constant censure? Perhaps the more pertinent question is: why has this situation remained the case since the inception of modern criminology? The consistency of this pattern points to the existence of fundamental differences in the cultural norms of young working-class men and those dominant in wider society. Moreover, the enduring nature of the pattern suggests that society's response to criminality does little to redress this gulf. There is some manner of circularity at play, where, despite shifts in both socio-economic climate and practices in criminal justice, it remains young working-class men who constitute the bulk of those who come before the criminal courts.

1.1.2 Thesis Aims

Ireland lacks a tradition of empirical research into the phenomenon of criminality (Brewer, 2000: 4) to the point where criminology has been referred to as its 'absentee discipline' (Rolston and Tomilson, 1982: 25). Whilst Irish criminology provides a profile of offending in Ireland and offers insight into society's response to it, a reliance on state sources of data and samples has ensured that the perspective of those directly involved in criminality has been overlooked. This serves to reinforce dominant conceptions of crime and justice and does not readily facilitate the formulation of radical critique. In particular, Ireland lacks a tradition of first-hand, empirical treatments of offending, which unearth culturally based norms and values informing criminality. Calls to address this lacuna have gone out from leading scholars (McCullagh, 1986: 144; O'Mahony, 2000: 10). This thesis is based primarily on ethnographic research with *The Crew*, a particular group of young offenders, *Northstreet*, their community and with those agents of wider society who are employed to address their law-breaking: the Gardaí and 'welfare' juvenile justice professionals. The aim is, firstly, to describe the behaviour of the young men in a fashion that recognises the historical, social and cultural factors that inform it. Secondly, considering the modus operandi of those professionals paid to intervene in the behaviour of the young men provides an opportunity to highlight the cultural norms and values espoused by wider society. Ultimately, through analysing the interactions between the two parties, the interplay of cultural norms which is at the foundation of the Irish criminal justice system can come to light.

1.1.3 Thesis Structure

The remainder of **Chapter One** is concerned with reviewing literature which provides an account of the relationship between class and crime in Ireland, before focusing specifically on ethnographic perspectives on youth crime from international sources. **Chapter Two** considers the use of ethnographic methods as a tool of criminological inquiry and accounts for the research process that yielded the data utilised in this thesis.

Chapter Three is concerned with *The Crew*, a group of young offenders, their behaviour and cultural orientations. **Chapter Four** locates *The Crew*'s values within the context of their parent culture, through a consideration of *Northstreet*, their home community, and treats of the nature of working-class lifestyles in an era of urban renewal and mass consumption. **Chapter Five** examines wider society's 'front line' response to criminality in the form of policing, probing the intricacies of 'cop culture' and mapping the class-cultural exchange taking place between the force and residents of *Northstreet*. **Chapter Six** demonstrates how 'welfare' approaches to youth justice, as observed within this study, are underwritten by notions of normative conversion and thus constructed by its recipients as unwarranted interference. **Chapter Seven** places the arguments made as well as the actors and situations introduced by this study into a coherent conclusion.

1.2 Class and Crime in Ireland

The following material briefly considers the significance of class in Irish society, before examining how it is reflected in prison populations and in the manner in which criminality is constructed and managed in Ireland. Though this thesis is centrally concerned with notions of 'class', this is not in a deeply Marxist or structuralist sense, but rather focuses on the manner in which individuals and groups construct values and meanings based around their lived experience of social structure. As will become evident through the content of this thesis, notions of class are embedded but mutable, subject to changing social structure, cultural reproduction and the impact of individual biography. Historically, the term 'working-class' is associated with the large swathes of western society engaged in manufacturing. This is somewhat complicated in a post-industrial, late modern era, which features less stable employment in the service sector and an identifiable population of the 'long-term unemployed'. As such, no fixed definition of the terms 'working' or 'middle' class can be offered, except in the broadest sense. 'The working class *is* the bottom half of… (the) gradient no matter how its atoms move' (Willis, 1977: 129), that section of the population marked by the relative lack of social, cultural and economic capital. The finer points of definition emerge from the ethnographic material, which considers with nuance the professed and exhibited values of both the 'working-class' community and 'middle-class' professionals.

1.1.3 Class Categorisation in Irish Society

Irish society has been traditionally antipathetic to notions of class-consciousness, which was historically constructed as a facet of British social hierarchy (Breen and Whelan, 1996: 1). The legacy of colonial rule created a situation in which tensions were focused on foreign 'oppressors' as opposed to inequalities within the indigenous population. Shared commitment to the sanctity of Irish national identity can create the illusion of a classless society. Nevertheless, it has been noted that whilst 'class boundaries in Ireland are less ritualised' than in others, there remains a significant stratification and rigid limits on social mobility (ibid.). Irish economic advancement and the development of its class structure has been dissimilar to most other Western democracies, having been heavily reliant on agriculture prior to the 1960s, and undergoing atypically rapid industrialization in the succeeding years (Whelan, 1995).

In recent times, the strength of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy has transformed a nation, once suffering from chronic fiscal underachievement, into a strong contender in the global market (see generally: Sweeney, 1998; O'Hearn, 1998). The socio-economic effects have been rapid and far reaching. Ireland has become predominantly a nation of white-collar workers; employment in the services, managerial, professional, associate professional and sales sectors have grown by 49.2%, 47.4%, 46.7%, 34.7% and 32.4% respectively in the period 1981-1995, and fallen in the agricultural and labouring sectors by 23.7% and 36.1% respectively (Tansey, 1998: 41). Social mobility has risen dramatically, the middle-classes have swollen and consumption has become something of a national obsession (McWilliams, 2005). There is a tendency towards national self-congratulation, to place blind faith in the 'rising tide' notion of economic success, and to assume that the Celtic Tiger is gnawing on the bones of whatever class tensions that may have previously existed[1]. Whilst Irish society maintains an informal air, suggesting a high degree of equality, class remains a potent factor 'understood in terms of a gross differentiation

[1] This is particularly clear in the McWilliams text, a piece of popular sociology that became a national best-seller, in which he attacks the 'commentariat' for importing doom and gloom through constant reference to divides in Irish society.

between the majority – the "more or less middle classes" and an "underclass"' (Tovey & Share, 2000: 160), 'the duality of a contented majority versus a socially excluded minority' (Allen, 1999).

The benefits of the improved economic situation have not been universally distributed throughout Irish society. Measures of relative poverty have increased (Kirby, 2002: 57), suggesting a growing divide between rich and poor in Ireland (see also: Nolan et al., 2002). As the middle-class grows, through incorporating the more successful components of the working-class, what remains is an 'under-class'. There is a temptation to view class in Ireland as having leapt from irrelevance due to inconsistency with dominant views of national identity, to irrelevance in a society that perceives itself as almost entirely middle-class. To do so, however, glosses over the continuing financial struggle faced by individuals and communities who are now labelled with the dual stigmas of poverty and failure to capitalise on recently available opportunities (see: Saris et al., 2002). Moreover, those whose economic status is now deemed 'middle-class' do not by virtue of this fact simply exchange their deeply encultured norms and values. A simplistic view of class in Irish society neglects a detailed analysis of differences in class-based beliefs and aspirations. Certain areas of Irish life continue to manifest a pervasive tension between the classes.

1.1.4 The Proto-typical Irish Offender

Despite the dearth of Irish criminology, the residents of Ireland's prisons can be typified as 'disadvantaged'. There is a particular paucity of data on young offenders in Ireland, owing to a lack of data management systems and uncoordinated record keeping between government departments (Kilkelly, 2006: 3-5). Historically, the General Prison Board Reports on the Borstal Institutions was the principal source of information on youth crime in the state until 1959. Though based on anecdotal experience as opposed to scientific enquiry they highlighted the problems of those youth who were incarcerated: lack of skills and employment, homelessness and stigmatisation (Burke, Carney & Cooke, 1981: 31-33). A survey of boys incarcerated in St. Patrick's Institution in Dublin demonstrated that inmates tended to be young men from large families in poor urban

areas, with below average intelligence and educational attainment, whose fathers held unskilled or semi-skilled occupations and who committed crime in a group rather than individually (Flynn, McDonald & O'Doherty, 1967: 223). The Kennedy Report (1970) similarly found that the residents of juvenile penal institutions suffered 'deprivation' and were 'generally backward' (Kilkelly, 2006: 9). More recent research conducted by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform echo these findings, and showed that in a sample of 84 young people before the Dublin Children Court, 80% live in public housing (Kilkelly, 2006: 11). Significantly, research is unequivocal in identifying males as the principal participants in youth crime (Kilkelly, 2005: 16).

The pattern in youth offending applies also to adults. A study of Mountjoy Prison inmates (O'Mahony, 1993) confirmed the belief that socio-economic disadvantage was prevalent amongst the population of Ireland's largest prison. The study found that the typical Mountjoy prisoner was in his early to late thirties, from a large family in an area of disadvantage. They tended to work in menial jobs and were frequently unemployed, having typically left school at the age of fourteen or earlier. Typically they received a first conviction at age sixteen and spent time in a juvenile institution (1993: 224-225). A more recent study echoes these findings, indicating that those appearing at a Dublin District Court on criminal charges tend to be from disadvantaged areas (Bacik et al., 1998). Low socio-economic status, or class, is the factor common to all of these data sets. Sugrue (2006) argues that particularly disadvantaged lower-class males form a 'prison class', whose values support further offending and resistance to the agents of justice. All of the above studies provide empirical evidence for what can be described as popular wisdom: young lower-class males form the majority of the prison population. Offending is not however, the exclusive preserve of the disadvantaged. McCullagh argues that the crimes of the middle-classes are underrepresented in both crime statistics and the national consciousness (1996: 84). Thus, whilst it is clear that working-class masculinity has some connection to crime, consideration must be given to the extent to which this is amplified by popular public conceptions of 'the criminal' and the functioning of the criminal justice system.

1.1.5 Youth Crime in Ireland, Public Perceptions and their Consequences

Irish crimes rates have traditionally been low in comparison to other western democracies. They rose significantly between the 1960s (in 1960 the Gardaí recorded 15,375 indictable offences) and 1980s (in 1983 the Gardaí recorded 102,387 indictable offences) and have levelled out during the 1990s (in 1999 the Gardaí recorded 81,274 indictable offences) (O'Donnell and O'Sullivan, 2001: 10-13). In 2005 the Gardaí recorded 101,659 'headline' offences[2], which must take into account significant increases in the population and a new method of categorisation for the purpose of statistics. Youth-crime over the last three years (2003-2006 approx.) has accounted for approximately 20,000 recorded (including 'non-indictable') offences per annum (Kilkelly, 2006: 16), and must be thus understood as relatively rare in frequency. Moreover, the crime of the young tends to be of lower severity, with property offences and larceny accounting for 94% of total offences committed by the under 21 age group between 1976 and 2002 (Kilkelly, 2006: 17). Nevertheless, the issue of youth crime has an ability to dominate both media headlines and the public consciousness. The death of a Garda under a car driven by two joyriding youths contributed to a heated public debate which provided some of the impetus for the funding of this PhD[3]. Recently, the fire bombing of a car in Moyross, Limerick, injuring two young children, has ignited further controversy and has added a heightened dimension of intensity to the debate on 'tearaway teens'[4]. Public sentiment may not reflect reality. The Irish media disproportionately reports on crime, in particular those of a serious and violent nature (O'Connell, 1999).

The illusion of a lawless society is propagated in the face of evidence to the contrary. 'Moral panics' (Cohen, 1972) are manufactured in this manner, particularly in the aftermath of focal incidents. Such was the case when the murder of journalist Veronica Guerin by underworld gang figures in 1996 prompted the promulgation of robust, though arguably excessive legislation (Meade, 2000; O'Donnell & O'Sullivan, 2001; Hamilton,

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[2] Source: Central Statistics Office Website http://www.cso.ie/statistics/headline_offences.htm, accessed 25/09/2007.

[3] See: RTE television documentary Prime Time, *Gardaí Killed in Crash with Stolen Car*, 16/04/2002.

[4] *New Curbs on tearaway teens*, Dearbhail McDonald and Richard Oakley, The Sunday Times, Irish Edition, 20/11/2005.

2002; Daly, 2003). Contemporary concerns are indiscriminate, failing to account for qualitative differences between adult and youth criminality, and manifest in the notion that respectable society is under assault from the criminal 'Other'. Rather than empirical criminological knowledge guiding legislative development, it is politicians catering to a fearful public (O'Donnell, 2001: 81). Ireland shows many signs of exhibiting the 'culture of control' (Garland, 2000) where irrational concerns around criminality generate a desire for punishment and control over rehabilitation, and where political and commercial forces[5] within the state mobilise to sate it[6]. The respectable classes are adamant: 'send a tough message to the criminals that they will not be tolerated'[7].

Respectable society tends to rally in the face of a perceived threat from working-class youth. This is a pattern that has existed since the inception of industrial society (Pearson, 1985). Incidents that are widely covered in the media and hold public attention become flash-points of class-cultural tension. Tackling youth crime becomes tied up with the struggle to 'restore or reproduce social order' (Bowden, 2006). Irish society has a tendency to downplay the crimes of the elite, choosing to focus on 'the criminals we want', those on the bottom rungs of the social structure (McCullagh, 1995; Kilcommins et al., 2004: 131). It is not merely that the young-working-class male commits offences, as his middle-class counterpart seems to do likewise[8], but that he rejects the norms otherwise hegemonic in society. The report of the Interdepartmental Group on Urban Crime and Disorder concluded that 'authority itself appears to be under attack and ... unless the trend is "nipped in the bud", all of the conventions on which ordered society is based will be put in jeopardy with extremely serious consequences for society as a whole' (Government of Ireland 1993: 26). Respectable society crusades to press its values on

[5] Employment in the private security sector has grown by 16.1% in the period 1981-1995 (Tansey 1998: 41).

[6] It is important to note that Irish society departs markedly from Garland's model in terms of departing from a welfare based penal system to one which is centrally concerned with crime control, although arguably in contemporary times both Ireland's prison population and changing criminal law are indeed demonstrating a number of factors which comply with this authors paradigm (see: Kilcommins et al., 2004).

[7] Letter to the Irish Times, November 2006.

[8] The death of Brian Murphy, killed outside a Dublin nightclub in a brawl between young middle-class men, generated intense media interest and highlighted a universality in night-time violence. See: *The Night Lives Changed Forever*, Kathy Sheridan, The Irish Times, 28/02/2004. Researchers have recorded middle-class offenders amongst those participating in night-time public disorder (see: Clare & Digney, 2003).

marginal communities and their most disaffected residents. The situation is complicated further as working-class communities are increasingly gentrified and conflicts emerge between traditional antipathy to the dominant social order, and a new found desire to demonstrate an ability to participate in it. Youth crime, therefore, becomes a point of contention for residents of the working-class community who are now unsure whether to treat it as the youthful folly they traditionally believed it amounted to, or as the threat much of the rest of society views it as. Youth justice, whether through pedagogy or coercion, attempts to win converts to the respectocracy and cast doubts on the continuing viability of traditional working-class responses to crime.

1.2 Youth Justice in Ireland: The Welfare/Criminal Conundrum

The manner in which society responds to youth crime is indicative of dominant perceptions of the issue. Youth justice in Ireland has changed to reflect the demands of the public and developing standards of best practice. The tensions between these two demands prevent policy from developing in a single clear direction. Perhaps symptomatic of the low regard in which young offenders are held is the failure of successive governments to reform systems that have caused serious harm to those within them. The Industrial Schools established to discipline young offenders for much of the 20th Century have become notorious for the abuses suffered by many of their residents (Raftery & O'Sullivan, 1999). Nevertheless, it took several decades before concerted legislative reform would be introduced in the form of The Children Act 2001 (the Act).

1.2.1 Remodelling Youth Justice

This remodelling of the youth justice system has, however, left in place confusion about the philosophy that underlies it. Doob and Tonry (2004) have observed in the international context a breadth of difference in the manner in which young offenders are dealt with and make a distinction between 'welfare' and 'criminal law' models. The former model places as its centre the protection and development of young people who offend whilst the latter is concerned primarily with the existence of an offence and the assignment of guilt. Critiques of the Act note that it has done nothing substantial to alter a system which is essentially built on the standard criminal law model (Kilkelly, 2006: 37;

O'Sullivan, 1999: 9; Walsh, 2005: 5-7). The Act does enshrine in Irish law principles derived from international human rights standards, which for the most part urge an enlightened child-centred approach to justice. It provides, therefore, a model which could be classed as welfare in nature, provided it is fully enacted[9] and supported by well resourced and capable agencies.

It is a lack of investment in the necessary structures that prevents the Act's high ideals from translating into meaningful change (Kilkelly, 2006: 47-51, Seymour, 2004: 20). Furthermore, the Criminal Justice Act 2006 restricts some of the more progressive measures before they could come into affect, including lowering the age of criminal responsibility in the case of serious crimes and introducing controversial anti-social behaviour orders. The latter measure can be understood as particularly punitive, civil orders obtained by Gardaí and local authorities, which traditionally target young people, and lead to criminal sanctions where breached, ASBOs are described as institutionalising 'the majority conception of order' (Hamilton & Seymour, 2006: 62). Ultimately political will supports measures which meet the perceived wants of an electorate who are manipulated themselves by moral panic. The tension in the philosophies underlying juvenile justice creates confusion in its administration and in the minds of the youth who are subject to it.

All forms of juvenile justice seek to cause young people to adhere to mainstream cultural norms of behaviour. Young people should refrain from criminality, attend school, avoid alcohol and drug consumption, engage in constructive leisure pursuits and put in place measures to ensure a prosperous and successful future. The welfare model attempts to promote these modes of behaviour, whereas the criminal justice model imposes sanctions when the law is breached. Whilst both of these approaches are considered in the Children Court, what is not recognised is the fact that young offenders are not simply rejecting

[9] Crucial sections of the Act are yet to be implemented (see: Kilkelly 2006: 39). This may soon change in light of recent announcements by the Irish Government in relation to funding, see: O'Brien, Carl, *Youth Justice reforms will aid courts*, The Irish Times, 20/04/2007. Furthermore, The Report on the Youth Justice Review 2005 (Government of Ireland, 2006) recommended the establishment of a Youth Justice Service with specific responsibility for promoting the aims of the Act, which occurred in 2006. There is great potential for reform in the Irish youth justice in the coming years.

mainstream behavioural norms but are adhering to an entirely separate set. Recent research indicates that 60% of incarcerated young people re-offend within four years[10]. Can juvenile justice be an effective intervention?

1.2.2 The Children Court

Recent research into The Children Court has highlighted the difficulties associated with the dual roles of administering criminal justice whilst monitoring the welfare of the same young person (Kilkelly, 2005; McGuirk, 2005). The conflict stems from sections 96 (1), (2) and (3) of the Children Act 2001 which instructs the court to impose a custodial sentence only as a last resort and to impose penalties which hamper the development of the young person to a minimal degree. Specific mention is made of the need to foster education and family relations, yet there are no special measures introduced in order to achieve this. The elements of restorative and communicative justice that are contained in the act are dependant on an admission of guilt by the young person and would take place in lieu of a court appearance. Such measures include family welfare conferences and the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer and Youth Diversion Projects (discussed within Chapter Five of this thesis). The Children Court ultimately performs a monitoring function on the efficacy of alternative forms of sanction:

> The role of the Children's Court judge extends beyond the traditional one of determining a criminal charge. Instead, it demands that the judicial function be combined with that of counsellor, manager and administrator of youth justice: this makes his/her role not only the most influential and central position in the youth justice system, but also the most challenging. (Kilkelly, 2005: 47-8)

The courtroom is traditionally the domain of the criminal trial and not the welfare inquiry. The degree to which it can be effective in the discharge of the latter function must be called into question for three principal reasons. Firstly, research has found that there can be a lack of direct communication between the judge and accused and a failure

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[10] According to unpublished research conducted by the Institute of Criminology, University College Dublin. See: media reports such as Lally, Connor *Quarter of Prisoners back in jail within year of release*, Irish Times, 06/12/2006.

to utilise language appropriate to a young person at all times (Kilkelly, 2005: 65; McGuirk, 2005: 21). This impedes the degree to which there can be any meaningful engagement with the young person within the courtroom setting. Secondly, the young defendants are represented by solicitors who utilise legal tactics to thwart charges and prevent a custodial sentence; this is the modus operandi of lawyers. The use of welfare services by young offenders are thus represented merely as cause to withhold a custodial sentence, without great consideration of the suitability of these services, or the young persons' progress within them. Thirdly, with high case loads, there is insufficient time to conduct a proper inquiry into the young person's welfare within the courts. Rather there are lengthy delays in the juvenile justice process created through waiting for formal reports. The delays detract from the urgency of the process and creates increased distance between the offence the young person has committed and the official response to it (McGuirk, 2005: 22).

Essentially the courts attempt to deal with the behaviour of the young people through mechanisms that are part of the legal system and make sense from a juristic point of view. The legal system operates outside the cultural consciousness of most young offenders who perceive, and react to it, accordingly. Ultimately the differences in culturally based norms and values between the agents of justice and most young offenders impede the effectiveness of the system[11].

1.3 On 'Street Culture': An Ethnographic Perspective of Youth Crime

Ethnographic studies demonstrate that young working-class men engaging in behaviours, which wider society construct as deviant, are positively conforming to a distinctive set of normative practices. Constituting more than methodology, ethnography creates a distinct perspective, revealing how lived experiences of poverty, marginalisation and disadvantage shape culture and values divergent from those of the mainstream. Below, American and British ethnographies are divided into two distinct bodies of work. The former tend to represent 'classic' models of the genre focusing primarily on the lives of

[11] Indeed, a similar critique might be offered of the adult criminal justice system.

study participants. The British material tends to relate its participants, to a greater extent, to wider society.

1.3.1 American Perspectives

Examining American ethnographic perspectives on offending, from the works of the Chicago School of Sociology through to contemporary gang studies, provides a wealth of comparative material and theoretical insight on the manner in which social structure in particular, disadvantage and gender, prompt the development of, and adherence to, cultural orientations at odds with those dominant in wider society. An early study by Frederick Thrasher (1927) describes the tendency of male inner-city youth to congregate in groups, which crystallize into gangs through conflict with rivals and the authorities. Stanley, the lone participant in Clifford Shaw's *The Jack Roller*, eloquently accounts for his inculcation into a system of values which endorses criminality over the drudgery of manual labour:

> I had spent my life going in and out of jails and now I was old and hardened at seventeen, had lost all hope of regeneration. In fact I could see nothing but crime and jail bars ahead. That was all I was educated for; it was all my mind could think about; it held lures and hopes nothing else did.... I was not a fool to be kidded by the circumstances of life into manual labour and a life of slavery to fill the pockets of grafters and snobbish people (1930: 160 – 161).

Firm notions of a distinct working-class culture did not take root until *Street Corner Society* (Whyte, 1943) challenged Shaw & McKay's (1942) theory that poor communities live in a state of 'social disorganisation'. Debate took place between Albert Cohen (1955) who asserted that a working-class delinquent sub-culture exists in opposition to dominant middle-class values, and Walter Miller (1958) who countered that the 'lower-classes' adhere to norms based around their own 'focal concerns': *inter alia* 'toughness', 'smartness', 'excitement' and 'autonomy'. The latter argument found resonance in the work of Suttles (1968) who describes in rich ethnographic detail how *The Social Order of the Slum* creates specific behavioural expectations of resident youth. Liebow's *Tally's*

Corner (1968) illustrates how peer grouping and street corner life come to inhabit the cultural vacuum created where the legitimate economy cannot support the role of the male as breadwinner and head of family. The discourse became increasingly clear on the manner in which broad structural issues impact on individual lives as men struggle to construct status and dignity for themselves in the milieu of the street.

The 'Chicano' Mexican community studied by Moore (1978) in East Los Angeles exhibits a reliance on gang membership as a reaction to the social and cultural marginalisation facing individual residents. The gang provides a degree of ethnic, social and cultural solidarity that would be otherwise unavailable. Gang studies have established the prevalence of working-class masculine concerns through a social structure 'pathologised' (Katz & Jackson-Jacobs, 2004) as criminal. Padilla (1992) notes that the gang may be construed as an 'American enterprise', echoing the hierarchy of business, a ghetto variant of a mainstream phenomenon. Decker & Van Winkle (1996) frame threat as the prevailing theme in gang life, forming the prime motivation for joining and the primary force maintaining group integrity. Violence thus becomes revered and mythologized as the means of negotiating and responding to threat. With increasing sophistication, ethnographies of crime in America have identified the manner in which working-class normative imperatives, shaped by economic, social and cultural marginalisation underpin the formation of apparently deviant male peer groups:

> 'Inner-city street culture' (is) a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values and ideologies that have emerged in opposition to exclusion from mainstream society. Street culture offers an alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity (Bourgois 1995: 8).

Bourgois (1995) found that an emphasis on masculine toughness and self-determination cause his participants to excel in the world of drug dealing whilst failing to make progress in the legitimate employment market. 'Their niche in the underground economy shielded them from having to face the fact that they were socially and economically superfluous to mainstream society' (2003: 119). The author demonstrates how the lives

of participants, marred by self-destruction, violence and tragedy are motivated by a positive desire to achieve according to their own cultural standards in a society that not only is dominated by differing values but is structured to their distinct disadvantage. American ethnographic perspectives on crime demonstrate the degree to which offenders, rather than engaging in negativistic behaviours, are positively performing cultural imperatives derived from their low socio-economic positions.

1.3.2 British Perspectives

The above themes are further developed by ethnographic works in Britain which specifically probe notions of class, culture and crime. British ethnographies of youth crime[12] tend to highlight the role wider society plays in criminalising certain everyday practices of the young urban working-class male and demonstrates approaches derived from ethnographic methodologies, and later Marxist theories. Examining this material reveals the degree to which hegemonic notions of crime and justice contribute to the criminalisation of disadvantaged urban males. *Growing up in the City* (1964) treats of the lives of young men from an impoverished area of 1950s Liverpool, demonstrating that the participants inevitably become involved in some kind of offending behaviour, but are only classed as delinquent should these acts be detected and dealt with by the state (Barron Mays, 1964: 78-80). A later Liverpool study focuses on young offenders in a working-class community under assault from government rehousing schemes, where local loyalty and solidarity are exhibited through celebration of the area's tough reputation and opposition to outside interference from state agents (Parker 1974). *The Boys*, his participant group, hold a negative conception of civil authority which they see as Other, victimising them unfairly (1974: 157-9). They feel that courts are calculated more to degrade and punish than to seek out the truth and do justice (1974: 172). Gill (1977) describes the manner in which diverse state agents construct various individuals, groups and areas as troublesome through a 'superstructure' of delinquency, highlighting that youth crime is 'dyadic' (Young, 1999: 16), a product of specific behaviours and the response of authorities. The negative relationship between working-class community and

[12] Britain has a further tradition of ethnographic treatment of adult crime which is not considered in any great detail within this thesis. See for example: Ditton 1977; Young 1971, Henry 1978; Hobbs 1988.

municipal and policing authorities is self-perpetuating and results in increasing marginalisation (1977: 67). These early British ethnographies demonstrate that the interaction between indigenous working-class cultures and hegemonic values underpins both participating in and addressing the incidence of volume crime, non-serious offences that constitutes the bulk of recorded offences.

Such a line of argument facilitates an understanding of the complex role played by class in the fields of crime and justice. In *Knuckle Sandwich: Growing up in the Working Class City* (1978) Robins and Cohen offer a Marxist, class-based analysis. The authors observe the breakdown in traditional working-class institutions such as the local pub and corner-shop through rehousing and emphasise the role of the male youth group as an enduring facet that has become a vehicle for increasing delinquent behaviour in the destabilised *Monmoth* estate. Adherence to territoriality offers young men a method of negotiating space. Relations with others are managed through assigning classifications of 'affinity and enmity' (1978: 75). The group is a vehicle for the practice and learning of masculine working-class culture, such as leisure-seeking in the face of structurally imposed monotony and violent potential to gain respect and avoid predation.

In both Britain and America working-class law-breaking can be properly understood as the manifestation of a complex class-cultural dynamic, which has been considered in a number of specific works. Through the exigencies of their social reality, young disadvantaged males adopt norms that differ from those of wider society and are thus more likely to offend. Mainstream society, to an equal degree, contributes to the criminalisation process by targeting this particular social group and maintaining justice systems which are perceived as alien and oppositional. These themes remain consistent despite notable difference in the two major English-speaking societies.

1.3.3 Culture and Crime in the Working-Classes

Contrary to what the above review of literature might suggest, working-class identity is not synonymous with criminal propensity. Further works have demonstrated that a complex negotiation of culture and values occurs internally within the class, whereby its

members occupy positions at varying distances from mainstream normativity. These works essentially consider the class-cultural distinction that can be made within working-class communities between the 'rough' and 'respectable'. This concept is well illustrated by the contrast between Whyte's *Norton's Gang* and *College Boys* (1943). The former group is a street gang which is organised around traditional working-class Italian notions of respect and reciprocity, which is thus at odds with hegemonic American careerism. The latter group organises itself around the respectable notion of the social club and have assimilated the cultural outlook necessary to progress within the American mainstream economy. The author notes, furthermore, how this distinction carries into adult life, citing a similar pattern in racketeers and politicians. Evidently, working-class communities contain both 'rough' and 'respectable' elements. This pattern flows through a majority of the ethnographic works considered above. Scholars have developed this notion into increasingly sophisticated theoretical insight.

Cultural orientations developed in youth, assign social mobility and thus reproduce the social classes over successive generations. Clarke et al. (1976) [13] critique the conception of youth culture as all-embracing, noting that it is overridden by class. The working and middle classes exhibit divergent cultural patterns and therefore different models of youth culture: 'the young inherit a cultural orientation from their parents towards a "problematic" common to the class as a whole, which is likely to weigh, shape and signify the meanings they attach to different areas of their social life' (1976: 29). The schoolyard and streets represent spaces in which young people negotiate their position in relation both to the dominant middle-class culture and their own working-class culture (1976: 44). This concept is further explored by Willis (1977) who asks 'why working class kids get working class jobs?' by examining the cultural exchange that takes place through secondary education. A distinction is made between separate groups of working-class youth: the conformist *ear oles* and the deviant *lads* who are concerned principally with 'having a laff', allowing them to 'amuse, subvert and incite', an instrument to pass

[13] *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in post-war Britain* (Hall and Jefferson [eds.]: 1976) contains a number of ethnographic style examinations of colourful youth sub-cultures: however, 'the great majority of working-class youth never enters a tight or coherent sub-culture at all... As Paul Corrigan eloquently testifies, most young working class boys are principally concerned most of the time with the biggest occupation of all – how to pass the time' (Hall and Jefferson [eds.]: 1976: 16-7).

the time and rebel against authority (1977: 29-32). Youth offending is a further element of the *lads*' particular sub-cultural orientation[14].

Willis points to similarities in the *lads* sub-cultural code and that of industrial workers on the shop floor in terms of informal friendship groups, distinctive bantering language, the tendency towards practical humour and resistance to subjugation (1977: 52). Through adhering to their parent values, the *lads* find themselves working in similar jobs to their fathers and with similar cultures and beliefs, selecting this end over conforming to the middle class values that they resist. Jenkins (1983) examines class-cultural reproduction through a wider lens, dividing his cohort into the categories of: *lads*, *ordinary kids* and *citizens*. *The Lads* are characterised by their 'rebellious' attitude, rejecting middle-class occupational aspirations. They tend to leave school early and have successions of poorly paid menial jobs, taking ironic pride in their status, thereby mitigating their failure in occupational achievement. They are locally orientated, organising their social lives around friendship groups, consuming alcohol in local spaces and engaging in various offending behaviours. *The Ordinary Kids*, characterised by a greater sense of fashion, are less extreme in their rebelliousness, although they engage in some of the same activities as the *lads*. *The Citizens* represent a model of upward mobility, attending church regularly and embracing structured leisure. They are the 'respectable' working-class. Unlike the *lads*, they 'get on' in work and though subject to many of the same problems of insecurity and dispensability in the job market, they make progression a priority. Working-class culture contains a spectrum of cultural orientations which influence social mobility and involvement with criminality.

The tension between competing working-class cultural orientations is well illustrated by Anderson (1999). 'Decent' values are described by the author as resembling those he observes in middle-class districts and highlight achievement, sacrifice and dedication to the family. Families in the ghetto who hold these values impose strict rules to prevent their children becoming involved in the life of the streets. He terms as 'street' values those norms of behaviour that facilitate survival within an environment that is harsh and

[14] Although it does not occupy a large proportion of that author's consideration.

violent, which is the social reality of a great number of ghetto residents. This value system places premium on the concept of 'respect', earned through suggesting strength and a willingness to use violence. Street values emphasise the presentation of self and therefore contributes to the esteem of its practitioners who suffer from the internalisation of low socio-economic status and suffer from the feelings of hopelessness. Indeed, hope for the future seems to be an essential part in the development of 'decent' values. Decent individuals utilise elements of the street behaviour in order to coexist and avoid predation (1999: 42).

Working-class areas contain both 'rough' or 'street' elements, whose normativity diverges from hegemonic middle-class values, and 'decent' or 'respectable' factions, who demonstrate mainstream aspirations through adherence to its norms. It is the 'street' variant of working-class culture that can thus be properly understood as the threat to the dominant normative order, as it is the most different and oppositional. The internal contradictions within a single class signal the importance of cultural values in the construction of behaviour (and indeed social groupings) as criminal. This thesis uses the concept of 'class-cultural dynamics', the interaction between encultured norms and values shaped by socio-structural position, as a theoretical frame to shed light on the degree to which those who adhere to 'rough' norms are the target of censure by dominant 'respectable' society, through the structure of the criminal justice system.

1.4.1 The 'Underclass', Blame and Threat

The 'rough' working-class is more susceptible to criminalisation, not merely on account of its distinct value system but on the basis of wider society's tendency to view this section of the population as reprehensible and threatening. Charles Murray's analysis of the British 'underclass' is steeped in normative judgement against substance abuse, unemployment and illegitimacy, apparently the hallmarks of the 'undeserving', 'unrespectable' and 'feckless' poor (1996a: 23). He asserts that: 'the habitual criminal is the classic member of the underclass. He lives off mainstream society without participating in it' (1996a: 33). This analysis implies the 'underclass' is to blame for propagating a culture antithetic to mainstream notions of good citizenship, in part due to

the flawed normative capacities of its members. The class is thus construed as the problematic 'Other':

> Both the self and the world are split into good and bad objects, and the bad self, the self associated with fear and anxiety over loss of control, is projected onto bad objects. Fear precedes the construction of the bad object, the negative stereotype, but the stereotype – simplified, distorted and at a distance – perpetuates that fear (Sibley, 1995: 15).

Impoverished communities are often perceived by mainstream, consumerist society as deviant and criminal, reinforcing their identity of exclusion (McAuley, 2007). Where there is increasing 'ontological uncertainty' around the values that majority society espouses, the 'bad' culture practiced by the young, urban, disadvantaged male become a rallying point for the mainstream to affirm itself through chastisement of the 'Other' (Young, 1999). Hence the nuisance of youth crime becomes constructed as a *bona fides* threat to the social order. It speaks not to the magnitude of the 'problem' but to a class-cultural dynamic in which middle-class, respectable society is vindicated through the criminalisation of a class perceived of as embodying social ill. The force of the state is called upon to stem the tide of anxiety, where the perceived threat is more a product of the 'respectable fear' (Pearson, 1985) than working-class conduct. The criminal justice system, however, is equipped to impugn individual instances of illegal behaviour and not the perceived threat represented by opposing value systems, and thus becomes the arena in which class-cultural dynamics are played out.

Conclusion:

The literature considered above points to a number of theoretical propositions about the nature of youth crime and justice that will be explored through ethnographic inquiry in the body of this thesis. Irish society can be understood as a contented mainstream, generally adhering to hegemonic norms. The exhibited behaviour and culture of an 'underclass' minority, who adhere to a 'street' variant of working-class values, represents both an expression of their socio-economic position and marginalisation from the

mainstream. Their activities have become pathologised by an indignant public, disconcerted by high-profile crimes. Criminal justice is thus recruited as the champion of majority sentiment and represents the 'front-line' in a struggle of class-cultural concerns. This is particularly clear in the arena of youth justice, where although lip-service is paid to notions of 'welfare', the entire project can be properly understood as an exercise in chastisement and normative evangelism. A circular pattern is thus reproduced over generations where certain working-class youth perform a deeply encultured repertoire of behaviours, and wider society retorts with the same, essentially unchanged responses. It is the same game being played, with the same predictable results: the reproduction (and arguably escalation) of the 'underclass' condition.

Chapter 2
Entering the Complex: Criminology, Methodology and Ethnographic Research

Introduction

This chapter considers the ethnographic methods utilised to produce many of the works reviewed in the previous chapter and their application in the context of the present study. The chapter thus contains both theoretical and reflexive elements designed to locate the methods within the politics and science of research and contextualise the data pertaining to this study within the specific circumstances that surround it. The first sub-section considers the development, decline and resurgence of ethnographic methods as a tool of criminological enquiry in America and Britain. The importance of these methods within policing studies is also considered in brief. The second sub-section of the chapter is concerned in-depth with the reflexive and practical issues underlying the research process which produced the data on which this thesis is based. Such a methodological discussion locates this study within a rich tradition of ethnographic inquiry in criminology and creates transparency around the research process.

2.1.1 Peaks and Troughs: Ethnographic Methods in Criminology[15]

Ethnography remains a minority practice in a criminological discipline ensconced in an 'administrative' approach. Research funding tends to be allocated where it will be of greater utility to the 'justice project' (Maguire, 2000: 120; Morgan, 2000). Administrative criminology, defined by 'a decelerating rate of innovation, a drift towards normal science, and a new pragmatism which addresses above all else, the problems of victims, social control, the police woman and ethnic minorities' (Rock, 1998: 68), better suits policy makers struggling to cater to a concerned public. Criminologists themselves are, furthermore, embedded in the hegemonic culture from which 'criminals' tend to be excluded. Polsky (1967: 145) has cast scorn on what he calls 'jailhouse or courthouse sociologists' who in their eagerness to derive insight on criminality from the data

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[15] Adler and Adler (1998) analyse the rise and fall of ethnographic methods in US criminology under the headings: 'Impressionism', 'Renaissance', 'Abstract Impressionism', 'The Dark Ages' and 'The Enlightenment' and describe a dynamic similar to that set out in this sub-section.

available from state sources neglect to consider the issues from the perspective of those directly involved. In a sense what exists through mainstream criminology is an examination of crime that does not recognise, consider or probe the lived experiences of those who offend.

Ethnography challenges the assumptions of positivistic criminology through 'nuanced reportage' of social worlds and more importantly the meanings that social actors within them attach to various phenomena (Bottoms, 2000: 30) and therefore provides accounts of criminality that inherently differ from those produced by mainstream criminology. Examining a community and area through direct observation and the stories of its residents produces data of a different nature from surveys or state statistics. Ethnographers of crime orient themselves towards understanding its *verstehen* – the subjective experience of criminals, victims and agents of crime control (Ferrell, 1998: 27).

Ethnographic studies are time consuming and emotionally draining, restricting their viability for those academics who are tied to institutional duties (Hobbs, 1993). Moreover, in an era of heightened ethical invigilation, ethnographic research with offenders may not find favour amongst funding and academic institutions as researchers 'must make the moral decision that it some ways he will break the law himself' – either directly or through observing the acts of his/her cohorts and gaining 'guilty knowledge' (Polsky, 1967: 138). Conducting fieldwork with offenders puts the researcher in danger, not just of illegality, but of physical and emotional harm (Ferrell, 1998: 25). Epistemologically, the critics of ethnography label it a soft science (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1995) and those who revere statistical modes of investigation may well view it as a form of 'glorified journalism'. There are, however, dangers associated with attempting to examine criminality statistically. Many crimes remain unreported or undetected while even arriving at a consistent definition of transgression remains elusive (Sutherland & Cressy, 1970: 25).

Problems exist, furthermore, in the expectation that active offenders will cooperate and frankly engage in a questionnaire process lead by an officious stranger. Whilst one can make contact with offenders in penal institutions, one does not gain a sense of their lived experience of crime. Indeed,

> ...[D]isadvantages (of ethnographic methods) are counterbalanced by an intimate view of slum life which gains in validity what it lacks in representativeness. When observing from a great distance one is apt to invent all sorts of irrational mental mechanisms to account for the behaviour of slum residents. When observing close at hand, we are made all the more aware of how our own ideals have blinded us to the practicality of slum residents (Suttles, 1968: 12).

Thus ethnography seeks to describe with detail and authenticity (deriving insight and analysis from this process), whilst statistical methods are concerned with broader patterns and trends. Ethnographic research must satisfy a number of requirements: '1) the need for an empirical approach; 2) the need to remain open to elements that cannot be codified at the time of the study; 3) a concern for grounding the phenomenon observed in the field' (Baszanger & Dodier, 1997: 8). The methods are both empirical, relying on systematic observation and recording, and flexible, allowing mutations in research question and paradigm in order to exploit the most fruitful seams of data. Accusations of inherent bias in ethnography must be balanced against the fact that it is 'grounded' (Glazer & Strauss, 1967), placing an emphasis on description rather than answering questions that have been set in stone before any data has been gathered, remaining faithful to the integrity of the phenomena at hand.

Ethnographic methodology has a distinguished history within sociological and criminological inquiry, congruent with the professionalisation of the disciplines, beginning with the work of the Chicago School of Sociology in the earlier part of the twentieth century (Bulmer, 1984: 34). The departmental combination of anthropology and sociology at Chicago would influence the research philosophy espoused, notably a reliance on observing participants in their natural environment. The recruitment of

journalist Robert E. Park, and close links to the School of Divinity ensured that the Chicago School absorbed the influences of press reportage and maintained an interest in human suffering and social reform (Bulmer, 1984). Whilst the early authors of the School[16] gave little attention to the methods they used (a common phenomenon in sociology at the time) (Bulmer, 1984: 90) it is inappropriate to label them a 'soft' school (Burns, 1996). The methods they pioneered, emphasising a reliance on observation, would become codified and formalised as the disciplines progressed.

Ultimately, the dominance enjoyed by the ethnographic tradition at Chicago would erode, as academics there followed trends within the discipline of sociology towards a more statistical mode of enquiry. Famously Shaw and McKay's *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas* (1942) made use of a large scale quantitative study to determine the relationship between locale and youth criminality. The study found strong correlations between poverty, disadvantage, low quality housing and delinquency. The authors noted, however, that whilst statistics are useful in the study of the incidence of crime, they are of limited benefit in attempting to explain its aetiology:

> This explanation... must be sought... in the field of the more subtle human relationships and social values which comprise the social world of the child in the family and community (Shaw & McKay, 1942: 14).

In an era of post-war optimism and social engineering, the 'hard science' of statistical methods dominated criminological enquiry in the United States, while in the United Kingdom a medico-psychological model of investigating the causes of criminality was most prevalent (Maguire, 2000: 125). Ethnographic works on deviance and criminality once again gained favour in the 1960s, no doubt due to a growing radicalisation of the academy and an increasing public amenability to social explanations. In America, Becker (1963) and Polsky (1967) demonstrated the internal logic of the social worlds of their deviant participants, marijuana users and pool-hall hustlers respectively. British

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[16] See for example: Thomas (1918), Park and Burgess (1925), Thrasher (1927)

ethnographies of crime[17] emerging during this period were conducted in a 'traditional' style emulating American studies, yet by the nineteen seventies had evolved into a distinct body of work utilising a sophisticated analysis of class and culture, thanks in no small part to those in the Birmingham School of Contemporary Culture.

The advent of Thatcherism and Reaganism, the politicisation of law and order and the development of 'The Culture of Control' (Garland, 2000) called for methods of criminological enquiry that to a greater extent serviced the needs of the state in the control of crime, precipitating the prevalence of administrative criminology. 'What was called..."petty, trivial, irrelevant ethnography" was not only apparently intellectually redundant by the mid-to-late 1980s, but interfered with the corporate imagery that perpetuated criminology' (Hobbs, 1993: 54). Nevertheless:

> Field research remains, no matter what its risks, the essential research method for uncovering the situated meaning of crime and deviance, for exposing the experiential web of symbolic codes and ritualized understandings which constitute deviance and criminality (Ferrell & Hamm, 1998: 9).

Now enjoying something of a resurgence, ethnographic methods have considerable scope to expand on the insights it has already offered into the definition and causes of crime. The methods, moreover, can be used to the examine the manner in which society, through its agents, responds to the incidence of criminality.

2.1.2 Culture and Control: An Ethnographic Approach to Examining Policing

Much in the same manner that the popularity of the ethnographic study of crime and deviance has waxed and waned commensurate with wider politico-social concerns surrounding law and order, ethnographic studies of policing have varied in focus and frequency. Reiner (1989; 2000a; 2000b: 213) has identified a number of categories in

[17] See: Hobbs (2001). He includes in his analysis pioneering British social journalism. The influence of this type of writing on the ethnographic project is important to note.

which to classify British police research[18]. In particular the 'Controversy' research that began to develop alongside growing radicalism and social awareness in the 1960s and 1970s produced works that explored notions informing police discretion, prioritisation and conduct[19]. This form of research 'saw policing as an important process in shaping (rather than merely reacting to) the pattern of deviance through the exercise of discretion' (Reiner, 2000b: 214).

In Ireland, there has been no tradition of police research in the Republic and authors have concentrated to a greater extent on historical aspects[20], although increasingly significant qualitative studies are being conducted[21]. In Britain, ethnography has constituted a popular tool in police research. Policing is a 'low visibility' activity (Reiner, 2000: 219) and as such many of the same caveats that apply to researching street criminals are methodologically relevant here. Policing is both a controversial and politically charged process and those employed by the state to deliver it can be hard-nosed and well versed in obfuscation tactics (Reiner, 2000: 218-220). Necessarily there are difficulties in securing access to police views and behaviours depending on the status and personality of the researcher (Brown, 1996). The naturalism of ethnographic methods has the further advantage of making it possible to go beyond preconceptions of police personnel as aggressive and authoritarian and look at the manner in which the job itself creates certain responses in those who undertake it (Fielding, 1988: 5). The results of various ethnographies of policing are discussed in Chapter Five.

2.2 Core Methodology

This study differs from the 'pure' ethnographies of communities, young people, offending and policing. Rather it is methodologically reminiscent of works by Hobbs (1988) and Welsh (1991) in that it seeks to work with a number of different participant

[18] For the purpose of this thesis it is primarily British literature on policing that will be discussed. There are clear links between the execution of the policing function in both Britain and Ireland, due in part to the colonial process and the fact that both are unarmed, consensus based police forces. Notable works on policing have been produced in America see for example: Manning and Van Maanen (eds.) 1978.

[19] See for example: Cain, 1973; Manning, 1977; Holdaway, 1983.

[20] Sec for example: Breathnach, 1974; McNiffe, 1997; Allen, 1999.

[21] See for example: Digney & Clare, 2003; Mulcahy & O'Mahony, 2005

groups to gain multiple perspectives on the same core issues. Seeking a description of the social reality occupied by *The Crew* and *Northstreet* community facilitates a contextualised understanding of youth offending, cognisant of the manner in which culture develops and is altered by socio-economic circumstances. The Gardaí and youth justice workers represent groupings who embody mainstream normativity (albeit mediated through occupational culture) and are on the 'front line' of society's response to youth crime. Interaction between the groups is, therefore, an essential nexus where the issues of class, culture and crime come into sharp focus.

2.2.1 Overview of the Research

Data collection consisted of fieldwork conducted between May 2004 and October 2005, supplemented by occasional revisits in pursuit of clarification. *Northstreet* and *The Club* constituted the primary field sites, whilst *Northstreet Garda Station* acted as the centre of fieldwork during the final two months. Participant observation represented the major source of data, complemented by 44 formal interviews, countless informal interviews and casual conversations recorded in fieldnotes. Formal interviews lasted between twenty minutes and three hours depending on the participant. Three loose focus groups were conducted, the first with a group of local youths, the second with a group of women who had occupied leadership positions in *Northstreet* during the mid-nineties and the third, which quickly proved untenable, with members of *The Crew*. Formal interviews were sought with many other participants who either refused or evaded participation. Every effort was made in these circumstances to gain information through less formal means.

2.2.2 Breakdown of Participation in Formal Interviews

Interviewee Type	No. of Formal Interviews
Crew Members	5
Crew Parents/Guardians	4
General *Northstreet* Residents	8
Northstreet Leadership Figures	2
Community Workers *Northstreet*	4
Local Dublin City Council Staff	3
Local Businesspeople / Professionals	3
Youth/Community/Social Workers General Locality	10
Local Gardaí	14
Total No. Formal Interviews	**44**

2.3 A 'Confessional' Statement of Methodology

Whilst the majority of this thesis is written in a 'realist' style, interspersed, for the sake of authenticity, with 'impressionist' elements, a 'confessional' section follows below (see: Van Maanen, 1988). This piece, written in the first person, is calculated to demystify this author's fieldwork and give the reader a basis and context on which to assess the ethnographic data in the following chapters.

2.3.1 Getting Started

The process of undertaking ethnography is inherently tied up with the researcher's biography (Okely, 1992). For my part, I had grown up in a mixed-class area and as a teenager belonged to a social group that spanned the middle and working classes. Our 'friends from the flats' provided a source of fascination and fear, as they both preyed on us for small amounts of money, and inspired us to 'code switch' (Anderson, 1999: 42), altering our patterns of dress and speech to appear more 'street'. As an undergraduate I studied law and worked for a solicitor, noticing that the roles of the criminal courts were predominantly filled by the young, male and disadvantaged. I saw a connection between working-class 'street behaviour' and involvement in the criminal justice system,

becoming interested in exploring this relationship. Commencing post-graduate research, my supervisor, an anthropologist, urged me to eschew a survey based approach: 'get out there', conduct fieldwork and engage in the realities of street life.

The research was designed to focus on a specific community, *Northstreet*, the youth crime within it and the manner in which wider society attempts to curb it, utilising the following questions to provide focus:

Primary question: What is the nature of the *Northstreet* young offenders' interaction with wider society that results in their persistent involvement with the criminal justice system?

- What is the nature of the culture in which the youth operate?
- How does this culture relate to that of wider society?
- Through what avenues are the youths most likely to interact with wider society?
- What is the nature of the youths' interactions with wider society?
- Do the youth exhibit a distinct sub-culture forged through the impact of social and economic marginalisation?
- If such a sub-culture exists, through distinct modes of dress, speech, choice of activity and comportment, how do those outside their locality view it?
- What are the actions precipitated by this sub-culture? How are they understood by the youth themselves and how are they understood by wider society? How are they perceived within their own community?
- What kinds of structures have been put in place to deal effectively with the problems of the young people?
- What issues do these structures address?

Secondary question: What is the nature of these youths' involvement in street crime and violence, with which the Gardaí at *Northstreet* station are engaged in policing?

- To what extent, that the Gardaí are aware of, are those youth from *Northstreet* responsible for the incidence of crime and disorder in the area?

- Are there other groups of young people responsible for violence, crime and disorder in the area?
- If so, what groups are offending in the area and in what manner?
- How do other types of offenders compare to those that are being studied in *Northstreet*?

I was introduced to Gerry, a youth justice worker and we agreed that I could operate out of his project, *The Club* (described in detail in Chapter Six), situated on *Northstreet*. The Garda Síochána fund and manage *The Club* and therefore constituted gatekeepers whose approval it was necessary to secure. I met with senior officers on a local and national level. The fact that the study was to be 'balanced' by examining numerous different participant groups appealed to the senior officers who granted permission for the study and encouraged me to feel free to criticise the Gardaí if appropriate. An advantage of this process was that the local Gardaí within the field site were 'on notice' of my presence in the area, and I thought that this might prevent the need to answer difficult questions at a later date.

The prospect of researching through a youth project appealed to me. Not only did it provide an avenue to all the participant groups I sought to contact, I saw it as an opportunity to 'give something back'. I entered the field with the naïve belief that I could make a positive contribution, create a 'win-win' situation and gather data with relative ease. I was fast to learn that ethnography is a 'messy business' (Pearson, 1993: vii) where plans must be constantly re-evaluated and re-assessed. For example, I had planned to make initial contact with *Crew* members through a photography programme I designed for them. Delays in negotiating access made it untenable and it was postponed[22]. Indeed, my previous experience in research had been in a structured quantitative study. I was not prepared for the lack of structure, emotional turmoil and sheer discomfort that is involved in undertaking ethnography. I entered the field with the intention of seeking signatures on consent forms and tape-recording every pertinent conversation. As time progressed, I

[22] Indeed, when I ultimately attempted to conduct the programme which involved cognitive mapping and visual methods of encouraging the young men to express their use of space, they were uninterested and it was abandoned.

learnt that researching a subject as sensitive of crime requires the flexibility to meet participants at the level they are comfortable with. Thus, I ultimately found that some of my most salient data was not in the transcriptions of formal interviews but in fieldnote recordings of casual conversation. As with most ethnographers I found that I learnt my craft as I engaged in it.

2.3.2 The Youth Worker as Researcher: *The Club* and First Beginnings

My arrival at *The Club* was timely; a vacancy existed for a full-time volunteer. Somewhat intimidated by the unfamiliar surroundings of *Northstreet*, I embraced the role wholeheartedly. I believed that it would legitimize my presence in the eyes of the ever-vigilant residents and provide a valid reason for spending so much time in the company of young people[23]. I became part of *The Club*'s team, taking on limited administrative duties and assisting in youth justice work. In return I had *The Club*'s network of clients and contacts as potential participants and a secure environment in which to write up field notes and conduct interviews. A letter was sent to the parents of *Club* clients informing them that a researcher was coming aboard, the subject matter of the study and urging them to contact me through the *Club* with any queries.

My introduction to young people would occur over summer residential trips. The younger 'school group' educated me in the strains of youth work. Gerry and I spent a weekend attempting to curb their tendency to run off in all directions in search of a football to kick or sweets to procure. The young women's group found another way to test me, draping underwear over my head whilst I slept on the bus. Most significantly, I met *The Crew* (who will be discussed in some length in the following chapter):

> Adam and Paul had been excluded from the trip due to their behaviour over the year. Gerry saw it as an extremely positive step that their mother had firmly and fairly disciplined them. Wacker and Keano were driven to the adventure centre in

[23] There is a degree of generational segregation in *Northstreet* and an adult who spends a noteworthy amount of time in the company of young people is open to earning the label of *weirdo* or *rapist* (paedophile). That was certainly an identity I was keen to avoid.

the Garda Community Bus[24]. Gerry and I drove in his car to collect Byrnesy who had just completed his Junior Certificate at a suburban secondary school[25]. The fifteen year old looks disconcerted as we pull up in Gerry's dented Toyota, complete with coat-hanger aerial, and beep to break up his conversation with two taller men who are sitting on a wall. He enters the car and Gerry enthusiastically quizzes him about the exam. Byrnesy answers the questions somewhat sullenly but is clearly jubilant that he has reached the end of his formal education. I'm still somewhat 'green' and overwhelmed by the whole participant observation project and remain silent. Gerry introduces me to Byrnesy who nods in recognition and is silent for the rest of the journey. Gerry punctuates the silence that otherwise prevails with enthusiastic comments and predictions about the trip ahead.

When we pull up to the adventure centre Byrnesy visibly brightens when he sees Wacker and Keano. They are told the programme of activities for the day, and as soon as they realise that they have some spare time dart away from us. Gerry is speaking to one of the centre staff so I proceed after the boys who have discovered a narrow alley to the side of the centre and are already at its end. Cigarette smoke rises from behind Wackers back, they look somewhat sheepish as I approach, but relax as I take out a cigarette and admonish them for going for one without me. Wacker looks quizzical: 'That's Johnny,' explains Byrnesy, 'He's cool.' I'm briefly elated by the complimentary description, and not having yet learnt the virtues of restraint, begin to blurt out the reasons behind my presence on the trip and in the *Club*. Wacker begins to laugh hysterically and the other two join in. I'm puzzled. 'You talk funny' proclaims Wacker.

'Yeah,' agrees Byrnesy 'You sound like my cousins.'

'Are they from the south side?[26]' I ask. He nods. 'Well there you go. I'm from the south side' (extract from fieldnotes).

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[24] 'It's a bleedin Moriah (police van)' remarked one of them. The mode of transport made available by the Gardaí who support voluntary community organisations look no different from the average 'paddy wagon' although they are internally furnished with bus seats rather than a cage.

[25] Youth workers operate constantly with notions of 'child protection' in mind. They avoid being alone with a young person in closed surroundings, another adult is always sought.

[26] Dublin is widely considered to be symbolically divided by the River Liffey between the 'richer' South and 'less affluent' North.

From the outset, my social class, revealed through my speech and status as a researcher, mark me as different to the young men I hope to get close to. Their mockery extends to the way I dress. On the other hand a relationship develops between us as we partake of the outdoor activities. Gerry is satisfied that we can all begin working together. I already, however, suspect that the young men see me more in the role of a youth worker than a researcher. Over the next months, I maintain a regular presence at *The Club*, on average eight hours a day, five days a week. At this stage I feared that I would never get beyond the stock denials and cover-ups the young men deliver to their various workers. Equally, as the young men gradually lost interest in *The Club*, it became clear that if I was to secure sufficient data I would have to 'push' myself deeper into their social world.

2.3.3 One of the Gang: An Honorary Member of *The Crew*

Gerry facilitates a visit to the home of each client, where I obtain parental consent to undertake the research. It doubles as an opportunity to glimpse for the first time my primary participants' home environments. I begin to spend more time in the street, talking to *Crew* members before and after sessions, accompanying them to court, quizzing their parents and social workers, beginning to build a picture of their backgrounds. Occasionally I remind the young men that 'for my book' it would be very useful to spend more time with them and engage in interviews. I have been in the field for approximately six months when Gerry facilitates a number of early interviews. If anything, these confirmed the notion that an extended ethnographic presence is key to gaining open accounts from participants. While the transcripts contained a few seams of valuable material, generally the young men were keen to get across that they were 'done with robbing'. Others, particularly Macker, were fond of attempting to shock me with exaggerated tales of deviance that correspond to some media representations of inner-city youth: 'Do ya want to hear stories about us smokin' heroin and robbin' cars?'

The young men were deeply suspicious of my motives. There was nothing in their cultural lexicon to place an outsider participant observer within a comprehensible frame of reference.

> 'Who are you? Are ya lookin' for a phone?' A peripheral *Crew* member notices my presence (extract from fieldnotes).

There was no way for them to be sure that I was not a 'rat' and in any event I appeared most likely to be yet another youth worker, anxious for them to speak about their reasons for being involved in crime. Explaining to me why he did not want to engage in a formal interview Byrnesy recalled with aversion how he had spent 'three hours' talking to a social worker: 'she kept asking me why I was robbing'. Ultimately I learnt to be thankful for the increasing acceptance I gained, as a silent observer when a large crowd of the extended *Crew* was present. One evening when by chance I met with the core members, who were in high-spirits, in a poorly-lit side road, I had a breakthrough which is recorded thus in my fieldnotes:

> The lads spy me and rush over chanting my name. There is an air of excitement and the gang are moving swiftly. I am the centre of attention, they are all joshing around me. Podge tries his usual trick of trying to get my phone out of my pocket. Macker goes behind me and unzips my bag taking out a can of deodorant. Wacker surprisingly steps to my defence and tells them not to be robbing off me... They walk by a house and leap to grab a cable running up it, pulling it loose. They run ahead laughing loudly. It is infectious and I cannot help but join in. I'm still flanked by Podge, Macker, Mano and Wacker. The boys are surprised to hear me laugh. 'Johnny's in the gang, Johnny's in the gang' Podge chants. Macker and Wacker ask if I want to see them rob a bike, I don't answer. They lead me down a lane. Wacker lights up a cigarette and I do the same. Mano asks me for one and again Wacker jumps to my defence: 'Don't be giving them smokes.' I do anyway. Mano turns to a wall where all of *The Crew*'s names are written in marker and writes my name at the bottom of it. Podge asks why I don't rob bikes, 'I'll get you one for forty euro' he assures me, 'keep the money for smokes'. I'm a bit taken aback by the sudden welcome. The lads take me further down the lane where there is a bike tied to some railings with a U-lock. 'Watch this' says Wacker who

> hops up on the bike and violently jerks it around until the metal of the lock fatigues and it opens...'

I took from this incident tacit permission to accompany *The Crew* following *Club* sessions, and for approximately two to three months had a period of relatively open access. I spent time with various *Crew* members as they hung around in the *arches* of *Northstreet* 'skinning' and smoking joints, and recorded their contemplations by memory, to leave after a while and run to *The Club* where I would write them out in full. On days such as this I met older, more peripheral members of the group, who as they were over 18 occasionally invited me to join them in the local pub. After a number of drinks these participants began to tell of a different side to life in *Northstreet,* speaking of intense emotional pain and failed suicide attempts. The closeness achieved during these moments was rarely replicated in the cold and sober light of day. At the same time, through a *Club* orchestrated initiative, I began tutoring Adam, and consequently spent considerable time with him. I developed a friendship with this smaller, younger and thus more vulnerable member of *The Crew* which would result in very fruitful interviews and conversations at a later date.

The Crew is a loose collective and, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, its members are anything but homogenous. Ultimately each member had their own opinion of me and my presence and the level of access on any day depended on who was present. For reasons which I cannot divine, Wacker began to voice his objections, first to me asking questions, and as the weeks progressed to my very presence around them. He is a very influential figure as the unofficial leader of *The Crew.* Dommer operates his life based on telling different stories to his parents, friends, and Gerry and began to object to my presence, in a very polite way, due to the fact that I was beginning to know too much about him. Macker, is wildly unpredictable and interchanged between extreme friendliness, complete with hugs of greeting, to violent threats, depending on his mood. Adam and Philo were the closest I came to having sponsors within *The Crew.* Adam genuinely seemed to consider me 'one of the lads' and could see nothing wrong with my presence. Keano was open with me in the many sessions and interviews we had one-on-

one in *The Club* and seemed to enjoy talking about his life. Overall I had been tolerated, for the most part, as a novelty. It amused certain members that they were able to 'subvert' a worker, bring someone from the world of officialdom into theirs. I was also a soft mark for loose change, cigarettes and always had 'credit' on my phone. The latter commodity became increasingly a source of conflict as I felt it better to feign a lack thereof rather than permit the young men to use my phone to order cannabis.

Ultimately, what made my continued participant observation as a silent member of *The Crew* untenable, was the need to manage my identity and conduct participant observation with other groups. I was expected to repay *The Crew* for their co-operation by actively facilitating breaches of *Club* rules. Since I was a witness to theft and drug consumption in the streets, they understood that I would not object to it in *The Club* or on its activities. I was deferent to Gerry and his agenda where his project was concerned. A number of conflicts ensued as they discovered that I could not give them unfettered access to the pool table or allow them to smoke cannabis on trips. The ethics of conducting research with young offenders (see for example: West, 1980) confounded my acceptability. I was present without participating never buying their stolen goods nor engaging with them in any alcohol or drug consumption. The latter was a serious impediment as it was a mainstay of their daily activities and at various stages my refusal to partake was the subject of comment. 'You have to smoke this if you want to hang with us' Macker would often taunt, proffering joints close to my mouth. Unlike the experience of Scott (2004), the fact that I was not a drug user did not earn me any respect. Following a number of requests to leave, ranging from the polite to the threatening, I could only join smaller groups of more sympathetic members and only on a sporadic basis.

Our relationship broke down almost altogether when I commenced policing fieldwork. Despite the fact that I had discussed my 'transfer' with them on numerous occasions, the sight of me in a police car confirmed their deepest suspicions. I was now a confirmed 'rat'. They ultimately confronted me about the perceived betrayal to which I responded that I would disclose nothing about them. They remained sceptical; they could not understand why I would choose to 'go around' with 'Garda scum', their mortal enemies.

My response that it was 'for my book' was met by Macker with: 'Fuck your book'. I was certainly no longer 'in the gang'.

2.3.4 Identity Management and Research within the Community

The challenge of conducting participant observation with multiple participant groups is the need to remain acceptable to them all. Indeed, there are always issues of identity management for the ethnographer (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1995: 83, 92). For my part, I felt it necessary to balance my involvement with *The Crew* with acceptability to their community (the structure of which is discussed in detail in Chapter Four). I felt very vulnerable when accompanying the young men on thefts and drug binges and usually would leave if I saw that we were being observed by other *Northstreet* residents. On one occasion when I accompanied *The Crew* on a drinking 'session' in a concealed area at the back of the *Northstreet* complex, a mother asked me if I was 'drinking with (my) clients'. Owing to Gerry's kindness and the effort he had invested in building up the project's reputation, I was conscious of the need to avoid tainting it with disrepute. There is a strong conservative element in the locality, and allegations of wrong-doing are prime weapons in the arena of community politics. My standing in the adult world of *Northstreet* and that of *The Club*, I felt, would have been damaged had I been a conspicuous participant in *Crew* activities.

As acquaintances became established and as I grew in confidence within the field I began to inundate residents with requests for interviews. For their part, they largely viewed the research as a requirement for a college course. One community leader, when approached for an interview offered to sign whatever I gave her, but said that she did not have the time to 'sit and chat'. 'How many names do ya need?' she asked, 'I can get ya loads'. She was happy to help me confound the regulations of officialdom, by helping me to conjure the illusion of greater participation, but unwilling to speak in any detail about her life. Indeed, many community leadership figures, and those associated with them would not engage in the interview process with any candour, frequently failing to turn up for appointments, or remaining true to the prevailing rhetoric when present. I became increasingly despondent at the lack of interest, and my initial belief that the residents

would repay my efforts at 'community development' unravelled. Owing to our existing relationship a number of *The Crew*'s parents submitted to the process, while Anne, a community worker of many years standing, whose own insights became a valuable contribution, opened access to a swathe of participants.

This group, whilst open, added a distinct polemic gloss to the bulk of the data I gleaned from the community. Formerly leadership figures within *Northstreet*, the group had been active in anti-drug politics in the eighties and nineties and are now deposed and marginalised by current leadership. They have a number of axes to grind in relation to the operation of community leadership and the status of certain residents with whom they have engaged in conflict ranging from the symbolic to the violent. The man who I call *Barry* kindly took a day off work in order to take me on a tour of the area and speak to me, giving up several 'half days' to engage in taped interviews. The women from this group meet for tea most mornings and I became an occasional addition, thanks again to Anne's invitation. They spoke candidly about issues of crime in the locality, including that which their own children commit. The emotional intensity reached at some of these sessions assured me of the veracity of their convictions. These participants tutored me in the divisions that exist within *Northstreet* society and kept me up-to-date on 'flat talk'. They were keen that I see beyond what they saw as something of a conspiracy to mask the true incidence of serious offending within the flats. Barry encouraged me not to merely believe him, but to see with my own eyes.

2.3.5 Ethics, Truth and the Politics of Representation

Mindful of the fact that I had obtained ethical clearance on the basis of operating through informed consent, I practised my research overtly. I obtained signatures on detailed consent forms outlining the fundamentals of the research and the nature of partial confidentiality with all those who engaged in formal interviews. Following several lacklustre interviews I gave informants the option of an informal session: no tape-recorder or names signed and noted improved responses. No one seemed overly concerned with scribbled words on loose sheets of paper. The fact that *Crew* members and parents had signed a general consent imbued me with a certain satisfaction that I had

achieved a level of adequate ethical practice. Responsible research, however, goes beyond the bounds of bureaucratic fastidiousness; there is the ethics of conveying the correct meaning of participant accounts (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1995: 273-5). To this end, I was conscious to clarify issues that arose in interview or conversation. What became increasingly frustrating and ultimately fundamental to the research was divining 'truth' from the contested accounts that sprung up on nearly every key community issue. With two factions in *Northstreet* offering different accounts of local criminality, in effect, trading accusations, the waters muddied considerably. Ultimately I made use of 'neutral' sources: the local Gardaí, Council workers, members of religious orders and 'ordinary' residents of the flats to help make sense of what I was hearing.

The manner in which one is to represent participants and their activities is a matter of some concern for ethnographers (Armstrong, 1993; Hobbs, 1993). In the field participants hold much of the power as ultimate arbiters of access. Nevertheless, the observant researcher can see much of what participants may try to hide, or have no intention of disclosing. On return to the academic world, moreover, the ethnographer, freed of the constraints of the field, wields the power to represent study participants in the annals of official knowledge (Hobbs, 1993). For my part, I am reluctant to represent as fact, that which I did not witness directly or gain a clear and relatively uncontested account of from numerous different sources. Polemic accounts are flagged thus. Much like Bourgois, I am concerned that I may represent my participants in a negative light, but take note of his reluctance to censor the experience of poverty (2003: 11-13). Ethnographers of crime may be called upon to suspend judgement of their participants (Polsky, 1967) and this was a personal strategy in both undertaking the research and preparing the manuscript. My intention is to highlight both the 'positive' and 'negative' aspects of the social world of the participants: to describe without judgment and analyse without moral bias. This is as much the case when treating of youth offenders and working-class communities as when dealing with the police and social workers.

2.3.6 Researching Officialdom: Youth/Social/Community Workers and the Gardaí

In contrast to the manner in which I struggled for the best part of a year and a half to gain a satisfactory handle on life in *Northstreet*, my progress with state and voluntary agents progressed with relative ease. Whilst at *The Club* I was a mainstay at various local care worker meetings and gained an almost instant acceptance. Having a background in community work, the lingua franca of the workers was familiar; we had similar attitudes and political outlooks and usually shared the same class background. I rapidly achieved 'insider' status. The workers maintained diaries and kept to interview appointments, were familiar and comfortable with confidentiality agreements, and often used the sessions to 'clear the pipes', professing to have enjoyed the experience of articulating their vision of their work and their clients. Listening to interview tapes I am struck by the levels of comfort in the conversations, which were frequently punctuated by laughter, as opposed to the nervousness I can detect in my voice, and/or the participant's during interviews with *Northstreet* residents. Having all completed some form of third-level education, the workers had an awareness of my own undertaking and their role within it, often plying me with literature, further contacts and offering further assistance. For my part I feared that I was beginning to 'go native' and berated myself for spending so much time in this company. Once I engaged with young people in the streets I correctly feared that I had subsumed the worker identity. On the other hand, I wonder whether this would have been in any way avoidable, given the propensity of communities to assign an identity to researchers (Atkinson & Hammersly, 1995).

Conducting research within the Gardaí was an entirely more complicated affair (the results of this phase of research are discussed in detail in Chapter Five). Negotiating this particular period of access required an insurance indemnification and the trading of letters and phone calls for a further two months. It furthermore required a 'gear shift' in terms of formality. In the more regimented environment of the police station I felt that it was important to fit what I imagined to be the expectations of a 'researcher'. I eschewed my regular clothing in favour of slacks and smart shirts and was more forthright about taking notes and requesting interviews. I was further conscious of the need to work quickly and gather sufficient data within the two month period. I was received by an Inspector I knew

through earlier fieldwork and was initially assigned to the Community Policing Unit, perhaps because this group was seen as being more personable and helpful. I was surprised and heartened by the openness and co-operation I was afforded.

A relationship of mutual respect seemed to grow between me and the majority of the Gardaí at *Northstreet Station*. I was keen to get across that I intended to 'live the life of a Guard'. I kept to the same shifts as those I was 'shadowing', writing up field notes at home on my return. A number of the Gardaí expressed approval at this approach. The long and anti-social hours I chose to work, as well as the diet of take away food I shared with my participants, imbued me with a sense of the effort and sacrifice involved in their chosen occupation. After over a year of fieldwork in which I felt I was pushing against a relatively uncooperative cohort, I found my time in the station to be relatively straightforward. For the most part the Gardaí perceived me as a 'student' and I was not considered particularly threatening. My status, rather, was a source of jocularity. It was joked that I was a 'rat', 'pro-*gouger*' or a 'protesting type' and that they should watch what they did and said in my presence. They were not entirely inaccurate. The good relations I shared with them, however, had subjected my initial prejudices to a total reversal. Much like Kraska (1998) I found that I enjoyed my time in the heady macho company of the police and frequently found myself taking part in their good natured banter. I forced myself, therefore, to maintain a distance from these participants. A number of incidents served as 'reality checks' reminding me that not all Gardaí treat inner-city residents with the same kindness they afforded me.

A month later, arrangements were made to transfer me to the regular unit. The Gardaí were protective of me. When missiles flew from flat-complex balconies or fierce street fighting erupted I was ordered to return to a car. If this was not possible one of the larger Gardaí would generally position themselves in front of me. It was inner-city residents and Gardaí from other stations that tended to react towards me with confusion and/or hostility. Occasionally, when depositing prisoners in holding cells in unfamiliar stations, attempts were made to incarcerate me. My sponsors needed to speak on my behalf swiftly. From my first day on patrol, children from the surrounding communities would

ask if I was a Guard[27]. In a community with a particularly poor relationship with the Gardaí I was seen as a soft target for insulting comments and I tasted my only experience of racism during fieldwork[28]. A group of young men warned me that I was 'going to get my face knocked in', resulting in one of their number's arrest for 'threatening and abusive behaviour'[29]. In my smart clothing I was sometimes confused for a plain-clothes detective, which the Gardaí I accompanied occasionally confirmed, either for private amusement or to dispel further questions as to my identity. When I identified myself to the public as a researcher, which I did whenever directly questioned, reactions were varied. Some assumed I was a newspaper reporter whilst those with grievances often told their stories.

2.3.7 An Uncomfortable Exit

A number of particularly uncomfortable incidents occurred when my Garda participants interacted with *The Crew* or the general youth of *Northstreet*. I generally felt a desire to speak out on their defence, yet equally wanted to seem favourable to the Gardaí's position. I felt torn, yet used these situations as the fertile sources of data that they were, without adding the complication of a personal intervention. I would later try to apologise to the young people in question. *Northstreet* residents seeing me in police company often assumed that I had been arrested. When asked, I felt it important to be honest, and I could see previously solid informants visibly stiffen when told that I was working *with* the Gardaí. Ultimately, the collapse of the limited trust I had developed with certain *Northstreet* residents served to sever my links to that field. The Garda fieldwork was structured and ended on a particular date and I was thus fully extricated. In relation to *The Crew* and *Northstreet* community it was not the most amicable of exit strategies but a final one nonetheless. I do regret that I would no longer be seen as a pseudo-friend by many individuals who would go on to threaten me whenever they saw me in the weeks that followed. I was, however, ready at this stage to return to my office, transcribe my

[27] In the communities surrounding *Northstreet Station* adults tended to avoid public contact with the Gardaí and therefore it would only have been young children who approached to ask questions.
[28] I have non-Irish parents. It is interesting to note that it was only when I associated with the Gardaí that this became an issue; otherwise I was at least tolerated by all of the residents of the wider locality.
[29] An uncomfortable incident occurred shortly after the completion of the fieldwork when I was forced to disappoint the arresting Guard, who had been acting for my safety, by refusing to act as a witness in court or help in any way with the charge.

audio tapes, manually code my fieldnote manuscripts and typed transcriptions and begin the process of writing up.

2.4 Limitations

The ethnographic study of crime produces particular results, rich in detail and authenticity, yet limited to a narrow group of participants and linked to the personality of the researcher. It is possible, however, to assume that there will be certain similarities between a cohort in an ethnographic study and others who share the same socio-economic and cultural characteristics, whilst the role of the researcher can be made explicit as a caveat through expressed reflexivity. The shortcomings and exacting nature of ethnographic methods account for their continued status as a minority practice, yet for all their limitations there are distinct advantages. There are however, limitations that are specific to this study that must be dealt with before the data ahead can be considered. As a structured doctoral programme there were limits to the amount of time available for fieldwork and whilst approximately 18 months is not a short time, it allowed only a brief period of trust with many of the participants. Thus, much of the key data was gathered under pressure during the final stages of fieldwork, during a relatively tumultuous period for *The Club*, which was undergoing staff changes and for *The Crew*, many of whom were facing their most serious criminal charges to date.

Conclusion

Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher was faced with the problem of his 'outsider' status. This is compounded in his analysis of life in *Northstreet* where his principal informants were also outsider groups (See Elias, 1994; O'Brien, 2004: 26): *The Crew*, and members of the old leadership. Few *Northstreet* 'insiders' were willing to co-operate significantly with the research process. This no doubt has implications for the manner in which the dominant factions of *Northstreet* are represented in the text that follows. Whilst these caveats do not apply to researching the 'workers' to the same extent, they are very much applicable to the examination of the Gardaí as the researcher would be classed as an 'outside outsider' (Brown, 1996). Nevertheless, the fact that it was considerably easier to conduct fieldwork within 'professional' settings, brings questions of trust, safety,

education and class to the fore. The researcher, having been identified from an early stage as having links to the agents of officialdom, could only pierce through the veil of obfuscation and silence that was erected around discussions of criminal issues through perseverance or appealing to existing conflicts within the community. Without a 'primary relationship' with potential informants from the community, frank participation was untenable and trust took considerable time to develop. In the 'professional' settings, however, the emblem of my academic institution, coupled with a brief 'once-over' assessment of the researcher was usually sufficient to secure meaningful participation. Class issues have played a definitive role in the shaping of fieldwork progress and hence on the quality and quantity of the ethnographic material that was gleaned. It is only proper that it should form an important part of the discussion of the ethnographic material that follows.

Figure 1: Dilapidated Georgian doorway adorned with the graffiti of contemporary Dublin. Photograph by Anne Maree Barry.

Chapter 3
The Crew: Crime, Culture and Identity in *Northstreet*

Introduction

The issues discussed within this thesis centre around offending behaviour, in particular the varieties of youth crime practiced by *The Crew*, a male youth peer group based in the area referred to as *Northstreet.* As will become apparent later in this chapter, and throughout this study, the preferred activities of the group come under heavy censure by the leaders of their own community and by the agents of wider society. This chapter describes in detail the nature of *The Crew*'s behaviour, contextualising it within the logic of their lived lives and specifically their demonstrable adherence to a 'rough' or 'street' variant of working-class culture. To this end, the first subsection of the chapter provides a description of *Northstreet*, *The Crew*, and their specific 'objectionable' pursuits. The second subsection explores the individual biographies of *Crew* members in-depth, noting the degree to which these have supported their involvement in street culture and the formation of their 'delinquent' group. The third subsection focuses on the advantages the young men gain from their choice of lifestyle, outlining the contrast between the manner in which they are perceived of (marginalised) within their own community and the positive identity they achieve through the practice of 'street' culture.

3.1 Community and Youth Crime: A Descriptive Introduction

The material below offers a sense of the community in which *The Crew* live and an introduction to the structure of their group. Their day-to-day lives and activities are discussed in detail allowing the cultural values that underpin them to emerge.

3.1.1 *Northstreet*

A Dublin City Council owned and managed public housing complex dominates *Northstreet* both in terms of its physical space and socio-economic status. The flats are squat four-story buildings, with flat roofs of greying-black tar and rounded stacks that bear numerous chimneys. In the past these would have been a constant source of black smoke, prior to the installation of gas fired central heating. Brightly coloured doors,

elaborate playgrounds and patches of well-tended garden mitigate the drabness and uniformity of the structures. Like an amphitheatre, the flat buildings face on to a central square. Doors and windows face inwards to the rest of the community, whilst walls face the outside world. The vibrancy of flat life is sealed off from the outside observer yet open to view for all within. Drying laundry hangs from washing lines attached to balconies exposing the content of whole families' wardrobes. The community is understandably close and 'village'-like. 'Flat-talk' or local gossip and an intense connection to the immediate familiarity of the locality ensure that residents are deeply acquainted with each other and knowledgeable of the details of each others' lives. During the day, on the pavements outside the flats and in the central courtyard, women push babies in prams or trolleys laden with shopping, stopping to speak with each other. Young children run and play, others speed about on bikes, young adults and teenagers congregate. Loud shouting is frequently heard in *Northstreet* with many residents eschewing the newly installed intercom system in favour of the more traditional means of announcing their presence. The street's animated street life is subject to the seasons, more subdued and short-lived in the colder and shorter winter days, whilst lasting long into the bright, warm summer evenings. At night *Northstreet* is usually quiet, windows are darkened, a dull flickering indicates the last few residents awake and watching their TVs. At other times there are boisterous groups of youth or young adults revelling late into the night.

There are complex divisions between private and public, affluence and poverty, connectedness and alienation amongst the residents in *Northstreet*. These are observable to some extent through differences in the internal condition of the various flat buildings. The flats are divided into blocks. Each block has a doorway or '*arch*', accessible only to its specific residents. The stairways, corridors and connecting balconies, floored with raw concrete and painted black, supported by walls of concrete breezeblocks painted a bright orange, provide access to the individual flats. These spaces are not cleaned by the council on a regular basis and their condition is determined by the residents who use them. The walls may be grimy and marked with graffiti. Local youth record their friendship groups by listing names or initials, whilst the occasional mavericks simply inscribe their names,

possibly including the year in which they wrote it. Equally, these areas may be newly cleaned, freshly painted and smelling of Jeye's Fluid (a strong disinfectant). The balconies may be dotted with dirt, rubbish and fresh spittle, old washing machines, lumber and machine parts. Equally, they may be meticulously clean, feature pot plants, small plaster statues or wall hangings, pristine park style benches, well organised bicycles and the occasional motorised scrambler. The appearance of the semi-private spaces in *Northstreet* says much about the financial liquidity of the families within the individual flats.

Little in the public spaces of *Northstreet* belies the poverty that is the common heritage of its residents. Signs in the window of the community centre advertise a crèche and courses in computers, relaxation, yoga and crafts. *Northstreet* is said to have been 'regenerated' and 'reclaimed' from the chaos and crime for which it was notorious in the eighties and early nineties, a showpiece for the relevant authorities. The transformation of the physical space has not necessarily altered underlying patterns of life and encultured behaviours that have developed over several generations of poverty and disadvantage. A survey conducted locally by Dublin City Council in 2003 shows that 60% of local residents are still dependant on social welfare, whilst only 3% are involved in higher education. In recent years, the buoyant Irish economy has increased the earning and consumption potential of certain residents. Despite the proliferation of 'middle-class' incomes and heightened aspirations within the working-class locale, disadvantage, firmly established cultural norms relating to the acceptability of certain criminal acts, and the inherent distrust of the justice process remain potent influences. Within this milieu of the working-class community in late-modernity, a group of young men negotiate their identity and their relationship to offending behaviour.

<u>3.1.2 *The Crew*</u>

The Crew is a term occasionally used in jest, by the eight young men composing the core of a friendship group associated with the *Northstreet* flats. *The Crew* is not a 'gang' such as those described in the American studies discussed in Chapter 1; membership is highly fluid, contingent on who is 'coming out' on a particular day and frequently oscillates

between two young men talking quietly and a full scale gathering of over twenty youth taunting passers by. The young men[30] are aged between 14 and 19. *Northstreet*'s outer courtyard represents their principal congregation point, yet certain elements of the community are keen to articulate that the group invades from nearby areas and are not of the street itself. *The Crew* are young offenders, and whilst attitudes to and involvement in criminality varies widely between individual members, this would seem sufficient to earn the group the hostility of certain residents and Dublin City Council who own the complex. Nevertheless, *The Crew* endures. The street is their natural domain, and much as the Council asserts ownership, they contest it through adorning hallways and walls with their names in rough graffiti and resisting requests to 'move on'. *The Crew* members have a mechanism in place which insulates them from the critical voices from their community and wider society. They adhere to 'street culture', a phenomenon that has been well documented in ethnographic works in America and Britain, which offers respite from the tragedies they endure and forms an alternative to a 'respectable' life trajectory they see as unattainable and undesirable.

3.1.3 Street Lives: Creating Leisure and Economic Opportunities

The material below examines *The Crew*'s day-to-day activities generally, before individually considering their most common offences: theft, cannabis consumption, joyriding and violence. Using local street spaces is essential to *The Crew*'s way of life. The working-class home tends to be diminutive; a regulated, feminized space, a monument to the (traditionally large) family, creating a necessity to socialise outside of it (Suttles, 1968: 91). Typically in working-class areas the different generations are relatively segregated despite close living conditions, yet younger groups tend to emulate the older in a more extreme fashion as they charge the boundaries of acceptability (Parker, 1974: 48-53). Young working-class men attempt to avoid the formality and regulation of school and structured leisure (Willis, 1977; Corrigan, 1979: 109). *The Crew* have taken a cue from certain local adult men by seeking autonomy and independence on the street. Young working-class men suffer from a double deprivation, gaining little

[30] This study is subjeet to the traditional criticism of excluding young women. It is simply the case that they are rarely present within *The Crew*, subject to one exception whom the researcher never formed any kind of research relations with, and the occasional presence of one of the member's short-lived romantic interests.

satisfaction from work and education, yet having little money to engage in leisure through legitimate commercial routes (Corrigan, 1979: 96). Life on the street and the presence of one's friends facilitates both leisure and financial gain, the combination of which provides a more appealing proposition than the subordination and deference they would be expected to give teachers, youth workers or indeed their parents.

Paradoxically, offending represents a central part of *The Crew's* conversation and identity, yet a relatively small portion of their time. For the most part, these young people spend their days 'cruising': walking or cycling around, 'knocking in on' (visiting) other *Crew* members, seeking each others company and using their mobile phones to this end (where these have not been lost or sold). In much the same way that Decker and Van Winkle (1996) note that teenage gang members spend most of their time in 'normal' teenage activities, a great deal of *The Crews*' day is occupied by watching television, playing game consoles, kicking about a football or repairing legitimately obtained bicycles or scramblers. The following extract demonstrates the manner in which their days are unstable and contingent; a conversation soon becomes an excursion during which all the resources of the street are utilised to gain either amusement or profit:

> The Crew are hanging around outside *The Club* (a youth project attempting to divert them from offending), on the other side of the road, leaning on the railings, chatting. Macker asks me if I want to buy a Sagem silver flip phone for 25 euro. I decline. Macker and Byrnesy are discussing an incident in FÁS[31], which I don't entirely catch. Byrnesy had earlier told me that he had found the phone, but it seems likely it was smuggled out of their classroom in an empty crisp packet and that it, in fact, belonged to their teacher. Although they had gotten away with it the teacher had been asking them questions, he was looking for his phone. They are a bit paranoid about running into him, so they get Keano to hold it, but disguise their uneasiness:
>
> Byrnesy: 'Keano, you hold it, I'm always losin' phones.'
> Keano (probably uneasy about getting involved): 'But I've no zip on my pockets.'

[31] The Irish vocational training body operates courses for school leavers and the unemployed.

Macker (more forceful, settling the issue): 'Look Mr. Connor doesn't know you, you'll be grand, just hold it.'

Keano will probably now be entitled to a share in the proceeds for his efforts. They look at passing cars fairly intently for a few moments nearly expecting to see the teacher. An elderly resident walks by with his grandchildren and the lads make an 'old-man-groaning' noise at him. He ignores them. The lads discuss a number of issues: The 'bird' Wacker was supposed to meet before school, who he assures us all is 'good lookin' an all', a friend of his who was charged for smoking a joint, and a group of young men from elsewhere in the inner city who were caught by the Gardaí in a stolen car out in the country. They speak of them with a certain admiration and Byrnesy suggests that the other group could have a buzz stealing cars to get out to the country for their court hearings.

One of them 'has' a bike, so we set off to see it. They walk a few minutes to a parked moped and they examine it intently, 'Go on, get this bike' says one, but it won't be easy, there are a lot of cars on the road and they are still a bit nervous about the phone. Dommer, however, pries open the seat compartment, but seeing that there is nothing but a red waterproof jacket, throws it back in and shuts the lid. We continue. Down a lane there are new private apartments complete with CCTV cameras which they leave alone and proceed to the back of an office building whose black gates are lying open. The lads go in to a bicycle chained up at the back of its yard. An attempt is made to release it but the bike comes apart and they leave it, running out of the gates…

We cross towards the shops of the city centre and through another set of flats, where two girls around 12 years of age ask Dommer for a smoke. He asks them if they've a REAL smoke (cannabis). … Two men around nineteen are talking to Macker out of earshot and money and something else I can't see properly changes hands. Macker tells me to put them in my book, that they are real criminals. 'Don't give him me name!' warns one of the strangers. 'Don't mind him,' Macker dismisses the stranger, 'he doesn't even rob'. As we continue into the city centre, there are several parked cars and vans lining the street. The boys peer through windows and test doors. They are shouting and laughing, this seems to be very

> much a play experience to them, this is made more apparent when they spy an electronic shutter rising and Macker and Wacker grab hold of it to be carried up. A man walks by and tells them to get off it: 'Fuck off ya cunt,' Wacker mutters quietly. Dommer holds open the doors to an apartment block when a resident walks through. A number of the group quickly run in. They come down a few minutes later… Getting to the bike racks, they search for a likely candidate but are unable to find one. Macker and Wacker spot a good silver flashlight mounted on one of the bikes and Macker snatches it off. Wacker gets annoyed: 'I called it.' As we continue the lads attempt to discourage me from following, telling me that I'll earn a criminal record and laugh when I tell them that I'm sure my mother will bail me out. Relying on one's mother seems to be taboo. They see some black-clad skater youths around their age (a middle-class sub-culture). Byrnesy asks Wacker: 'We rob them poshies?' Wacker smiles. I am told to leave at this stage: 'We're going to the south side to make some money' Dommer informs me, and it is clear that I am just going to be in the way (extract from fieldnotes).

The vignette above represents less than an hour in the company of *The Crew*. Much of their time is spent in listless 'hanging around'. Conversation fills dead time and offers an opportunity for the young men to discuss the issues they deem important to the group. Within *The Crew* various goods obtained either legitimately or through theft are bartered or sold. Much of conversation centres on bicycles, mopeds and cars, discussing their value and various merits or demerits. Thus even these humdrum moments serve as an occasion to assert adherence to working-class notions of entrepreneurship[32]. The young men thus portray themselves as hustlers as opposed to delinquents. The act of 'going off for a buzz' breaks up the monotony and provides fodder for further conversation[33]. It is a random spontaneous process, which can be difficult to articulate, as is demonstrated by Adam's attempt below:

[32] See Hobbs (1988) for an account of working-class entrepreneurship in adult East-End Londoners.
[33] See similarity to group discussed by Corrigan (1979)

> A buzz is just going around having a laugh, having a joke, probably going on a bike, up to the straight tracks, up to [suburbs] there. Just basically you know, having a laugh, not fighting or anything just, you know, sitting down and just, having a few joints or something, rob bikes, drugs, nah basically having joints. I'm not saying that's a laugh or anything, but just a laugh, going around with your mates, stealing a moped, you know just like going around like, going home, just, you know. Not robbing or anything; that stuff can happen but eh, just, really hard to explain (Adam, *Crew* member, 14 years of age).

Various ethnographies of groups of offending working-class youth have observed that the types of crime usually engaged in tend to be petty, opportunistic and relatively infrequent (Mays, 1966; Parker, 1974:63-70; Gill, 1977; Corrigan, 1979). The same can be said of *The Crew.* In this manner, criminality might be said to be somewhat incidental to their activities. It sits, however, at the core of the group's identity. Acts of daring, embodied by the criminal act present an opportunity for each member to assert his masculinity and toughness amongst the group, their loyalty to its values, and to exhibit difference to mainstream society, whom they perceive as 'down on them'.

3.1.4 Theft: Culturally Comfortable Street Enterprise

The effects of declining industrial employment on working-class men, both young and adult is well documented in American and British literature (See for example: Liebow 1968; Robins and Cohen 1978). The disappearance of the stable, decently paid, heavy labour job which sustained working-class families for generations in these countries left a vacuum in the lives of affected individuals and communities. The male peer group, street corner life and criminality comes to inhabit the cultural space that was held by the role of the male as breadwinner and head of family, where the legitimate economy no longer provides the means for this position to be achieved[34]. Whilst traditionally young men would have followed their fathers into industrial employment[35], in *Northstreet,* as with other communities studied, this is now a very rare occurrence. Without casual, well paid

[34] See also Bourgouis 1995

[35] See Willis 1977

employment readily available for *The Crew*, theft is perceived as the most realistically tangible means of yielding an income.

The Crew's favoured congregating point at *Northstreet* is in close proximity to Dublin's busy city centre, which offers rich potential for theft. In 'town' bicycle racks and parked cars line the streets; the opportunities present themselves. By the end of fieldwork *The Crew* have settled into a more or less regular practice of stealing mobile phones and bicycles, for which they have developed a well-established customer base. The act of 'cruising' doubles as an opportunity to review the locality and establish opportunities for theft. Ideally, one member of *The Crew* would have an item, car or shed 'sussed' before any attempt at theft is made. This process involves first identifying the item as something that is worth stealing. Secondly, ensuring that there is a viable manner in which it can be stolen. Thirdly, where possible, to maintain vigilance over a certain amount of time and establish the kinds of security measures or surveillance that is evident in the immediate vicinity. In the case of a locked bike, initial strain might be placed on the lock to break it more easily at a later time. At this stage the *Crew* member will refer to the item as his own: 'I have this bike, you want to take a look?' There are rules that operate delineating objects that may be stolen from those that should not. As a rule of thumb, the property of someone they know, and know to be on a similar economic level, is not targeted unless as part of a particular vendetta or disagreement. Where the owner cannot be identified, the property is fair game, but the inquiry is always made: 'anyone know who owns this bike?' Although the influence of immediate opportunity is strong, cultural rules, planning and forethought form the basis for a large proportion of their thefts.

The act of theft is generally undertaken collectively. There are multiple tasks to be assigned. 'Keeping sketch' is the method by which a look out is kept for Gardaí, owners or concerned citizens and one member will take this lesser role. Another 'clips' the ignition wire or 'snaps' the bicycle lock (depending on the vehicle in question), or alternatively smashes the car window with a projectile or an arm wrapped in a tracksuit top. Another person then 'takes' the item they are stealing, someone else may then be called upon to 'hold' it. If they then decide to continue 'cruising' the object will be

offered for sale on the street to those who seem like potential customers. Otherwise the goods will be sold to shops whose owners display a lack of curiosity in relation to their origin, to local criminals, or door to door in housing complexes considered appropriate. The prices generally sought by *The Crew* are very low: usually 20-50 euro for a bicycle or mobile phone, depending on its quality. Where goods are of exceptional quality they can be sold at a higher price. The proceeds of the sale can be in cash or cannabis depending on the customer and are divided between those who participated in the theft. Towards the end of fieldwork, the researcher is told that each member centrally involved in 'robbing' is earning approximately 150 euro per week. *The Crew*'s acts of theft and trading in the informal economy demonstrate not only their close links to the latter, but their dedication to working-class cultural values of self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship.

3.1.5 Inebriation: Cannabis and *The Crew*

> 'We're not real big criminals, we're only into small things. We just want hash.' (Macker – extract from fieldnotes)

Unlike older adults locally, members of *The Crew* prefer cannabis to alcohol. The latter is occasionally consumed but generally only on 'special occasions' as its availability must be negotiated through an adult, either an older sibling or a passer-by on the street who is willing to purchase it[36]. On the other hand, cannabis or hash can be purchased whether for cash or 'on tick' (credit) from a number of different men living on or close to *Northstreet*. There is a certain amount of familiarity and safety in purchasing hash. The process is conducted with others deeply embedded within the local informal economy and stolen goods can be offered as payment. Moreover, the manner in which the young men test the hash, through biting or burning it, displays their acumen within this economy and is an opportunity to forge greater relationships with the older more established individuals. Cannabis consumption is a collective activity, three rolling papers are stuck together into which the tobacco from a cigarette is added, and finally hash is 'burnt in'

[36] This situation has radically changed since the completion of fieldwork, and alcohol consumption has become a staple activity of *The Crew* according to many informants within *Northstreet*.

before the joint is licked and a 'roach' inserted. The joint is passed around and arguments and good-natured banter tends to take place in order to secure a place in the rotation. Pride is taken is rolling a joint that is well shaped.

Hash is also bought collectively, money is contributed to purchase a 'lump' for all to consume. In this manner Macker estimates that the central group consumes approximately an ounce and a half of hash per week. Traditionally they would have avoided all 'harder' drugs, however, towards the end of fieldwork rumours begin to circulate about the group's experimentation with ecstasy and cocaine. A Garda participant shares his belief that Mano has begun dabbling in heroin use. This would be strange, as most youth in Dublin's inner-city who grew up in the aftermath of the heroin crisis discussed in the next chapter, consider it 'dirty'[37]. *The Crew*'s relationship with cannabis displays both similarity and difference to documented notions of working-class culture. Much in the same way that the pub and alcohol underpins adult socialising[38], *The Crew* revere and dedicate much of their lives to hash and its use is a highly collective act underpinning the structure of their friendship group. On the other hand, as a criminal offence, it is an activity that insulates them from wider society and their community, from whom they must separate in order to engage in this illicit activity. Gav, a nineteen year old with stable employment who is a peripheral member of *The Crew*, can be found more often in the local pub after work, whereas the core members, even where over 18, eschew it in favour of remaining in the streets and smoking. Constantly possessing and frequently using cannabis publicly marks members of *The Crew* as deeply embedded within street culture with its antecedent notions of continual partying (Shover & Honaker, 1992; Wright & Decker 1994; 1997), made possible through the fusion of leisure and economic gain in the one way of life.

3.1.6 Joyriding: 'A Good Buzz'

Dommer is amused at the researcher's misunderstanding of *The Crew*'s activities midway through fieldwork when he inquires as to how much they would sell a moped for: 'ya

[37] For similarities to the USA see: Golub & Johnson 1999.

[38] 'The pub' is mentioned as a cornerstone of traditional British working-class life in a number of works (Gill 1977; Robins and Cohen 1978; Hobbs 1988).

don't get a moped to sell, ya get it to rally around'. *Crew* members with family connections to the suburbs introduce the rest of *The Crew* to the fields in these places, an ideal terrain in which to joyride. They travel there at least once a week. Mopeds are either stolen or purchased from 'dodgy garages', 'knackers' (members of the Travelling Community) or thieves. Stealing a moped requires that it is not immobilized, it will be 'clipped' (hotwired) brought to a safe place and 'stripped', removing the casing and chiselling away the serial number which would allow it to be identified formally as stolen. This is an opportunity to display technical competency and canny knowledge of the intricacies of the criminal justice system. Most of *The Crew*'s parents seem supportive of their sons' enthusiasm for 'the bikes', choosing to believe that they utilise their own scramblers and not stolen vehicles. The young men treat their own property with due care and cannot obtain the same amount of excitement when 'rallying' them. A stolen moped can be easily abandoned if and when the police arrive, and obtaining a chase through the suburban landscape offers a further opportunity for thrills (for the significance of police interaction in the generation of excitement, see: Welsh, 1991).

Joyriding is organised and executed independently, a leisure pursuit that is entirely their own. They move away from *Northstreet* and obtain temporary freedom from the eyes and judgment of the community and their parents. The suburban field represents a site in which they can experience control and mastery of their surroundings. Riding the vehicles at extreme speed and performing tricks is an opportunity to demonstrate competence in what they perceive as a very masculine and adult pursuit. Moreover, these excursions offer an opportunity to meet with like-minded young men from the suburbs. These encounters occasionally result in violence but more often camaraderie is established as all the young men assembled share rides on different vehicles in a general celebration of their daring and deviant identities.

3.1.7 Violence: Fighting and Threats

Violence has an inherent role to play in street culture (Bourgious, 1995; Anderson, 1999; Mullins, 2006) to establish hierarchies of toughness and masculinity, and serve as a method of settling disputes, where state authorities such as the police and courts are

mistrusted and actively avoided. Within *The Crew*, Wacker, one of its younger members has used his violent potential to earn himself a position of leadership.

> I walk out of the club to see Wacker assailing the 18 year old and much bigger Philo. Philo has his back to the wall; Wacker is right up inches away from him.
> Wacker: 'What the fuck was that? Who do you think you are? I'll fucken kill ya, I'm not afraid of ya.' He is aggressive in the way he talks, rapidly spitting out every phrase. He is shoving with his hand to emphasise the threat in every sentence and completes the rally with a fake head butt, high in both force and accuracy that stops short of breaking Philo's nose by a matter of millimetres. Philo flinches back. At that Wacker seems satisfied that his point is made, 'shite-bag' he mutters as he returns to rest his back on the car Mano and Byrnesy are leaning on. He takes a joint off Mano, 'Ah yeah, smoke a bit of this' he chirps triumphantly. He is clearly elated by his victory and returns to his conversation with the others, pointedly ignoring Philo who is left silent and submissive... I discuss the incident with Philo, Wacker overhears us and is obviously not happy with the interpretation of the events that has been offered, he interjects and Philo begins to assert his case.
> Wacker: 'Shut up, I'm done talking to you, bleedin' throwin' bottles!' (The incident had been sparked when Philo jokingly threw a plastic bottle at Wacker). With his last indication of disdain, Wacker turns around to finish his conversation, still very jovial towards the others. He is saying by his demeanour: this doesn't bother me, I'm in control. (Extract from fieldnotes)

Wacker's will to violence promotes him above the others. Evidently it is not always necessary to exceed threatened violence, the realism of which testifies to an ability to do so (see similarly: Willis, 1977: 34). Within the group each member has taken part in fights against others in order to establish their ranking, settle disputes, or simply to pass the time. Through threats that are in no way challenged, members of *The Crew* assert dominance. Those *Northstreet* youth who attempt to align themselves with *The Crew* are often met with insults and fake blows calculated simply to cause them to flinch and thus

label them subjugated[39]. Truth within *The Crew* is hotly contested. Arguments are an ever present feature of their conversation: who was playing in a particular football match, how much a particular bicycle earned them, where the group should go to. Discussion descends into banter, which descends into put-downs and disputes. Wilfulness in terms of wit or violence is the only force that can make impact against an opposing suggestion in order to sway group opinion[40]. Violence is tied up to notions of toughness and masculinity; perceived slights are not tolerated as this extract from a taped conversation demonstrates:

> Adam: But a stranger walking up the street, bumping into me like that, into me. I'll say sorry and they'll just walk away. And that's where I go, I just tip them and I say: excuse me. WHACK! Then I go: "that's for not saying sorry", or something. Just... I don't know why but, there was one fellah around [school] what really did bump into me and you know what, I didn't like it. He went whack, you know something like that (demonstrates how he went into Adam shoulder first). I just kicked him and I goes: "watch yourself!" He goes: "watch where you're walking". Right so I go like that and I go (grabs me and pulls me closer to demonstrate): "unless you want your fuckin neck broke, I'd advise you to shut your mouth." And he just kept walking and he goes: "tisk, thug". So I really do, I went up: "What are you saying?" Whack! Into the head. And he was like: "oh, oh, oh what?" Some other fellahs come along like calling me every name under the sun like. So I just kicked them, just don't approach me, kick em, just leapt home. Left him with a black eye, a few bruises.
> J: Was he a young fellah, was he, or...?
> Adam: No he was bigger than me!

Whilst those who are well embedded in their communities or society can seek solace from this sense of belonging, members of *The Crew* have no one else but themselves or

[39] See: Mullins (2006) particularly Chapter three. The men he studied subjugated the less violent to the status of punk and could demand that these individuals provide them with money or drugs or perform menial tasks.
[40] These are factors afforded significance by other writers examining working class youth in other jurisdictions e.g. Miller (1958)

the group from which to obtain a sense of security. The middle classes tend to have faith in the institutions of society to protect them but *The Crew* do not in any way share in this. Displaying menace and maintaining dread negate feelings of vulnerability in *The Crew* by exporting the fear to those they encounter. It would appear that offence is the greatest form of defence in the harsh social world they occupy. Extended eye contact or any comment about them from anyone unknown and unlikely to be able to return their level of violence (especially middle-class youth) can easily earn a violent reaction from a *Crew* member. The manufactured dread serves at times to invert the socio-structural hierarchy allowing *The Crew* to feel contempt for, and superior to, those who occupy a higher social class. Usually *Crew* members are quick to state that they are afraid of nothing and will fight anyone, in more circumspect moments they tend to emphasise the fact that they 'don't look for fights, fights find me'. This assertion ignores the fact that they cannot ignore any perceived slight and suggests that their predilection to violent acts has become normalised.

The Crew engage in criminality consistently though relatively infrequently, the bulk of their time consisting of negotiating empty time. Theft offers a means of generating income that transcends the taboo of acquiescing to the demands of mainstream society: deferring gratification, committing to education, and with luck and hard work gaining well-paid employment at some point in a future they consider plainly stark. Violence provides a means of establishing internal hierarchy and preserving a sense of dignity and control, while cannabis consumption and joyriding provide a sense of altered reality and risk which intercede in an otherwise mundane day-to-day existence. This analysis of *The Crew*'s activities demonstrates that their acts of criminality are, to them, 'normal' and conform to the logic of 'street culture'. The behaviour facilitated or indeed demanded by this way of life has a particular appeal to *The Crew* and the young men in the British and American literature cited throughout the above analysis, who are on the bottom rungs of the social hierarchy and have been raised in particularly difficult circumstances. Indeed, the independent-mindedness, mistrust and violence that underpin street culture and the criminality it facilitates become further comprehensible when the biographies of these individuals are considered.

3.2 Individual Tragedy[41] and Collective Solidarity: The biography of a 'street gang' and its individual members

The rich data and understanding that can be garnered from a 'life history' approach to the individual offender is demonstrated famously in *The Jack Roller* (Shaw, 1936). In this sub-section the biographies of *The Crew*'s members are considered along with an examination of how the friendship group came to be solidified. Crucial to realise is that whilst professionals who encounter members of the group consider their upbringings problematic, chaotic and tragic, *The Crew* do not necessarily share this interpretation. Key to adhering to 'street culture' is the normalisation of harsh circumstances and aggressive responses. These are factors which are a common theme in most of *The Crew* members' lives. This commonality lends itself to the young men seeking solidarity in each others' company and the peer group thus becomes a vehicle for the practice and propagation of a particular cultural orientation.

3.2.1 Wacker

Wacker is an exceptional member of *The Crew* in several ways. At 14 years of age he is one of the younger members of the group and he is also small of build and stature. He is however, quick of wit and fist and seemingly more self-assured and calculating than the others. His involvement with the criminal justice system has been minimal, although local Gardaí state that he is 'cute' and thus avoids capture or charge. He has platinum blonde hair, bright blue eyes and handsome boyish features. He dresses in new, clean tracksuits and of the entire group, seems to have the most casual encounters with the opposite sex. Unlike his peers in *The Crew*, he has a stable home environment, living with his mother, her partner of six years and his little brother, who is 9. Wacker's roots lie out in the northern suburbs of Dublin where his extended family resides. He moved with his immediate family to a flat in *Folk Street* (proximate to *Northstreet*) three years before the commencement of the fieldwork. The building is owned by a wealthy relative and Wacker's mother is responsible for leasing out the shop space beneath their flat. His living conditions are homely and comfortable. Whilst he does share a room with his little

[41] The term 'tragedy' is a reference both to unfortunate circumstances and the dramatic nature of these events and the manner in which participants have reacted to them.

brother, the flat has been recently decorated and furnished and contains the latest high quality entertainment equipment. Neither of the adults works outside of the home and are thus capable of providing supervision. Wacker, however, prefers to spend his time in the nearby *Northstreet*. Wacker is in the first year of secondary school and already on a restricted curriculum. He is frequently in detention or suspension for verbally abusing teachers. His mother considers his progression in education satisfactory and she tells youth workers that she hopes to persuade him to remain there to complete his Junior Certificate. He is far less enthusiastic about the prospect.

Despite a relatively prosperous upbringing, Wacker has been constantly exposed to criminality. His natural father spent many years in prison and a Garda participant claims that his mother was a well-known drug dealer. For her part, she is quick to stress that neither she nor Wacker have been involved in crime. She does however, seem to harbour some concerns about him. In conversation with youth workers she expresses a desire to keep her son 'off the streets', suggesting that *The Crew* members might be taken to see Mountjoy Prison in order to shock them. Wacker is further exceptional in *The Crew*, in that he enjoys a relationship with his father, who is now a large-package courier. Father and son spend a few days working together during Wacker's school holidays and the young man returns to report favourably to his friends. The independence of the job appealed to him, he enjoyed 'riding around all day' without a boss directly issuing orders. His father has instilled in him a passion for motorcycles. Wacker has several scramblers that he keeps in his grandparents' home in the suburbs. He often brings other members of *The Crew* out with him and has been key in establishing the groups' use of this part of the city to joyride. He shares a particularly close relationship with Byrnesy to the point where their mothers have become close friends.

3.2.2 Byrnesy

Although Byrnesy lives in a flat in *Northstreet* with his mother and older brother, this is merely the most recent in a number of different locations in which he has resided. His family can be described as that with the greatest tragic history. At the commencement of fieldwork Byrnesy's elder sister had recently passed away. She was a drug addict and

was linked romantically to a local drug dealer. In the past she had jumped/been pushed off one of the higher *Northstreet* balconies. It was an overdose, however, that claimed her life. Another of his sisters was in bed with her husband as he was murdered. She suffered a nervous breakdown and attempted suicide whilst institutionalised. His cousin was murdered in another flat complex for seeing 'something he shouldn't have'. The mother of the family is a short, slender blonde woman in her fifties, who bears the visible marks of stress in her capillary checked cheeks, the deep furrows in her face, and the manner in which her hands constantly shake. She is prone to incapacitating depression, having suffered from a breakdown several years ago. Byrnesy has little relationship with his father, who lives in the suburbs, is involved with another woman and seldom makes contact. Byrnesy states that he has little interest in forming a relationship with him. His mother attempts to be strong and provide a haven for her family but her nervous disposition is a hindrance. She has few friends in the immediate locality, bar Wacker's mother, and claims that with so many alcoholics and drug addicts in the flats she keeps 'meself to meself' rather than becoming embroiled in anyone else's problems.

Byrnesy is 17 and is one of the tallest of the group. He is often silent and thoughtful creating a greater impression of innocence. He too has had relatively little contact with the criminal justice system, having earned only a few 'JLOs[42]'. By the end of the fieldwork however, he has become a feature of discussion amongst local Gardaí and it would seem likely that this will change. He claims to be progressing well in education, avoiding crime and cannabis use, both to youth workers, the researcher and his own mother. This is however, a front to be maintained in order to minimise interference in his life and his mother becomes increasingly aware of this:

> I don't know what his game is! It's getting to the stage where it's really annoying me. I won't put up with his lying. He said to me that he went to his work experience but he didn't. Now he's out of the place… but he's not just hanging around wasting his life and I'm not putting up with his lying! (Extract from fieldnotes)

[42] The Juvenile Liaison Officer scheme is a method by which young offenders receive visits from a specialised officer rather than entering the conventional criminal justice system.

He is not successful in hiding his offending and lack of effort in education. This particularly disappoints his mother who gives him money she can ill afford as a birthday present and discovers that he has spent the money on drugs as opposed to clothes. She blames her elder son who is unemployed, drinks and gambles heavily and often has his girlfriend, children and friends in the flat, which she attempts in vain to keep clean. Although she threatens to eject both the sons unless they improve their behaviour she is conscious of the fact that they will just leave the house until she calms down, which is precisely how events unfold. Having left school after his Junior Certificate, Byrnesy expresses an interest in a carpentry apprenticeship; in the FÁS office he is diverted into a training course, as sponsoring tradesmen are rare. Despite the initial disappointment, he soon finds an apprenticeship as a motorbike technician, to him, an ideal position. The constant presence of the rest of *The Crew*, however, draws him into conflict with his employers and he can no longer continue.

3.2.3 Dommer

Other members of *The Crew* describe Dommer (14) as a 'mad cunt'. He of all *The Crew* is the most prone to anarchic and unpredictable behaviour. He exhibits particular joy during the act of theft, often breaking out in fits of giggles or excited whooping as he wheels away a moped or sweeps off triumphantly on a stolen bicycle. Dommer is short and slim. He has pleasant features and often puts a greater effort into the clothes he wears, donning Levi jeans and checked Ben Sherman shirts and sports two large gold sovereign rings. He is one of the few *Crew* members who frequently speaks about the young women he is involved with. He has lived in *Northstreet* with his two parents, little brother and two sisters from an early age, yet his extended family is based in the suburbs and he has no other relatives in the flat complex. His mother seems perpetually stressed and busy; her baby son has several health problems necessitating frequent visits to the family doctor in the suburbs. His poor personal hygiene is testament to the fact that his mother has little time to spend regulating him. His father, although claiming to work in the burgeoning IT industry seems to be unemployed as he often spends his days in a local pool hall. The family are insecure in the city centre and have constructed a defensive

front in response to criticisms levelled against them by other *Northstreet* residents or perceived criticisms from agencies involved with the children. Dommer's mother will often lie on her son's behalf when he fails to arrive for appointments with youth workers. She makes a show of disciplining him in front of them, only to renege in private.

Professesing to hate the flats, the family is seeking to be rehoused in the suburbs. Dommer's knowledge of these areas is a catalyst for *The Crew*'s journeys, suggesting the mopeds that they steal and leading them through back lanes toward ideal fields for joyriding. *Northstreet* residents marked Dommer as troublesome from an early age, and forbade their children to play with him. Due to identified learning and behavioural difficulties he attends a special school. His local reputation is such that certain *Northstreet* mothers refuse to transfer their children there, should they become tainted with his company. His involvement in the theft of bicycles from an early age has earned him notoriety amongst the local Gardaí. Community leadership figures have made it clear that the whole family are 'on their last warning' on account of his anti-social behaviour. His parents constantly 'ground' him attempting to prevent him associating with his friends. He subverts their discipline through escaping to the suburbs where possible. Whilst his parents make a public effort to reign him in, there are clear ambiguities. They do not seem to comment on the constantly changing array of bike parts and bicycles that cross their balcony. He is constantly allowed to remain home from school in order to mind his younger brother.

3.2.4 Paddy and Macker

Paddy and Macker (15 and 17 respectively) are relatively new arrivals to the locality, their family having fallen victim to the provisions of the Housing (Miscellaneous) Act 1997, which gave greater eviction powers to local authorities. Their father is a man with a reputation for criminality and violence. An undisclosed series of crimes he committed earned him a prison sentence and cause the family to be evicted from their home in the suburbs and plunged into the limbo of transitional housing. The two young men, their younger sister, baby brother and mother have spent the past several years moving

between temporary accommodation in various areas of the city[43]. During temporary releases, their father would visit, on one occasion coming close to having the family evicted from one of these stop-gaps by assaulting a neighbour. Paddy insists that they want nothing to do with their father, yet there is a deep sense of regret in his voice as he says this. Theirs has been an extraordinarily tough childhood. A local Garda reports that he investigated their mother for neglect. She drinks and spends much time in local pubs. She is observed dressed in a tight dress and flirting with a local 'hard man' the evening before her sons are scheduled to sit state exams. She suffers from poor health and is often bed ridden. Midway through fieldwork the family is forced to move from their little apartment proximate to *Northstreet*:

> (Now) they are temporarily staying in a B&B, a Georgian building covered in grime. Indeed the pattern on the canopy above the doorway only becomes apparent when directly underneath it. The inside is somewhat institutional looking, spartan, with plain walls and a burgundy carpeted floor. There is a payphone in the corner. Inside her room [their mother] is propped up in a single bed as we enter. She is wearing pink patterned pyjamas and has her hair tied up under a towel. She doesn't look well and this much is made clear by the manner in which she coughs and splutters during the conversation. She tells us that she has been living here for the last month and that 'it hasn't been great'. The room has a double bed (where the lads sleep) and a single bunk bed above it where the sister sleeps. All have colourful bedclothes. There is a long dresser across the opposite wall upon which is a kettle, some tea bags, some bowls and mugs, a small loaf of bread and a half drank bottle of Club Orange. There is a small television on the left and a pile of clothes on the right. Their younger sister is lying on the double bed attempting homework whilst watching TV (extract from fieldnotes).

The brothers' extended families on both sides are notorious for their involvement in criminality. One of their uncles is a well known armed robber. The brothers are deeply embedded into street culture. Financially, the brothers are loathe to tap into their mother's

[43] Following the completion of fieldwork the family was permanently rehoused close to *Northstreet*.

scant resources and are thus particularly keen to attain independence, even at their young ages. They are committed to theft as enterprise and, more than the other *Crew* members, instil a certain sense of 'professionalism' into the group's offending. Constantly changing localities, the brothers have learnt to be resourceful and readily establish themselves as worthy of respect in the world of young street criminals. Paddy is quiet and considered compared to most of *The Crew* members. He has stolen prolifically throughout his life, selling on products door to door in suburban estates and to various relatives. Macker is brash, loud and quick to take risks. He is known to switch from affability to violence at the merest provocation. Despite their tough demeanour, the two brothers show remarkable tenderness to their own baby brother, whom they pick up, speak to softly and rock in their arms.

3.2.5 Mano and Adam

Mano and Adam (16 and 14 respectively) are brothers and the only members of *The Crew* who were 'born and reared' in *Northstreet*, nevertheless they cannot strictly be said to be resident there. Their family was thrown into turmoil with the death of their father, who was a dedicated community activist and was the primary care giver to the children. Sheila, their mother, works outside of the home as a cleaner, and on becoming a widow began to focus on her own social life to the extent that locally she is described as 're-living her teenage years'. She is a regular of a nearby pub and traverses the country with her new partner who is a travelling salesman. Whilst alive, their father operated a strict regime in which his children were expected to be in bed before ten. *Northstreet* residents recall how his booming voice calling the boys home was an institution in the flats for many years. His unyielding approach alienated his five sons, all of whom have lived in care at some stage in their lives. Pressure from the Council in relation to the behaviour of Mano and Adam, her two younger sons, caused Sheila to sign them into care. Their father had been the sole disciplinarian in the household and professionals working with the family opine that she 'lacks parenting ability'. Her flat is in worse condition than most in *Northstreet* with raw floorboards and cracking plasterwork on the walls.

The bothers' lives are immensely unstable. Their poor disciplinary record in care homes and their refusal to engage with full time education has meant that they cannot secure a permanent place. They must access the 'out of hours' service, presenting themselves at a Garda station every night and waiting until a bed becomes available somewhere in the city. Mano had left school during a stage where he lived with his sister in a distant south Dublin suburb. With out of character vulnerability, he admits that it was overly straining to travel such a long distance to his school in the inner-city. At the initiative of a social worker, he resided in a working farm in a rural area for some months. During this time, he was separated from *The Crew* for much of the week and spoke proudly about the masculine, manual labour he is engaged in there. Ultimately, however, he absconded following a dispute with one of the managers and returned to contingent existence around *Northstreet*. Adam escapes the uncertainty of 'out of hours' for a number of weeks by residing with an aunt. Sheila objects to this scenario, interpreting the custody as a denigration of her feminine status as a mother. Raising concerns about her sister-in-law's mental health, she ensures that Adam must leave. The boys maintain some relationship with their mother, often using her flat during the day, eating meals there and staying the night when unwell. The relationship, however, is most unstable. Unlike most other *Crew* member parents, Sheila is aware and frank about her children's involvement in criminal behaviour. Arguments frequently flare up and temporarily sever contact. On one occasion, Sheila calls the local Gardaí following an altercation in which Adam 'smashes up' her flat. The brothers insist on citing their social worker as their legal guardian.

Adam is very short and childlike in appearance. He exhibits intelligence, constantly asking questions and challenging youth workers. Despite what some would perceive as an aggressive manner, he has many childlike qualities and takes particular joy in playing with babies and puppies. Mano, although taller and stronger is not as quick witted, yet when talkative (rare and usually following the consumption of cannabis) he has amazed workers with keen observations. Mano, contrary to the impression he may give, is an enthusiastic reader of books, which he prefers to television. The brothers have been apprenticed in street culture and criminality. Their three older brothers all have convictions, although local gossip suggests that all but one have 'settled down'. Their

eldest brother absconded from the United Kingdom whilst on temporary release from prison. He has a history of drug use and has a reputation locally for violence, which he has used frequently against his mother. Although employed as 'night watchman' for a local businessman who is developing a nearby Georgian building, at the conclusion of fieldwork he is incarcerated for his involvement in street robberies. For Mano and Adam, nothing is settled.

3.2.6 Keano

So called because of his soccer talents, Keano[44] at 14 years of age, has used these skills to move onto the periphery of *The Crew*, where he enjoys better relations with the wider *Northstreet* community. Welfare workers attached to his school identify him as having low self-esteem, which explains a childhood fascination with *The Crew* and the respect they can garner amongst the youth population of the locality. He lives with his mother, her partner and his two sisters in *Northstreet*, yet his father lives close by and they meet daily. The atmosphere in the family flat is comfortable and supportive. The space is newly decorated and furnished, well equipped with up-to-date electronic durables. The family members enjoy an easy and open rapport. Keano's mother is frank and open about the difficulties she experienced as a child raised in poverty and whilst homeless. She is adamant that her children complete sufficient education to ensure a decent income. His school attendance and keen interest in sport ensures that his time is structured and 'constructive', he is not dependant on *Crew* activities to fill his days. Keano's biography exhibits a number of positive socialising influences that perhaps explain his increasing distance from *The Crew*. Whilst at the beginning of fieldwork he was a regular fixture in the group, he rarely accompanies them towards its conclusion, answering queries as to their whereabouts with: 'probably runnin' away from the Guards'. His skill in the boxing ring translates into an ability to negotiate the violence inherent in *The Crew*'s hierarchy. He beats a peripheral member for bringing his sister 'out robbing'[45] and has some difficulties with local Gardaí on account of other fights. Nevertheless, although he was

[44] His awarded nickname is based on the Irish international footballer and former Manchester United captain Roy Keane, who has iconic status in Ireland and is referred to affectionately by the Dublin-style moniker of *Keano*.
[45] See Mullins (2006) on the use of violence in street culture to protect female relatives.

not born in the flats, the *Northstreet* community have taken ownership of him, citing him as an example to be followed. Whilst Keano is fluent in street culture, he is not so embedded within it that he loses sight of his 'mainstream' interests (see: Anderson, 1999). Indeed, these serve to attract him into a lifestyle which involves lower levels of offending behaviour.

3.2.7 Philo

> I was three I watched me ma fucken chase the dragon. I remember when I was four I remember watching the aul fellah sticking a needle into me ma's arm, when you think about what he owes me ma so... The earliest memory I have is fucken would have been, I can't remember, only a couple of months old, the Garda raided the flat. (Philo)

Philo, aged 19, is present within the field for three months but during this short time he becomes an active member of *The Crew*. Philo is very tall and slender, with a distinctive pointed nose and shaved head. He stays with his elder sister who lives in *Northstreet* with her two children. During an intense impromptu interview Philo explains how his tragic biography contributed to his dedication to street culture. 'Drugs is the only thing I know', is how, as the child of two drug dealers, he has come to define his life. His mother is imprisoned in the United Kingdom, whilst his father was shot dead by a rival when Philo was 8. He has lived in care since then. Outside his father's funeral he smoked his first joint and began what can only be described as an obsession with cannabis, which would cause him to excel within the informal economy, yet falter whilst participating in that of the mainstream. As a suspected drug user and dealer he would have been considered a troublesome student in school and claims to have sat his Junior Certificate to spite his principal who had wagered him that he would fail. His formal education ended there. Whilst living with foster parents he began to work in car part sales where he says he made €1000 a week, a considerable income for a young man. Whilst passionate about

cars, he claims that the job facilitated astronomical cannabis consumption[46]. He was unable to 'keep a clear head' and was dismissed. He has tried many different jobs, from panel-beating to carpentry, but arguments with employers or altercations with co-workers always lead to dismissal. His adherence to street values ensures that he does not allow perceived slights to be tolerated, whether in the workplace or elsewhere. Philo bears the scars of several knife fights.

The mechanical skills and knowledge of car parts that he could not capitalise on in the legitimate economy lend him significant cultural capital in the criminal world. He has been involved in several car theft rings, where luxury cars are stripped for parts in 'dodgy garages'. The money he earns is invested in kilograms of cannabis that can be traded at considerable profit. Unlike the other principal *Crew* members, Philo seems unsure in his commitment to continuing a lifestyle dominated by street cultural norms. He professes a desire to gain legitimate employment and during fieldwork attends several job interviews. It irks him that he 'can't get a look in'. He believes that his outstanding criminal charges stand against him, although he has no formal convictions. Having promised his sister that he will no longer sell drugs, he had taken to 'robbing' with *The Crew* in order to supplement his unemployment benefit. His adult age and conspicuous height, however, make him a prime target for the Gardaí and he becomes the most likely to be arrested in any foray. He fears that he will be caught in a cycle of offending and incarceration if he does not leave *Northstreet* and eventually moves to a centre for homeless young adults elsewhere in the city.

3.2.8 Forming *The Crew*: Shared Experiences and Values

Thrasher in *The Gang* defines his subject as: 'an interstitial group formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict' (1927: 46). He notes how young men, with shared inner-city identity, congregate into groups to gain independence from the adult world and create an atmosphere more conducive to the pursuit of excitement and the acquisition of money. In the case of *The Crew* there are a number of decisive factors that, along with

[46] He estimates that he smokes approximately one ounce of hashish per day when he has sufficient money and opportunity.

conflict with their wider community, contributed to the formation of the group. Keano, Mano, Adam and Dommer are slightly older than the wider youth of *Northstreet* and significantly younger than the young adult men, who formed a delinquent group themselves in their youth. These four were therefore, demographically, a distinct entity. Community tensions (discussed in the next chapter), along with their reputation as troublesome, served to isolate the latter three youth, preventing them from freely associating with their *Northstreet* peers. Keano's family, recent arrivals to the complex, did not impose the same restrictions on him. Moreover, as a shy youth, his association with them would have established him as more daring and worthy of respect. The conventions of street culture allow insecure youth to cultivate a tough persona which protects and rapidly generates notoriety in an area in which they are not well known.

Most *Crew* members report that they began offending at a young age, quickly graduating past 'mischief', frequently practised by young people, to locally condoned forms of theft from neighbouring businesses and parked trucks. Keano recalls the first time he was arrested. At ten years of age, he, Mano, Macker and Adam had broken into a local building site and made off with a JCB 'digger'. Paddy can remember his first offence, stealing from a hardware shop at the age of nine. For most of *The Crew* beginning offending is somewhat natural, entering into activities practised, or at the very least, tolerated by members of their family. Ambivalence to the strictures of the law became part of each *Crew* member's individual identity and therefore developed into a central tenet of the fledgling group's values. Although traditionally, geographical solidarity has played a key role in the formation of working-class youth friendship groups[47], the situation is more complex in the case of *The Crew*. A system of youth groups orientated towards territoriality cannot function where there is no clear territory over which ownership can be claimed. None of *The Crew* has strong geographical or kin connections to *Northstreet*, a fact that unites them and distinguishes them from the wider youth population of the community. On arrival in the locality, Wacker and Byrnesy gravitated towards the group due to their shared ages and experience of isolation within the

[47] This is a key theme that runs through most of the relevant works cited in the earlier subsection, and indeed many rehoused *Northstreet* youth return to visit their friends on a regular basis.

neighbourhood. It is no coincidence that they too had been exposed to criminality in their own families.

The activities of the fledgling *Crew* lent them a particular reputation which facilitated relationships with other youth involved in theft and joyriding mopeds[48]. In this manner Paddy, Macker and Philo and the peripheral members would have gravitated into the group. *The Crew* share a more difficult and problematic upbringing than the majority of their peers. The peripheral members of the group are the sons of local gangsters or residents of the numerous care homes and youth homeless shelters in the inner-city. Within *The Crew* hardship is common and is not therefore a cause of shame. The solidarity inherent in membership is a strong incentive to join.

Family connections within the building trades provides a market for stolen tools and thus provide impetus for *The Crew*'s earlier theft based enterprise. Local Gardaí became increasingly aware of their activities and Mano was arrested whilst transporting power tools from a site into a waiting taxi[49]. Ultimately *The Crew* draw on their wider geographical boundaries travelling to greener pastures where they are unlikely to be recognised[50]. On one occasion Dommer and Wacker reminisce about excursions to a marina in an affluent suburb, to steal from moored boats. Paddy and Macker recall travelling to a middle-class school to rob from exiting students. This much is in contrast to conceptions of working-class youth contained in the literature (see for example: Robins & Cohen, 1978: 73) who are said to be strongly tethered to their own localities. Shared identity and values as opposed to a shared address and childhood is the primary vehicle which unites *The Crew*.

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[48] Joyriding in cars has become far less popular in the inner-city and is now very much a suburban phenomenon within Dublin. One *Northstreet* community worker connects this to a number of high-profile deaths amongst the local population caused by youth in stolen cars.
[49] The situational nature of youth crime is illustrated by the targeting of tools during the regeneration of the inner-city and a construction boom throughout the country.
[50] Dublin's public transport system is a hub converging on the city-centre.

3.2.9 Masculinity and Style

Messerschmidt (1997: 3) argues that gender, race and class mediate the manner in which individuals and groups are perceived and perceive of themselves. Borrowing his term, *The Crew* 'do' masculinity in a particular fashion, exaggerating specific aspects of male working-class culture, specifically the reverence of leisure and the celebration of physical prowess. These concepts find potent expression in *The Crew*'s sense of style. Their exclusive preference for the brand name tracksuit evokes the image of athleticism, sports teams and the traditional working-class hero: the professional footballer. The lifestyle of the group, however, is antithetic to participation in organised sporting events. The identification is symbolic rather, recognition that they, much like the professional sportsman, subsume 'work' and income-generating activities into their leisure pursuits. The tracksuit moreover, 'signals a Refusal' (Hebidge, 1979: 3), as the polar opposite to the suit and tie, the stylistic embodiment of hegemonic masculinity. *The Crew*'s appearance signal that they are unwilling to 'do' masculinity according to mainstream norms: achieve academically and pursue high-end employment (see: Messerschmidt 1997: 46). Their lifestyle, furthermore, leaves its mark on their tracksuits: dirt, oil stains, cannabis burns, subverting the athletic intent of the garment, and rendering it a communicator of their deviant identity and values (see: Hebidge, 1979: 101). *Crew* members share dress sense along with street values and thus style becomes a 'ready and visible medium for negotiating status, for constructing both security and threat, and for engaging in criminality' (Ferrell, 2004: 61). Subtle differences in clothing, body language and demeanour generally demark *The Crew* from the general youth population of *Northstreet* who do not offend with the same rationality and regularity.

The formation of *The Crew* as a cohesive friendship group owes much to a collective sense of personal tragedy, geographic dislocation and 'Otherness' shared by its members. These same factors provide an impetus to adopt the ruggedness of street culture to ward against a sense of marginalisation which might otherwise prevail. *The Crew* thus exists through a shared dedication to street culture, values and style.

3.3 Crime Paying: Positive Identity through Delinquent Sub-Culture

This subsection examines the role played by group membership in neutralising the marginalisation the young men experience within their community. For *The Crew*, the collective identity generated through group membership is a valuable commodity. It provides a sense of belonging and stability to individuals who cannot tap into that which is generally available to the majority of citizens through family and community. *Crew* members tend to feel isolated from and criticised by wider society. They complain that they are constantly harassed by the Gardaí and certain members of their community. Furthermore, they are watched fearfully by members of the public and are constantly monitored by security personnel whilst accessing commercial services or shopping. Street culture therefore becomes an essential mechanism to neutralise these negative outside perceptions, through adhering to a system of values that places a premium on their existing attitudes and behaviours, and scorns those which they are not interested in practicing. Membership of *The Crew*, though with attendant difficulties, combines with street crime to offer each individual a mechanism to garner esteem in a society perceived as wholly hostile. The analysis below considers the isolation experienced by *Crew* members within their own community and the role played by the integrity and culture of their peer group in maintaining defences against such marginalisation.

3.3.1 Living Locally, Feeling Marginalised

Northstreet's community leadership are keen to distance themselves from *The Crew*'s offending behaviour, making the claim that the group are not *of* the community, but were drawn in from the outside:

> They're like the Pied Pipers, you'd have lads coming from the north inner city that don't actually don't live in the immediate vicinity. So out of ten, you've eight or nine of them that's actually from outside the area. Now if they weren't in the area it would be very, very easy to convince, you know, the other two or three to buckle down, but with the influence of the other eight or nine of them there, its going to be very difficult. In any community where two lads or two girls gets involved with eight from outside the area, you know, they'll always be seen as

> being from, for example *Northstreet*, but they're not. They're from other areas, and you know if that escalates then it could become the same problem and to the same degree that we had years ago, where we had all the people coming into the community or to the area, the same as this, you know, new group. They've no commitment (James, *Northstreet* Community Leader).

James articulates what is a popular perception amongst more established *Northstreet* families: that members of *The Crew* (and their families) are not *of* the community. In assessing the group, he underestimates the number of members who have addresses in the street, and focuses rather on the extended membership. He attempts to frame their offending as something that is foreign to the normal residents and a phenomenon that the community would manage if they could claim ownership of the young men. The young men take an aggressive stance towards leadership figures, labelling their detractors as 'rats'[51]. *The Crew* take particular exception to the manner in which they are being physically excluded from the flats by community Gardaí responding to the community's complaints:

> Them rats in the flats are always kicking us out of their arches, calling the Guards and all (Paddy).
>
> How can they kick you out of your own flats? (Philo – extract from fieldnotes)

The young men themselves feel marginalized within the community structure and therefore are uninterested in involvement with it. There are internal standards of class and respectability within *Northstreet* and the manner in which *The Crew* are spoken about makes clear that they are considered to occupy the lowest tier. Adam is taunted by the wider youth population, mocked about his smell and appearance and called a 'little

[51] This is a broad insult and means more than one who informs on their misdeeds. All who in any way thwart their activities or criticize them can be labelled as such.

knacker'[52]. The isolation and vulnerability the young men might otherwise feel is negated through the maintenance of a strong, cohesive, single-value friendship group.

3.3.2 'In the Gang': Collective Identity and Loyalty

The importance of the friendship group to each of its members is evidenced by the sheer amount of time spent in each other's company. It is not uncommon for a member stranded alone (or worse yet, with just the researcher!) to phone the others and demand to meet them: 'I'm on me own here!' Mano and Paddy rely on each other as close comrades in care and occasionally display extreme aggression to workers who attempt to hold one in conversation away from the other. Several of *The Crew* may arrive together where only one has an appointment. *Crew* members should be present for each other. Adherence to an unwritten code of loyalty is paramount. Failing to commit fully to the group can be seen as an affront and challenged:

> Macker asks Wacker if he remembers the other night when they were rallying, that he 'legged it'.
> Wacker: 'Yeah, I nearly forgot about that, ya little slibhin[53] cunt. Where did you run off to?'
> Macker: 'I went down *Folk Street* after yis but couldn't find yis.'
> Wacker: 'Yeah right, ya little fucken slibhin, you were off for yerself.'
> (Extract from fieldnotes)

Acting for one's own benefit ahead of that of the group is somewhat taboo. Money is freely lent between the group; cigarettes and cannabis are more or less held in common. *The Crew* discuss disparagingly those peripheral members who consume cannabis without contributing towards it. Amongst the peripheral members, the core maintains a reputation of competence and a sense of pride through providing the drug for themselves and others.

[52] 'Knacker': a derogatory slang term, often used in reference to membership of the Travelling Community, is widely used to denigrate individuals considered of a lower social class.
[53] Insult derived from Irish language meaning: 'one who is sly'.

There are rules dictating that anyone who participates in a robbery is entitled to a share of the proceeds. Conflict is generated on a frequent basis as members pocket earnings themselves. An exchange of threats or violence may result. It is generally considered 'dirty' to deny anyone their fair share. Extenuating circumstances can be claimed, such as having to 'hold' property for a particularly long time, exposing a member to an increased risk of detection. Prioritising anyone outside the group, including one's own family is likely to invoke chastising from other members:

> Macker: 'Why didn't you open the door for us earlier?'
> Dommer: 'Me Da told me not to, he was going out.'
> Macker: 'If I didn't let you into my arch, you'd be throwin' stones through me window!'
> Another (giving him a way out): 'Was your buzzer not working?'
> Dommer: 'No I wouldn't! Me Da was going out, I couldn't let yis in.'
> (Extract from fieldnotes)

Indeed, Dommer's position as a resident of *Northstreet* and his need to participate in family life ultimately draws him into conflict with *The Crew* and results in his expulsion. One day Paddy insists: 'We don't pal around with Dommer any more'. It takes some time to establish the cause of the rift. It seems that *The Crew* who often congregate in Dommer's *arch*, vandalized the door's locking mechanism, trapping several people in or out of the block. Dommer's mother insists that he reveal the perpetrators whose names she forwards to The Council in order to deflect blame from her own family. He is branded a 'little snitch' having committed the ultimate treason. Members are expected to conform to group norms and there is little room for individual loyalties or emotions.

3.3.3 Asserting Significance and Dominance

A key figure working with young men 'at risk' in the inner city has noted that their acts of delinquency might be seen as one of the few means at their disposal to answer their critics in wider society:

'They were trying to convince, first themselves, but also the rest of society. The message they were receiving from society was overwhelmingly the opposite, "You're nobody, you're nothing". And they were screaming back at society: "I *am* somebody"' (McVerry, 2003: 16).

The Crew's alienation from wider society frees them to prey on its property. Generally it is property of unknown origin that is targeted. The young men rationalize that the owner has insurance or is sufficiently affluent to replace it. Stealing from the working-class is taboo, yet the young men have no conception of middle-class finances and see its affiliates as possessing unlimited resources. This fuels resentment and creates further internalised inferiority which is remedied through acts embedded in street culture (i.e. theft and/or vandalism with no visible remorse). Theft is not therefore simply a rational, economic process; there can be an undercurrent of anger:

If anyone has a problem with it, let them say it to us, fucken pricks. If someone chased us sayin' 'get away from me bike', I'd run. Otherwise, fuck them! (Mano on members of the public attempting to interfere with a theft - extract from fieldnotes).

Indeed, crime is used to target individuals or organizations they feel act unfairly. *The Club* is robbed on a number of occasions during disputes between staff and young people[54]. Negotiating spaces perceived as uncomfortable or hostile can be achieved through vandalism. Destruction generates a sense of power that mitigates feelings of inferiority. Creating damage or inscribing their names allows the young men to feel an aggressive sense of control, in environments otherwise unfamiliar and daunting. Trespass allows them to temporarily take ownership of spaces they are barred from. They convert a disused maintenance shack in a nearby industrial area into a 'camp' of their own. Craving independence they cannot be satisfied with the supervised spaces society offers

[54] See: Robins & Cohen (1978: 87) where their participants claim ownership of a youth club through delinquency.

young people, and indeed face particular suspicion from gatekeepers if they are permitted entry in the first place.

Some acts of theft allow *The Crew* to exhibit their confidence in a manner that allows them to feel a sense of control over others. This contributes to their esteem and elevates them to a position of being quasi-masters of the streets. Being versed in the language of violence is essential to minimize the possibility of being physically overpowered. A more vulnerable victim, a youth or foreigner represents an ideal target:

> Macker, Keano and [several young people from the flats] are standing around talking casually. Macker spots a Chinese man cycling by. 'Hey', he shouts stepping out onto the road in front of him, 'that's my bike'. The Chinese man mumbles something in broken English. 'Have you a receipt for it?' Macker asks. He turns to me, 'I left that bike outside the shop the other day, when I came back it was gone. I had to walk home with all the messages.' The Chinese man looks worried, he stays on the bike and says he'll call his friend, the bike belongs to him. I imagine a situation where someone else would have stolen the bike from Macker and sold it on (there is a shop locally that buys stolen bikes and is frequented by Chinese customers). 'Oh, so your friend owns the bike now? You're making this up as you go along!' 'Did you steal this bike?' asks one of the other lads in slow English. 'No, is my friends, he come here, five minutes.' The other lads are getting excited and are swarming around them, asking the man questions and occasionally lunging at him playfully. I imagine this must be a terribly intimidating situation. 'Stop!' orders Macker with authority, he makes observations about the bike: 'I remember this rusty screw, I used to play with it.' He begins to up the ante, taking out his mobile phone and making calls, ostensibly to his mother and the police, before insisting that they go to the police station to sort it out. The man can only acquiesce, and as we walk, Macker manoeuvres himself close to the bike, then takes it, gets on it and cycles away. The other young lads clustered around rapidly disperse. All I can do is apologise and point the man in the direction of the Garda station (extract from fieldnotes).

More than resulting in an ethical quandary for the researcher, this incident illustrates well the degree of control that a member of *The Crew* can exercise both on his non-delinquent peers and those in the street. Macker brags about the theft later, and all those ordinary youth present agree that he is 'mad'. Maintaining a delinquent image is valued for the leverage it offers them over the general youth population. Professionals working with *The Crew* classify them as suffering from communication problems and low self-esteem. Delinquency is a language they have learnt to speak fluently. Their anger, frustration, jealousy and exclusion find concrete expression. They exhibit self-sufficiency by relying on their immediate peer group for approval. In this manner the criticisms of those in authority or community leadership can be subverted and ignored, treated as meaningless and unimportant regulation that they need not comply with.

3.3.4 Dealing with Delinquency? Excluding the Excluded

Ultimately, whilst the young men may not recognise the authority of community leadership when viewing it through their own cultural lens, the state is increasingly vesting power in such bodies through a system of partnership[55]. In *Northstreet* the Resident's Committee makes representations to Dublin City Council on numerous issues, including the incidence of 'anti-social behaviour' within the flat complex. The researcher attends a meeting in which Mano's family are the prime topic of deliberation:

> I go with Gerry [youth worker] to a meeting of the community centre management committee, but with one of the members off sick this is going to be an informal meeting. Gerry asks Valerie [Council staff] how things are with Sheila (the mother of Mano and Adam) and this sets off a huge argument/discussion between Gerry and the others present:
> Valerie: 'Sheila is on her last warning, this is it, the boys have been smoking hash in the arches, urinating, hassling children, shoutin' and roarin' and keeping the other tenant's children awake. It's not on. She's going to get evicted.'

[55] In the United Kingdom there is a burgeoning literature in the field of Community Safety, see: Chapter Five

Gerry: 'What will that achieve? She lacks the parenting skills to deal with them. They're not even living with her anymore.'

James (community leader) points out that they are cycling around doing 'wheelies' and crashing into people's cars, damaging them, cycling between spaces that are too small and scraping the paint: 'Girls and fellahs here are trying to get ahead, wanting to get something better for themselves investing money in cars. John (community resident) just spent 34,000 euro on a BMW, another girl spent 28,000 on a new Volkswagen, they want and have a right to feel like they can park their cars in the flats. You see them out on their balconies looking out at their cars, checking to make sure they're alright. When I was younger I must have kicked a few footballs through windows, but if I did my father would be down to pay for the damage, even if he had nothing, he'd have found the money and he wouldn't have let me back into that yard. If you went to Sheila and told her that those fellahs were causing damage she'd tell you to fuck off. People are paying high rents and they rightly expect to be able to park their cars.'

Gerry attempts to explain that because of fears of eviction Sheila has kicked the boys out of her flat.

Valerie: 'This is an ongoing problem. The daughter is fine, she's lovely, she has kids and a house; it's the boys who are the problem.

James says that this was the last anti-social family left in the flats and that they were targeted for eviction long ago, but he urged that they be given another chance. Valerie says that they are a dysfunctional family and need the service of other agencies; that the Council is just a housing authority. James momentarily adopts the aesthetic of community activism pointing out that there are hundreds of other tenants in the block who have their needs and rights: 'Take it from me', he says, 'if nothing is done about this, the people here will march. They've had enough. Those lads are like the pied pipers bringing in lads from all over the place.'

Gerry: 'But what will evicting them solve?'

> Council Community Employee: 'She needs to control her kids; she needs to stop them from causing trouble.... James and Sheila were reared here at the same time. James never had the same problems with his kids' (extract from field notes).

On the face of these events, it would appear that eviction is being sought purely on the basis of Mano and Adam's behaviour, and the type of people they attract to the street. The family are being labelled as anomalous, practicing behaviours and holding values foreign and unacceptable to the residents of *Northstreet*. The community seems to be voicing an aversion to delinquency to the extent that they are willing to expel those who persist in it. This is in direct contradiction to the traditional working-class notion of 'slum morality', articulated by Suttles (1968: 223-234) which is less constraining than that of the mainstream and based on notions of 'fallibility and enthrallment to natural desires'. Indeed, in contrasting the manner in which he was raised to Sheila's attitude to parenting, it would seem that James is expressing the indignation of a 'respectable' working-class community against a 'rough' element in its midst. Furthermore, he refers to the militant working-class activism which is described in the next chapter. His constant reference however, to the trappings of consumerism: expensive cars and rents, belies a more complex class-cultural dynamic in operation.

The Crew have reason to hold community leadership in suspicion: there are plans afoot to exclude the young men from the flat complex, alleging that they practice behaviours and values that are alien to the *Northstreet* community. Group solidarity, heavily enforced by internal taboos, serve to buffer *Crew* members from outside criticism, whilst acts of control and threatened violence provide a route to the realisation of a muscular form of dignity. *The Crew*'s offending and group identity can be understood as an attempt to negotiate the multi-faceted exclusion they experience.

Conclusion

The lived lives of *The Crew* demonstrate a depth of complexity glossed over by a description of the young men as a 'gang' or 'young offenders'. The social and cultural factors underlying their behaviour consist of broad structural issues: their class, gender,

and marginalisation from wider society, combined with local and biographical concerns: familial tragedy, geographic and social dislocation and professionally diagnosed learning and behavioural difficulties. Crucially, their activities should not be interpreted as demonstrating the absence of values, as they can be shown to adhere to a system of distinctive 'street' norms, corresponding to similarly socially-located young men considered in the international literature. *The Crew*'s lifestyle prioritises behaviour which conforms to rugged ideals of working-class masculinity: autonomy and control, resisting subordination, entrepreneurship, the crowning of leisure, as well as facets of 'rough' working-class youth culture: battling monotony, resisting education and structured leisure. Theft as an act of income realisation, joyriding as a leisure pursuit and violence as a means of dispute resolution and asserting dominance are supported by these cultural imperatives.

Though criminality composes a limited section of their use of time and their offences tend towards the petty, *The Crew* are vilified by *Northstreet* community leadership in a manner reminiscent of the *folk-devilling* (Cohen, 1972) of young offenders occurring in the wider context of Irish society (as described in Chapter One). Group loyalty and collective adherence to sub-culture allow *Crew* members to withstand their marginalised status by interpreting reality through a normative lens that supports their lifestyle and heaps scorn on their detractors (this becomes particularly salient where *The Crew*'s interaction with the Gardaí is considered in-depth in Chapter Five). *Northstreet*'s community leadership has disowned *The Crew*, citing their behaviour and attitude as alien, contrary and regressive. Determining whether *The Crew*'s values and activities are so directly oppositional to those of the ordinary residents that such an absolute response is merited requires an examination of the relationship between 'street' ('rough') and 'respectable' ('decent') working-class cultures in the context of the historical development and contemporary social structure of the *Northstreet* community.

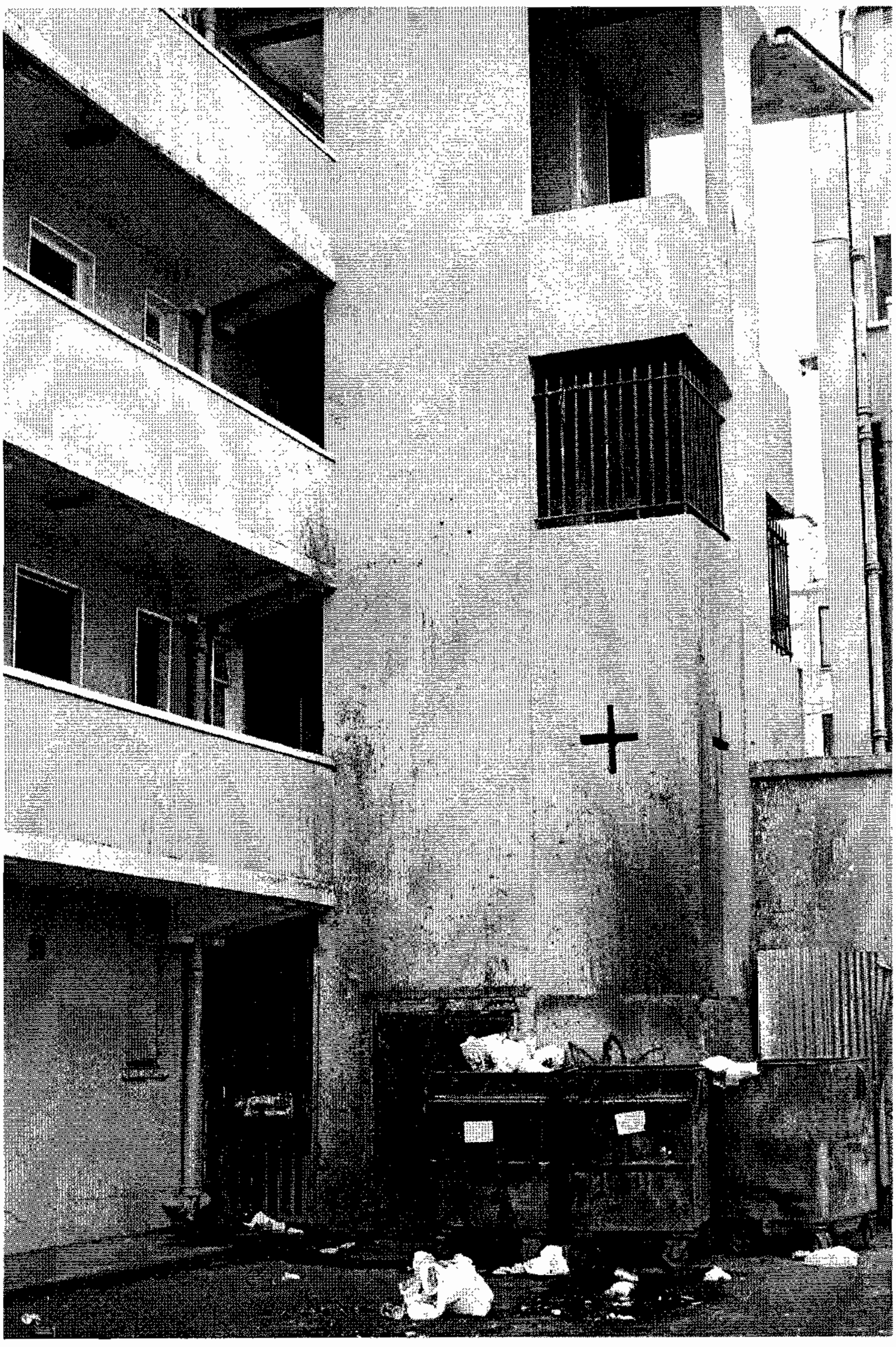

Figure 2: A memory of neglect? Several partially cleared 'Corporation Flats' in the inner-city, built during the 1960s, continue to house a small number of tenants. Photograph by Anne Maree Barry.

Chapter 4
'Years Ago and Now': The Development of Locale and Culture in *Northstreet* and its Contemporary Social Structure

Introduction

This chapter examines the historico-social development of the *Northstreet* community. Specifically, it seeks to identify key components of working-class culture, discernable from an ethnographic description of the participant community and to make comparisons to the 'street' culture identified and discussed in the previous chapter. Such an analysis allows *The Crew* to be understood in the context of their milieu. Focus is maintained on the manner in which the community acquired values around law-breaking and towards state sources of authority, in particular, how perceptions are altered by fluctuations in socio-economic conditions and the variety of prevalent criminality. The chapter seeks to address the problem created by the assertion by *Northstreet* community leadership that *The Crew* are relics of 'old' and 'bad' times, possessing values, and practicing behaviours no longer prevalent or acceptable within the locale. To this end, the first subsection examines the historic origins and early culture of the *Northstreet* residents, whilst the second subsection considers the area's contemporary social structure and culture.

Dublin's inner-city is in a constant state of transition, buffeted by shifting socio-economic currents. This is demonstrated, in architectural terms, by the juxtaposition of splendid Georgian buildings with blocks of municipal housing. Whilst the great four and five story Georgian dwellings, their distinctive fan lights, granite steps and red brick exterior indicates a prosperous past, the multitude of mid 20th Century, functional flat complexes indicates that some of the state's most disadvantaged citizens are currently in residence. Many grand mansions are now cheap guesthouses, catering for a transient population: foreign migrant workers and homeless Irish. Others house offices for the burgeoning service sector: solicitors, estate agents and language schools, all thriving in the new economy. Tall pillars of raw concrete and rows of smart apartments are testament to recent urban renewal, built under 'section 23' tax exemptions[56], profiting the

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[56] The Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides income tax relief where residential rental properties in areas designated for renewal are constructed or refurbished.

property developers. New populations are inundating the locality. There has been gentrification, an influx of middle-class professionals with little or no traditional connection to the district. The emergence of a multitude of ethnic shops and restaurants indicates the arrival of thousands of foreign nationals to the vicinity, drawn to the Celtic Tiger economy and its insatiable appetite for labour. Many residents of *Northstreet*, however, can trace their origins over numerous generations to the same inner-city streets which surround them. They must learn to adapt traditional cultural values and concerns developed over several generations and refined in the process of daily interaction for over 150 years, to the exigencies of 21st Century living.

4.1 'Dirty Auld Town': Tenement Living to Early Municipal Housing

The historical development of the *Northstreet* community and its culture can be understood in terms of phases: the tenement years, transition to state housing, urban decay and urban renewal, each of which are considered separately below.

4.1.1 Tenement Origins

Northstreet was originally constructed as a broad, elegant avenue and was a fashionable district amongst the 18th Century gentry. The area's fortunes turned as Dublin entered steep politico-economic decline (O'Brien, 1982: 70). The Act of Union 1801 constituted Ireland as an integral territory of the United Kingdom, transferring rulership from the disbanded Dublin parliament to Westminster. As the gentry decamped to London and the middle-class fled to the suburbs (Daly, 1984: 141) the grand buildings of early *Northstreet* became the preserve of the working-classes. The inner-city became tenement 'slumlands', with whole families living in single rooms (Kearns, 1994: 8), and by 1900 housed one third of the city's population (O'Brien, 1982: 136). Tenement life was characterized by the struggle for survival. The slums were notorious for filth and disease, infant mortality rates were high and nutrition often below the level required for subsistence (O'Brien, 1982: 102-104). Absolute poverty and material deprivation are common themes in reminiscences provided by older *Northstreet* residents. One recalls the over-ground sewer pipes, which would burst and spew their foul contents on the street.

> At that time things got so bad, damp, the conditions were so bad they were getting TB. The Corporation at the time were putting orders on them to condemn them, so that nobody could live in them… The tenement houses would have had one cold tap down in the back yard and in the winter you'd have to go down into the snow and or the ice and wash yourself with the cold water from the tap. The tap would be iced as well (James, community leader *Northstreet*, recalling the conditions he lived in as a child).

The economic landscape of the city contributed greatly to this situation with much of the working population dependant on unstable casual labouring positions, whether industrial or domestic (Daly, 1984: 77). Work in local food and textile factories or the docks were the staple of male labour, whilst women tended to 'char' or keep house for wealthier Dubliners. The instability of income and employment relegated slum dwellers to the margins of existence. This is the crucible in which the culture and way of life of the tenements was formed: '[T]he tenement dwellers had a distinct social milieu, possessed a unique ethos, and developed a remarkably cohesive community rich and complex in its customs, traditions, neighbouring patterns, survival strategies and urban folklore' (Kearns, 1994: 23). Key religious ceremonies were (and indeed still are) important occasions on which families often spent beyond their means. Pride necessitated that communions, confirmations, weddings and funerals were as elaborate as possible, irrespective of financial constraints.

Social mobility was minimal (Daly, 1982: 133). The classes were separated geographically and their social worlds were introspective, shaped by class-specific concerns. The tenement dwellers developed a manner of behaviour radically different from that of the middle-classes, yet well suited to preserving life and spirit under harsh conditions. Little premium was placed on education where a permanent industrial post in a larger factory was the most that could be aspired to (certain food factories and breweries were particularly coveted). A sense of pride was generated through an ability to maintain a family and possess a clean home without recourse to charity.

Certain facets of this cultural orientation influenced attitudes to offending behaviour within the Dublin working-class. Law-breaking became a condoned form of behaviour in a number of different ways. Such was the level of absolute poverty that all manner of tactics were adopted to keep together body and soul, including: frequent pawning, recourse to charitable relief, reliance on home remedies and the consumption of mean foodstuffs and old clothing[57]. Theft became a necessary recourse: 'As a young kid I'd *rob* the bread 'cause me mother had no money. We had nothing' (participant in Kearns, 1994: 65). For young people, the only resources for play and amusement were found on the streets. Thus, the practice of 'divilment' or mischievous sport became commonplace[58]. Historical crime rates indicate that whilst Dublin compared favourably to all other major UK cities in terms of serious offending, it had one of the highest rates of petty crime (O'Brien, 1982: 182-5). Dublin was a city in which theft to supplement family income and disputes fuelled by alcohol consumption were rife, yet more serious forms of offending were infrequent.

Notions of dominant masculinity are reported as being especially strong during this period. The man, as husband and father, was the undisputed head of the family, and the wife and mother the passive party, charged with maintaining its welfare. The men celebrated their independence through the medium of pub-life. Spending on alcohol often deprived families of essential finance (Daly, 1984: 81-82) and its consumption undoubtedly had a role in shaping the prevalence of violence. 'Straighteners' - 'fair' fist-fights between individuals, traditionally concluding with the shaking of hands and the purchasing of a drink - were a standard method of settling disputes. This must be contrasted to the 'warfare' engaged in by male street gangs, which pre-dates tenement living (see: Walsh, 1979). During the tenement era a network of 'animal gangs', so called for their vicious methods, operated throughout the inner city (Kearns, 1994: 56). A number of older women participants recall that domestic violence was a prevalent feature in the tenements of their youth. A reliance on aggression is a significant indication that

[57] Accounts of this period can be found in oral histories gathered by Kearns (1994). This material closely corresponds to accounts offered by participants in the current study.

[58] Kearns (1994) contains numerous references to this phenomenon: see for example ps: 79, 81, 85, 181.

the working-class population was disinclined to turn to state sources of dispute resolution embodied by the legal system and its agents.

Initially, with Britain administering its rule from Dublin, nationalism rather than criminality underpinned working-class antipathy to policing. The Dublin Metropolitan Police were 'the visible presence of an alien administration' and 'the object of a natural hostility' (O'Brien, 1982: 180). The urban population shared little with the predominantly rural force who tended to tower above them (by an average of four inches) owing to their superior diet and the force's recruitment practices (O'Brien, 1982: 162). With the emergence, post-Irish independence, of the Gardaí Síochána in 1924, changes in policing were fundamentally symbolic, signifying a move from a colonial paramilitary force to one that is 'Irish in thought and action' (MicNiffe, 1997; see also: Mulcahy & O'Mahony, 2005:3; Brady, 2000; Allen, 1999). In Dublin, where the police had been unarmed and continued to emanate from the opposite side of the urban/rural divide, the alterations were viewed as cosmetic. Crime was tolerated as a legitimate survival strategy and the slum dwellers sought safety in the solidarity inherent in their closely-knit communities, which by necessity were oppositional to state scrutiny.

The exigencies of tenement living had forged a set of counter-hegemonic cultural practices, which *inter alia*, condoned petty property theft, normalised violence as a legitimate means of dispute resolution and constructed the police in oppositional terms. These themes would continue to underpin working-class life as the residents of the tenements would come to occupy state built municipal housing.

4.1.2 Exodus: From Working Poor to Welfare Poor

The development of the welfare state in Ireland (see: McAshin, 2004) would radically alter certain aspects of working-class life in Dublin's inner-city, yet others remained intact. Dublin Corporation implemented its slum clearance scheme throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s (MacLaran, 1993:185). *Northstreet* was cleared of the dilapidated Georgian slum buildings and the flat complex was erected. Homes were allocated to residents from the immediate locality; surplus families were relocated to new schemes in

the suburbs. The transition from privately rented dwellings unfit for human habitation, to publicly owned, purpose built accommodation represented a shift in the relationship between inner-city residents and the state. Where once self-sufficiency and hardship were the defining characteristics of working-class culture, the state becomes a significant partner in sustaining a higher quality of life. Furthermore, the 'economic miracle' of the 1960s caused rates of employment to surge (McLaran, 1993: 54). In Dublin's inner-city the garment, food, and newspaper industries thrived and the gasworks, bus depot and docks were constantly consuming labour. Stable manufacturing employment became, for a brief period, the backbone of Dublin working-class life. Young people could leave school at fourteen and find employment at their parent's place of work. Greater comfort and stability came to define life for *Northstreet* residents, yet it represented merely the end, for some, of a particularly hazardous state of poverty.

Numerous privations followed the population into their fresh lodgings. Families tended to be large, and older participants recall sharing a bed with several siblings. Theft and pseudo-legal tactics were a continuing necessity of survival:

> Me ma had her ESB rigged up for eighteen years, box and all, no one knew! Me Da, before he left (deserted the family), had mates and they'd fix you up. That's how it used to work, if you had some mates in the gas company and they cut you off, they'd come round and re-connect it for ya. We used to break open metres and rob the shillings to have some dinner (Keano's Mother, mid-forties, *Northstreet* resident).

Young people routinely engaged in petty theft. The world of the young outside of church, home and school was largely unregulated. The streets continued to be the primary areas of play and they were expected to create and finance their own leisure opportunities. Consumption had become part of working-class life, young people wanted money for clothes, 'the pictures' and in the case of young men in their mid to late teens, the pub. Older participants recall a 'pecking order' in operation during their childhood which assigned social position on the basis of aggressiveness. Other older residents report that

they seldom engaged in any form of offending behaviour and that if ever apprehended by a parent would have been severely admonished. Within the international literature, the perceptions and uses of education are flagged as important indicators of the 'rough' and 'respectable' schism (Whyte, 1945; Willis, 1977). Whereas in Dublin, attitudes to criminality had begun to form a key component of the developing divide. With the greater supply of industrial employment, education was widely viewed as a necessary prelude to adult life, and a particularly unpleasant experience at that.

> (There) used to be a convent on one side and then the national school on the (other). The gypsies on the one side and the poshies on the other! [laughter] You couldn't cross the line! We had nuns for school! Used to beat us with sticks... very cruel, very dark, very miserable place. Five minutes later you'd get a bang of a bamboo on the hand or get beaten on the back of the head... Ah it was, very cruel aul school (Maureen and Helen, *Northstreet* residents, middle aged).

School was associated with the dual indignities of constant physical punishment and discriminatory treatment in comparison to middle-class youth. At the age of twelve, many residents altered their birth certificates to appear older and began factory work, escaping formal education and gaining a more independent sense of status. Others participated in the lively street trading of the day, selling or making deliveries. A young person effectively became an adult through contributing to the family coffers whilst spending their surplus income as they saw fit. Within the culture, the practicalities of working-class employment were judged more worthy than the niceties of middle-class education and regulation. 'Once you got into work, that was it, you were made.' In many aspects, leaving aside material improvements, life in the flats retained many of the characteristics of tenement culture. Husbands continued to dominate their 'dutiful' wives, and no-expense-spared religious ceremonies continued to punctuate an otherwise mundane existence.

Local solidarity and the sense of security that derived from membership of a cohesive community were tenets of working-class culture central to life in the new complex. With

characteristic Dublin wit, one respondent recalls the city street as comparable to a 'country village'. Recourse to assistance from specific neighbours or the wider resident population had been a crucial survival strategy in both the tenements and flats:

> The flats were fantastic to live in. In summer you'd go around collecting and everyone would give you 50p or whatever they could afford and we'd go and get paints and you know that space between the balconies and the pavements? We'd paint it red and black, the old folk liked it and we'd do it for them. We had respect for them, the old people… and they'd always leave their doors open and we'd go in and ask them if they needed anything. We were like one big happy family in the flats, when I moved to the house I cried for a year. The doors would always have been open, you'd shout hello in next door and everyone was there when you needed them. On your birthday everyone would buy you something small. There was a family who didn't have much and every week they'd borrow two, three pound off my parents, now that was quite a lot of money back then, they'd pay back every week on the Thursday when he got paid, and they'd be knocking again on the Saturday. There was so much back and forth I forgot if they owed us the money or if we owed them (Pauline, former *Northstreet* resident, middle aged).

Though a certain level of nostalgic recollection must be assumed, the 1960s and 70s are remembered as a period of growing prosperity and optimism in *Northstreet.* The struggle for survival characteristic of Dublin working-class life was gradually eased by increasingly stable employment and the pursuit of consumption. Nevertheless, cultural orientations regarding theft, violence, relationships to state authority, dominant masculinity and communality persisted. Criminality continued to be widely tolerated and security was still tied to notions of local solidarity. The 'innocence' of tenement culture with its attendant certainties around low levels of social and economic mobility had survived but would be severely tried by the developments of the following decades.

4.1.3 Culture under fire: *Northstreet* and the onset of Urban Decay

Towards the late 1970s wider socio-economic developments began to profoundly alter the fabric of life and culture on *Northstreet*. The economic decline and surges in unemployment and outward emigration affecting Irish society generally, would have particularly severe consequences for Dublin's inner-city and *Northstreet* specifically, challenging the advances in quality of life that had been achieved in the two previous decades.

In an era of rapid technological and industrial advancement, there were severe implications for a community heavily dependant on manufacturing and transport labour. Between 1971 and 1981 in the north inner city transport and related activities declined by 45% and production, communication and clerical activities by 30%. Unemployment in the area increased at a rate three times that of the national average. In 1981 the average rate of unemployment was 10% nationally, 15.5% for Dublin and 24.7% for the north inner city. In 1986 the latter figure had risen to 26% and statistics for 1989 showed that 58% of those unemployed had not worked in over two years (see: MacLaran, 1993: 214; McKeown, 1991: 19-20). The rising value of land in the inner city restricted industry. The process of 'urban-rural drift' is a key factor in the 32.3% drop in industrial employment during the seventies and eighties (Drudy, 1991: 21-22). Dock work, a stalwart source of employment, dried up due to the development of containerisation (Gilligan, 1988: 202). Between 1971 and 1993 Dublin's unemployed had increased from 16,000 to 70,000 (Drudy & MacLaran, 1996). Increases in service sector employment provided little solace, where men generally scorned the lower paid 'feminized' work[59]. Moreover, the residents felt discriminated against by middle-class employers who, in a market devoid of opportunity, were reluctant to employ the residents of an area largely assumed to be 'rough':

> I went to a shop ... the manager was outside sweeping the ground, and I turned around and was like: 'Howaya' and I was looking for work. He says he can give me a job. And its not exact now but, something like: 'have you like experience?' I

[59] For similar experiences and attitudes in New York see: Borgouis (1995)

> was like: 'Eh, I've worked in a shop before' and he was like, he was questioning me a few times and he says: 'where do you live?' I says: '*Northstreet*', he went: 'no sorry' (Stephen, *Northstreet* resident, early thirties).

This is a typical articulation of employment prospects during this era. Many residents felt prohibited from attaining a standard of living widely enjoyed in Irish society, whether through scant finance or elitism: 'Once they heard you were from this area, insurance, you know, house insurance, jobs, it was a no-no. Rent out a television, that was another no-no' (Mother of Keano). The community's working-class culture had its own role to play in *Northstreet*'s economic decline. Residents continued to eschew education in many cases with the expectation of culturally desirable employment persisting:

> I left school in fifth year. I was bored. I wasn't into it. Suppose it was the class I was in, we were never showing up, never get work done... I was never encouraged to go to college; I was told get a job (Stephen – extract from fieldnotes).

It is common to associate certain areas in Dublin with a particular socio-cultural milieu and its attendant social problems (Bannon, Eustace & O'Neil, 1991: 71). The residents relate this state of affairs to their physical landscape which deteriorated dramatically throughout the late seventies, eighties and nineties. Filth and graffiti were rampant, repairs and maintenance infrequent. *Northstreet* was marginalised from wider society and the state authorities who acted as their landlord. The residents report sharing a distal relationship with Dublin Corporation at the time. The local authority acknowledged solely its duty to provide accommodation whilst the residents felt little duty to maintain a complex they did not own. Contemporary Council staff admit their employer's fault in interview. They were isolated from the reality of complex's condition, ensconced in their central office. Whilst individual flats were maintained by their occupants, the complex generally was abandoned to the elements, both natural and criminal:

> The place looked like a no-go area to any driver coming through making a delivery or whatever. It was run down, dilapidated and there was car glass on the ground from where the drug addicts and thieves, from outside, smashed windows, using the whole area to do their one-stop shop act – snatching bags outside the [local public building] (James, *Northstreet* community leadership figure).

Criminality was gaining a negative connotation as it began to chew away at the quality of life in *Northstreet*. Whilst James attributes the offending to outside invaders, it will later become apparent that this is an issue of intense local controversy. Some residents recall that members of the community widely continued to engage in and tolerate certain illegal and pseudo-legal activities:

> Ducking and diving is probably the low level of criminality... If I don't have to declare my tax here, if I can get a stroke (theft) here, if I can get a thing here, whatever. If someone has come up and there's something after falling off the back of a lorry, whatever! Basically putting whatever on the table at as cheap a price as... you're cutting your cloth, you're not out to hurt people. It's not legal what they've done, but they don't have the resources to cover the full price (Barry, local anti-drug activist, mid-forties).

Financial means were once again scarce, following a period of relative prosperity where a limited culture of consumption had developed. Social welfare had replaced the industrial wage as staple income and required supplementation. Some *Northstreet* men engaged in un-taxed casual labour and trading, others conducted raids on local shops, factories and warehouses. Throughout working-class Dublin men were organising themselves into 'criminal gangs' engaging in armed robberies (Williams, 1998). Whilst all of the above forms of criminality were familiar and relatively common place, attracting little local controversy, drug related crime, hitherto unknown in working-class Dublin, became perceived as a threat.

During the early 1980s heroin use spread through inner-city Dublin coaxing the area's most disadvantaged and marginalised young people into addiction (Bradshaw, 1983: 24-5; Dean et al., 1984; Coveney et al., 1999: 2). *Northstreet* residents speak of the heroin epidemic and its attendant crime in cataclysmic terms:

> And when the drugs hit that's when everything changed ... It's like a whole generation was wiped out. That's what it takes for things to change and not only in the flats. Everywhere. It was like a black plague over that age group. You know what I mean?
> Wiped the whole lot out. Terrible. Drugs affected everybody they did... That's when the flats started changing. Everything would start going downhill then. You had to watch everything; you couldn't leave your door open. That's something you could always ... you could always leave your door open. You'd walk into junkies and drugs and bags snatched and cars broken into, women running screaming through the flats. It was horrible, you couldn't do anything about it. Nothing you could do to help them. You couldn't stop them. You'd feel twice as guilty if ya did.
> Yeah cos you have to walk over there. You couldn't stop them. You had to walk by, you couldn't do anything. What are you supposed to do? You'd be targeted if you did anything (Maureen and Helen, *Northstreet* residents in conversation, middle aged).

Many felt that they were confronted with a form of criminality they did not understand, could not condone and felt powerless to confront. A cultural prohibition against co-operating with the Gardaí had become well established due to what has been termed a combination of 'over-policing' and 'under-protection', which marked the policing of working-class communities (Mulcahy & O'Mahony, 2005: 3). What contemporary Gardaí refer to as the 'old-style Dublin' situation is the stark division between working-class community and police force with little flow of information from the former to the latter.

The Gardaí were perceived of as an aggressive and alien force: 'It used to be a load of country fellahs come up to the city to put some manners on us' (James). Male residents recall fearing an imminent beating on sighting the uniform[60]. Indeed, the consensus of contemporary participant Gardaí is that their forces' 'old ways' involved frequent and potentially arbitrary violence against those in the inner-city. Residents felt that the local Gardaí were operating under the assumption that 'if you're from the flats you're guilty' and that one would be subject to treatment that would never be meted out in a middle-class area:

> Guards at one stage were just enforcers and they would have thought that anyone from the area must have been involved in a certain amount of trouble and that they could stop anyone for anything (James, extract from fieldnotes).

In return most residents of *Northstreet* were openly hostile to members of the Gardaí. Middle-aged participants recall how men hid on the rooftops to rain glass bottles on any Gardaí who attempted to enter the complex. Garda incursions into *Northstreet* were thus rare, forceful and generally to effect arrests in relation to serious matters. As a consequence *Northstreet* became a 'no-go' area, unpoliced and almost unpolicable. Peader, a community activist involved for over twenty years in the wider locality, claims that there was 'no proper policing within the communities' in the 1970s and 1980s when residents began voicing their concerns about drug issues. Thus there was the perception within the community that they were not receiving adequate protection from the police, compounding the tendency to identify them as an oppressive force.

The taboo against invoking police intervention coupled with genuine fear of violent recrimination from drug-dealers prevented residents from stemming the complex's decline.

[60] Women on the other hand tend to recall the fact that the Gardaí did not become involved in domestic issues and thus did little to improve the lives of victims of domestic violence.

> If you went down the stairs, you'd see someone, throwing up, sleeped off, goofed off or whatever. So you had to jump over that or crawl over that to get your kids to school. Kids was playing on the balcony and someone was dealing, they'd tell them to go down. It was that bad. You had people then told to leave their homes, whether it was single women or old people were told: 'No we want that flat, out you go', and that happened (Barry).

> Yeah and they (the residents) were scared of the drug dealers too. You know these were big bullies, these were people that were like making, coming in with loads of cash and flash cars and you know (Stephen).

With a paucity of employment opportunities, young men increased their commitment to street culture and criminality. Aggressiveness was utilised to maintain circumstances conducive to the heroin trade. *Northstreet* housed a number of drug dealing families. Addict-thieves used the complex as a haven to return post-mugging and restock on heroin, small amounts of which they would sell. Corporation rent-collectors, money lenders, and passing strangers were standard prey for a growing number of violent thieves. A number of teenage males resident in *Northstreet* formed an ad-hoc 'gang', conducting thefts, joy-riding cars and conducting pitched battles against their counterparts in other areas of the city.

In the post-industrial economic landscape traditional notions of working-class culture began to erode. Sacrifice and graft as a requisite of survival had been challenged by the introduction of social welfare, which was increasingly sought under conditions of high unemployment. The community, no longer 'self-sufficient' but tied to an uneasy and suspicious relationship with state authority, suffered disarray which stayed its hand in the face of urban decay and escalating criminality. Modern conditions and the birth of a consumer culture had raised the living standards of residents, yet eroded long-held certainties, creating expectations that could not be realised within the legitimate economy (see: Merton, 1938). Certain facets of the traditional Dublin working-class culture, which continued to provide a route to relative material wealth and a self-defined sense of status,

were adopted and emphasised by particular *Northstreet* men. Necessity, self-sufficiency, toughness and the pursuit of pleasure are themes readily identifiable in the activities of the 'newer' *Northstreet* criminal. Unlike their predecessors, however, their offending was more intense, wide-ranging, and crucially, damaging to their own community. In *Northstreet* traditional working-class tolerance for certain illegal behaviours would take on fresh complexity as heroin use continued to abound.

Changes in the socio-economic climate and significantly in the provision of state welfare services have thus greatly altered the fabric of life in *Northstreet*. Residents moved from sub-standard tenement accommodation, to purpose built social housing, levels of employment fluctuated. Standards of living rose and fell, in turn impacting on the residents' cultural responses to crime. Ultimately, as a response to disadvantage and damaging forms of criminality, the heroin trade in particular, increasingly prevailed, precipitating a 'loss of innocence' and injecting complexity into the manner in which residents condoned illegal behaviour. The growing tensions and contradictions within the community would become more pronounced with the emergence of the anti-drug movement.

4.1.4 'Phoenix from the Ashes': Community Solidarity versus Unacceptable Criminality

Working-class militancy is a force which in Ireland had been rarely utilised to any purpose other than swelling the ranks of the nationalist faithful. During the early 1980s, however, a group of concerned individuals within the north inner-city of Dublin had rallied in an attempt to dislodge heroin dealers from their community with some success, offering a model of community activism which other groups would later emulate (Lyder, 2005; Cullen, 1991). Indeed, by displaying militant tendencies, the movement was branded as 'Republican' by the national media (Cullen, 1991: 73). An anti-drugs movement developed in *Northstreet* in the mid 1990s as a grass-roots response to the problems discussed in the previous subsection and tapped into a growing vein of community activism flourishing in the inner city (see: Punch, 2001: 40; Cullen, 1991).

Northstreet adapted to alienation from mainstream municipal, political and policing authorities by forming indigenous versions.

Once a single resident had taken a stance against a drug dealing family in 1996 the 'ordinary decent' citizens of the complex rallied around him to rebuff the death threats he received. Eager to capitalize on the newly-realised spirit of resistance, a meeting was organised in a local hall. A number of the key protagonists successfully sought a mandate to form an organising committee. Volunteers from the floor read out the names of identified heroin dealers. Outright condemnation of one's own neighbours represented a breach of tradition best undertaken collectively. Having 'named and shamed' individuals who would henceforth be labelled as 'pushers', 'the majority of the people in the flats marched on those people's doors and told them to leave', states Barry, a member of the organising committee. Pressure was placed by community members directly on the 'pushers' through mass marches, meetings and slogans painted on the walls of the flat complex: 'Pushers Out', 'Drug Supermarket is Closed'. Patrols were established to monitor the traffic of people through the complex, dissuading attempts to re-launch the drug trade. In the strongest of terms the residents indicated that they would no longer tolerate the sale of heroin and the barrage of theft it bred. *Northstreet* felt a resurgence of local solidarity and a sense of optimism:

> People got together and decided to kind of put their foot down and stop it. And it started off, like really good intentions, like it brought people together. And there was a sense of really strong community at that time. (Stephen, *Northstreet* Resident, early thirties).

The *Northstreet* movement allied itself with others developing across the city (see: Lyder, 2005). The committee established an office in an empty flat and produced a regular newsletter. They lobbied local and national government to address what they perceived as neglect of working-class Dublin and an absolute failure to police the heroin in its midst. Indeed, many anti-drug activists opine that they were subject to police harassment far in excess of that experienced by drug dealers, constructing themselves as wrongful victims

of state intervention where they sought to invoke it against those they believe were harming their communities. Barry notes that it was local women who played a significant role in much of the movement's activities[61]. In fact, during the initial meeting questions were raised as to the willingness of the male population to participate.

The community's initial unity began to unravel in the subsequent years. Barry's conversations with the researcher highlighted some of the issues that would undermine the progress of his cause. As a former heroin user, he cares deeply and personally about the effects of the drug on working-class communities. He exudes missionary zeal that some find off-putting. Not 'born and reared' in *Northstreet*, he moved there to join his partner and children and thus held 'outsider' status, which he shared with other noted members of his committee. Their activities became the subject of divided opinion.

> But then as you know, things started to shift slightly. Ehm... attitudes are changing. Ehm... people were taking authority into their own hands. It kind of started to divide the area. You know people were either kind of... like there was a committee formed, and you were either part of the committee or against the committee. You know what I mean? So it was kind of a divide (Stephen).

The community had widely supported the initiatives before fully realising the complications which would ensue. Deep seated familial and local loyalties were offended as the committee continued to spearhead the eviction of figures deeply embedded in the community. 'Addicts we care, pushers beware', a favoured slogan of the movement, was questioned by mothers who objected to the evictions of their sons:

> 'People couldn't see the bigger picture and you couldn't explain to them this is what we're doing, because it wouldn't have made sense. I mean we tried to keep them informed with a newsletter. Like our thing was drug dealers out, addicts we wanted to help them, get them treated. Like there's good in most people, when

[61] For a specific account of the manner in which women experienced Dublin's anti-drug movement see: Murphy-Lawless (2002).

> your mother throws you out of the house to clean it, she's not throwing you out for good. She's cleaning the house and as soon as it is ready enough, you're back in. But you come back in and you take your shoes off at the door. All we ever asked of anybody was to stop them. All we wanted was to have a community with some normality in it. And mothers were complaining like: 'oh, these are some of our sons', but they were the main beneficiaries. 'Cos their addict sons could come back in. 'Cos they were in the flats, they didn't have the money, they'd kid themselves that they were in a drug-free area' (Barry).

Intent on continuing their project, the committee's attitudes diverged from the general, and their actions departed from what was universally comfortable. Their predilection for vigils and patrols earned the group the label of 'vigos', a Dublin-style abbreviation for 'vigilante'. Resentment grew amongst residents who did not appreciate the surveillance and perceived appropriation of power. A common complaint is that in challenging 'anti-social' behaviour, the group exceeded its mandate and imposed unwarranted controls on the 'good people of the flats'. Those whose relatives had fallen foul of the committee's accusations began to challenge their veracity:

> 'I've seen people who were singled out that weren't dealers. One young fellah in particular was very decent, he worked and all that, and one of the old committee ran after him and gave him a smack with an iron bar. He hung around with people that they didn't like and tagged everyone in a certain group as a dealer' (James).

Kin and friendship loyalties were activated as the *Northstreet* community split into opposing factions. Accusations of violent behaviour, subsequently denied, were levelled against the committee, who report that they themselves were the victims of serious assaults and death threats to the extent that they lived in mortal fear. Barry theorizes that their trust had been damaged by inaccurate rumours asserting that they had 'ratted' on prominent local thieves. The committee had overstepped a cultural taboo, violating the community's pride by exposing its proclivities, and had become isolated.

Moving into the new millennium, the residents no longer garnered a sense of safety from a cohesive and co-operative community but became ever more concerned with defending narrow factional interests. Barry's opponents publicly raised the issue of his former drug use, implying hypocrisy and links to active drug dealers[62]. Traded accusations of drug dealing and unwarranted violence became ammunition in a battle over the moral authority to lead. Suspicion flourished amongst the aggrieved:

> I mind my own business. I don't look for people doing bad things. I wouldn't be like the 'vigos'. It's not their place anyways, the Guards are there to do that. They are the biggest hypocrites, they are. People who were vigos then are now the biggest dealers. They're nothing but hypocrites all of them. They ripped the flats off £100,000 that was supposed to be for the kids and they went on holidays... There used to be killings, they used go around with iron bars and hammers and bait (beat) people around. They'd jump out of vans and try and kill ya. They burst into a friend's flat and killed him, and he wasn't even selling. They'd get it wrong, they were always after me for selling and I've never sold drugs in me life... It's just jealousy, they couldn't stand seeing me with some money, they couldn't understand that I could have got it without selling drugs (Darren, former young offender and *Northstreet* resident, early twenties).

Notions of crime and safety differentiated along the newly formed community political lines commensurate with the perceived existence of threat. In one case, which is representative of events during this period in the late 1990s, a young man from an established family was accused, by the committee, of selling heroin. As he was discreet and the alleged offence ambiguous, his family were disposed to defend him and perceive the committee's actions, although based on thorough surveillance, as vindictive, illegal and threatening. To the concerned residents of the committee, however, the sale of heroin was an unacceptable threat to the integrity of the community and the future of its youth.

[62] According to Garda participants, certain members of the city-wide movement were paradoxically involved in the drug trade, although no specific mention is made of individuals connected to the *Northstreet* chapter.

The dispute rapidly developed a personal dimension. Tensions between the factions erupted into open fighting, savage beatings, attempted and actualised murder. The committee's office was burnt out in what they suspect was a vindictive arson attack, but what the wider community would agree was an accident.

Conspicuously absent from the above account are the agents of state authority who, for a variety of reasons, played a relatively minor role. Firstly, the anti-drug movement was an inherently community-centred initiative, possessing a tendency to advance its agenda on a local authority and police force accustomed to operating on the basis of its own. Secondly, the Corporation and its *Northstreet* tenants had a distant relationship strained further through the years of urban decay, whilst many residents were openly hostile towards the Gardaí[63]. Thirdly, the committee had attracted what they assert is the false label of Republican involvement. A number of individuals associated with Republican organisations participated at various levels within the wider anti-drugs movement in a personal capacity (Lyder, 2005: 290). One member of the *Northstreet* committee explains that opportunities to publicly deny paramilitary links were spurned, as the degree of mystique discouraged violent reprisals. Barry has concluded that the suspicions of Republican sympathy were ultimately seized upon by the authorities to justify excluding the committee from further involvement in community development.

The committee had sought funding from various state authorities to improve the material condition of the flat complex and the employment prospects of its residents. The qualities required to conduct successful grass-roots activism are radically different to those which inspire the state to loosen its purse strings (Punch, 2001: 40-41). The committee was not formally constituted but ad-hoc, informal and personality driven. Suspicion was rife in the unfruitful clash of working-class agitation and middle-class bureaucracy. Barry asserts that at an official level the Corporation and Gardaí were at best indifferent to their efforts, although certain individuals 'on the ground' offered co-operation and support. Ultimately those initiatives which the committee had unilaterally established floundered due to lack of state funding and support. Broken-spirited and exhausted post-conflict,

[63] Lyder (2005) describes the anti-drug movement as in constant conflict with various state authorities.

members of the committee report that they were ultimately force to cede community leadership.

Anti-drug activism divided the community and added considerable complexity to the manner in which the residents articulate concerns around crime. Accusations that the law had been broken emanated from all sides: with *vigos* alleging the continued sale of heroin, and *pushers* or their families alleging paramilitary involvement and vigilante attacks. The heated and violent conflict prompted extreme responses from across the community, rendering a distinction between 'rough' and 'respectable' elements difficult, if not somewhat ineffective in gauging cultural responses to crime in this period.

4.1.5 New Beginnings: Fresh Leadership and Urban Renewal

The failure of the committee and authorities to effectively collaborate on the achievement of reasonably similar aims indicates a level of alienation and mutual suspicion. Park and Burgess (1925) theorise that a cultural gulf exists between the middle-classes, who place stock in 'secondary' or official relationships, and the working-classes, who respond better to personal or 'primary' relationships. Perhaps the greatest triumph of the anti-drugs movement was altering the manner in which the authorities interact with working-class communities. The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997 empowered local authorities to evict criminal or anti-social tenants where this had only been previously achieved through unilateral community action. Now legally facilitated, Dublin Corporation would attempt to bridge the gulf by establishing local offices and micro-managing the flat complexes in an attempt to fill the power vacuum which militant and criminal elements had occupied.

Declan, a Dublin City Council[64] employee, was charged with assessing the future prospects of the *Northstreet* community, whether the flat complex should be retained or demolished in favour of modern duplex housing. He describes the community as 'good inner-city people', then 'disillusioned' by the 'veil of threats' maintained by the old

[64] Dublin Corporation changed its name to Dublin City Council as part of a comprehensive rebranding process in which many long-held policies were reconsidered.

committee and sinister Republican forces. Declan spearheaded the reform of his agency's relationship with the community by encouraging regular contact and direct participation in local decision making, while promising to invest in infrastructural improvements. Valerie, his colleague, describes their first steps thus:

> 'So we opened up a little office in *Northstreet*, just a little flat, and actually started from scratch. You know, eh, we done a survey with the people asking them what they wanted, what they expected and from there we just mingled with the people, that created a bond and a trust with the people and, em, we got a steering group going because the work, the precinct improvements, were ready to go ahead, so we had to have a steering group. We had to have a certain amount of people we could liaise with about the work. And we got that done and we decided to have an open day in the [old community] hall and I think it was a month or so before the work was due to start... We had all the plans around the hall. And we showed the people what we were going to do and most people were delighted, some people wanted little changes here and there which we were able to do for them. So from then, ehm, it took time for the bond and the trust to break [start] between ourselves and the local people. You know we were on the ground, they could see us there and if they had problems, maintenance problems they came to us, we'd be able to get them sorted, so it grew from there.'

Installing themselves within the space of the flats and in the consciousness of the local residents became key to regenerating the relationship between the municipality and its tenants in *Northstreet*. Whilst the committee boycotted this process, other residents who embraced the Council's fresh approach gained influence through constituting a Residents' Association. Unlike their predecessors in community leadership the association are disinclined to utilise agitation and militant tactics, favouring cooperation in exchange for concessions. Council and community leadership were thus afforded the opportunity to adopt a language of 'progress', 'partnership', 'regeneration', shared goals and values. Council staff refer to the new working relationship as 'a bond of trust'; they

are keen to locate themselves as servants of the community, who have broken down barriers and won the esteem of residents:

> They come to us for everything; you know every single little thing. There's people who can't read or write who come around and ask us to fill out forms. They let us know if anything is happening in the area (Valerie).

On site the Council were better positioned to maintain the premises, manage anti-social behaviour and allocate flats as they became available, all in consultation with the new community leadership. *Northstreet*'s marginalisation from mainstream society was symbolically, if not significantly reduced, through ostensibly acquiescing to state, as opposed to popular, forms of vigilance and social control.

The municipal authority's *volt face* was supported by a surge in the Irish economy and a wider regeneration of Dublin's inner-city. Local property prices rose steadily due to growth in the tourism, retail and service sectors, while a shift in habitation patterns fuelled demand for city centre apartments (MacLaren, 1999: 22-24). The construction boom provided lucrative and culturally desirable employment to inner-city males. Continuing growth in the service sector provided greater scope for employment generally. The Council complimented private regeneration by investing over €10 million in the physical structure of the *Northstreet* flats in the early 2000s. Two generations of graffiti were removed from the complex's outer walls, new courtyards laid, trees and gardens planted. Fences were erected and the 'arches' fitted with doors, restricting the access of strangers.

> People can't believe the change in the flats. People who left come to visit and they can't believe it, I can hardly believe it (Thomas, Maintenance Worker).

A community centre was built and James, a *Northstreet* resident was appointed as manager, placing him in a *de facto* leadership position but politicising the space immediately. The Council employed extra staff: managers, caretakers, sports

development officers, youth workers and offered maintenance posts to young men from the community, with the objective of creating a community lifestyle more in tune with mainstream values. The bullish economy would now provide ample employment opportunities for *Northstreet* residents inclined to accept the available work. Jacinta, a member of the Resident's Association in her later forties, and her sister-in-law articulate the changes thus:

> Things used to be very bad around here and there was nothing for all the kids to do, but now they've built the playgrounds and the football pitch and there's the community centre and trips for them, but years ago there was none of that, so there was nothing for them, that's all changed now.
>
> The area is grand now, it's a lot more friendly and its getting even better, you've computers gone in and all. It's easier to get jobs, years ago you couldn't get a job if you were from the flats, you had to pretend you were from the houses, pretend you were posh [pronounces it out of accent jokingly] (extract from fieldnotes).

Northstreet is said to have been transformed, renewed and reclaimed from criminality and divisive militant behaviour. The regeneration of *Northstreet* marked another step in the residents' exodus from poverty. There is the tendency on the part of contemporary community leadership to celebrate this achievement to the exclusion of discussing the fact that a divide continued to persist and numerous cultural responses to crime remained unchanged. This becomes increasingly clear as the contemporary social structure of *Northstreet* is considered in-depth.

4.2 Urban Renewal and the (de)Construction of a Working-Class Paradise

This subsection probes the experience of urban renewal in *Northstreet*, analysing first the articulated advantages of the regenerated flat complex and resurgent economy, before examining the challenge posed to this discourse from an observable 'underside' to claimed progress and contested accounts of the street's 'respectable' status. Finally, *The*

Crew, their activities and their sub-culture can then be properly located within the context of the contemporary community in *Northstreet*.

4.2.1 A Pleasant Existence

The regenerated flat complex is a pleasant environment conducive to the existence of 'community spirit' demonstrated by this description extracted from fieldnotes taken in June 2005:

> It is a lovely Summer day and there are many people out in the centre of the flats. Adults sit sunbathing on chairs and sun loungers talking easily, others are listening to an old style cabaret song on the radio. Jason [Resident's Association member] has a hose connected up to the tap outside the community centre. He is spraying down the cars in his vicinity, washing the footpath and watering the plants. One man walks around with a crate of diet coke cans distributing them to children and adults alike. The younger kids are kicking about a football in the playground, rollerblading around it, cycling bikes or playing 'chasing'.

Contemporary community leadership theorise that there has been a radical alteration in the manner in which residents perceive of and treat their surroundings:

> When the place was regenerated and people kind of took ownership of it... because the place had been done up, on a one-off thing, they could see: 'well look, if we let people, you know, write on the walls we're not going to get this repainted again', so people had taken ownership and were watching that no-one was damaging the walls or anything else (James).

James' explanation conceals tension by generically referring to 'people'. The flat's pleasant surroundings are regulated by specific residents, generally, those who are connected to the Council and represent the community as leaders. They pursue young people who write graffiti on walls or damage property, and older residents who leave stale food in the courtyard for pigeons to consume. Community space is increasingly

surveyed and regulated. The community centre can be accessed only through arrangement with the management, who demonstrate a preference for formal classes, although their own friends and family tend to maintain a casual presence. Young people complain bitterly that they are seldom allowed in. There are signs up throughout: stating the rules governing use of computers, announcing CCTV surveillance and instructing bathroom users to wash their hands. CCTV cameras operate throughout the complex. 'Arches' are supposedly accessible only to residents of specific blocks[65].

The safer, 'friendly' complex and improved economy has bred a vigorous culture of conspicuous consumption in *Northstreet*. Many flats feature plush leather suites, elegant moulded plaster features and sparkling chrome kitchen appliances. 42" televisions becoming *de rigeur* as is the ubiquitous black miniature satellite dish outside. Celtic Tiger Ireland is awash with credit and although the residents of *Northstreet* may no longer frequent the pawnshops or 'Jew men' with any great regularity, the Credit Union and corporate moneylenders provide. A brief walking tour of the flats reveals that most of the cars have been registered in the last five years and are generally in good condition, the jewel in the crown: a very well maintained new BMW. Many enjoy foreign holidays, predominantly in Spain, but also to destinations as exotic as Florida and the Dominican Republic. Young men favour a style popularised by UK footballers: hair shaved at the sides, spiked at the top, often with blonde streaks, single large diamante earrings, brand 'runners' and tracksuits, the bottoms tucked into the 'stockings' (socks). Brands are crucial: Nike, Addidas, Fred Perry, Lacoste and other expensive sporting labels. Official soccer jerseys and American 'urban' T-shirts are also favoured. Dressing the part is vital; local young women speak highly of those in 'nice tracksuits and clean runners' those who do not look the part are liable to be labelled as 'scumbags'.

For young women, shopping has become an important pastime; they dress in the height of fashion, visit beauticians and tanning salons, often taking part-time jobs to finance their steady consumption. *Northstreet* is not a great distance from the retail haven of

[65] The researcher observes members of *The Crew* tampering with the locking mechanism of certain arches so that they are able to open security doors with a firm tug.

O'Connell Street – Henry Street, a frequent port of call for residents. The women of the flats return with bags of groceries not only from the more economic shopping chains, but also from Marks & Spencer. Young people boast of receiving both a computer and game console as Christmas gifts. Even the most disadvantaged children can be seen with brand new bicycles and motorised scramblers. Traditional excessive spending on religious events has been extended to secular occasions: birthdays and debutante balls. Where once the north inner-city contained mostly 'huckster' shops with notoriously mean fare, there is now such a proliferation of convenience stores that the traditional greengrocers and butchers are closing. Convenience has taken priority over value. From the magazine stands of these shops celebrities stare from the pages of popular lifestyle publications which have made the aesthetic of consumption so desirable to the citizens of *Northstreet.*

Prosperity and consumption feature heavily in conversation amongst the residents, prompting Barry to comment: 'With the way that lot go on, you'd think we didn't live in social housing'. Dublin working-class identity has subsumed a level of consumerism traditionally associated with the affluent and in some cases has begun to alter, celebrating the possibilities that accompany a vigorous economy and greater material wealth. Indeed, certain residents articulate views in stark opposition to conventional notions of working-class culture.

4.2.2 Projecting Mainstream Values: Education, Aspiration and Respectability

Albert Cohen (1955) distinguished the values of 'delinquent' young men from those championed by the middle-class: education, careerism and deference to authority. These notionally middle-class principles feature prominently in Jacinta, of the Residents' Association's appraisal of *Northstreet* residents: 'Now everyone is getting on well, getting good jobs, staying in school and doing their Leaving (Certificates), going to college'. This description is typical of that offered to the researcher by many different community participants. In particular, young female residents take pride in academic achievement. A significant number of young people elect to remain in school for the non-compulsory 'transition' year and proceed to further education in community colleges upon graduation. Some young adults choose to resume their studies, earning their

Leaving Certificates and higher qualifications from local community colleges. *Northstreet* now houses teachers, administrators, secretaries, community workers and bankers alongside tradesmen, labourers, cleaners and the long-term unemployed. Numerous young people discuss careers in accountancy and law, nursing and social care. Whilst a majority persist in aspiring to construction and beautician trades, the widely held belief that natives of *Northstreet* could not progress beyond blue-collar employment no longer prevails.

Recalling the prejudice and stigma associated with a reputation for criminality, community leadership figures seem to link the proliferation of opportunity to the reinvention of *Northstreet* as a respectable neighbourhood. The Council and the partners in community leadership concur that the flats are '99% drug-free' and with the exception of *The Crew* and a single ex-convict, virtually crime free[66]. James contends that there was never a high level of crime committed by *Northstreet* residents and that negative perceptions of the street were as a result of outsiders using it as a focus of their cycle of theft, drug use and drug trading. He contends that the old committee planted exaggerated stories in the media to achieve their own agenda. The lowered crime rates are thus attributed to the insulation of the street from outside incursion. There has been a marked reduction in levels of high-visibility crime and anti-social behaviour, yet it is difficult to establish the truth of James's assertion and levels of less conspicuous criminality.

The real improvements to the quality of life in *Northstreet* are emphasised by community leadership to reinforce the image of the area vesting in mainstream values, 'respectable' working-class culture and an aversion to criminality.

4.2.3 The Social Structure of the *Northstreet* Community

Different accounts of community affairs emanate from disparate groupings based on age, gender, kinship, and shared identity (see also: Karn, 2007). Acquiring a sufficient

[66] As will become clear in the next Chapter, individual Gardaí operating in the area concur that levels of crime in the area have reduced significantly.

understanding of contemporary *Northstreet* necessitates an understanding of community divisions[67]:

Dominant Kin Structure: James and the members of the Resident's Association are drawn from *Northstreet*'s dominant kin structure, a network of families present in the flats since their establishment, deeply intertwined through marriage or co-parenting, and comprising a significant proportion of the local population. The group's dominance is reinforced through the rehousing of their grown children within the complex. Those within the structure benefit from the mutual support provided by their kin members: financial (gifts and loans), practical (running errands, child care), emotional (loyalty, support) and community-political (advocacy, making representations to the Council). The dominant kin structure lay claim to authentic *Northstreet* identity.

Transient Families: Certain resident families are described by the above group as 'transitory'. Temporarily housed in *Northstreet* by the Council, they await transfer to accommodation closer to their own extended kin. There can be a paucity of local support available to such families. Often they spend days in the suburbs and return to *Northstreet* at night. It takes considerable time to become accepted as a fully fledged resident: 'I'm here twenty years and I'd still be considered a blow-in' (Barry).

'Problem' Families: Families with particularly severe and visible social problems, who are transient, or have exhausted the patience of relatives in the dominant kin network, tend to be represented as problematic. Community leadership is inclined to represent the heads of these families as irresponsible and negligent, raising delinquent children:

> The Grandmother is a half-wit and the daughters are on drugs. The father was shot, you'd think that after all that that the family would have a bit of cop-on but, you know, they don't. You'd think that they'd be telling the young fellah to keep his head down, but it's not that they're stupid, just that they've no cop on. One of

[67] The following group titles have been devised in all cases by the researcher. *The Crew* will not be considered here specifically as they have been examined in detail in Chapter 3.

> the nights now, the young fellah was in the queue to get in (to the community centre) and there's some shoving and he starts getting into a fight with another young fellah, and d'ya know what his grandmother shouts down to him: 'Get a bar and batter him!' Would ya fuckin believe it? Someone shouts up to her that someone should batter her. Imagine saying that to a young fellah? (James, extract from fieldnotes).

For the most part, *The Crew*'s families belong to this group.

The Team: Those young men who were engaged in consistent offending during the heroin years, are now, according to both Council and community leadership sources, 'settled down': 'They've good jobs and are going to college and have girlfriends and kids' (Jacinta). The young adult males constitute the *Northstreet* football team who rank highly in the Dublin league and as such are constructed as a source of local pride. Casual observation, however, challenges Jacinta's assessment. Certain *Team* members are present in the flats throughout the day, clearly unemployed, whilst others have been arrested in relation to serious robberies and high-level cocaine dealing[68]. It is interesting to note, that these young men are deeply embedded in the dominant kin structure and have close relatives in community leadership positions.

The Malcontents: Many members of the anti-drug leadership committee continue to live in *Northstreet* and are deeply disillusioned to see the relatives of the 'pushers' they pursued now leading the community. They harbour deep reservations about the current conditions of the area and are sceptical of the governing partnership, perceiving it in terms of a conspiracy. They believe that the consensus between community and Council has facilitated corrupt planning decisions, favouritism, sluggish maintenance and unchecked criminality to flourish. The partnership, they maintain, has facilitated the denial of the existence of serious social problems within the area:

[68] The arrests occurred after field-work had been completed and as yet none of the individuals have been formally convicted. Prior to this development, local police informants had admitted that they suspect members of *The Team* are involved in high level crime, but did not possess sufficient evidence to pursue charges. It remains somewhat ambiguous.

> The official channels will tell you that everything is rosy in the garden. They're doing a great job, they're doing such a brilliant job and they're not going to say any other ... My whole thing is there's a problem there that needs to be approached, it has to be dealt with. The problem is denial... Like, there is still poverty in the flats, there is poverty, like people's not going to say it because it's... we're all supposed to be doing very well, we're all supposed to be with the Celtic Tiger. There is still an awful lot of problems. When the Corpo [Dublin Corporation] done up the place and gave us a cosmetic job and done all this, the problems are still there. Nobody responds to them because they're not supposed to be there. It's the old Irish way: you blow on it and it'll go away (Barry).

Though a relatively small faction, the malcontents seem to cause irritation to the both parties in the governing partnership. A residual conflict persists between the 'vigos' and those who sympathise with the 'pushers'.

4.2.4 A Neighbourhood Cold Conflict

No longer violent, the clash between contemporary leadership and *The Malcontents* is in the arena of belief and expression. Even the existence of the divide is contested:

> There is no real divide in this community, more it's people in the old committee who wanted to stay there forever. They wanted control and didn't want to give it up. It's not the new committee that has a problem, but the old committee wants people to think that they aren't doing a good job. People in committees can get very begrudging and vindictive (James, new leadership).

> We probably had that fear in the community of 'well if I talk to him, I'm on that side', or 'he talks to her cos she's on that side', and who's neutral? The dynamics of the community is totally changed... If someone talked to me it would create a whole barrier probably on his side: what's he doing talking to him for? And if someone else talked to someone else in the flats I'd be a bit wary saying: you

> know I'd better be watching, you know, what I say here, because they're been talking to him (Barry, old leadership).

There is indeed a palpable tension between particular individuals and families. The legacy of heroin controversies is manifested in slow-burning contempt. One can visit the community centre on any given morning and see two different groups of women in two different rooms, who will only discuss the other in hushed tones. 'You couldn't have the mother of a fellah who died from drugs sitting across the table from the mother of the fellah who sold him the drugs', explains a *Malcontent*. The community centre is a vastly contested space with a member of James' family initially questioning the *Malcontent* women about their presence 'Sure why are youse coming here? Youse are vigos!' There are elements in the community who view each other with silent enmity and deep suspicion and refuse to speak to each other, despite living no more than 100 metres apart.

The division is expressed through selective association and participation in community activities. On one occasion a local youth worker organises an outing for a group of young women and a volunteer (a member of *The Team*) agrees to accompany them. One young woman's parents refuse her permission to attend, due to violent events that had transpired between them and this particular man:

> She knows that she won't be involved with any project that [volunteer] has anything to do with. I can't understand why the Guards would let him work with children, they know damn well what he is (Mother's words – extract from field notes).

The discord has a significant effect on the manner in which *Northstreet* residents perceive of each other. Here members of the old committee firmly believe that the volunteer is, or at least was, a violent drug dealer and they express disbelief that the authorities would take a different stance. For her part, the daughter seems to agree with her parent's assessment: 'He's a fucken scumbag Johnny… I don't pal with them [the volunteer and other member of *The Team*]' (Daughter's words – extract from field notes).

This is a battle of respectability and criminality has become a weapon by which the other side's moral integrity can be denigrated. With cross-accusations of villainy continuing to fly, a low level of interaction with the criminal justice system can act as an 'objective' yardstick: 'Sure mine [son] is grand, I was only in court once this year'. Smugness is expressed when the child of an opposing camp is in difficulty. Remarking on the heroin addiction of the son of a *Malcontent*, a member of the Resident's Association asks with a sarcastic tone: 'That's a terrible pity, is there nothing the nuns can do for him?' *The Malcontent*'s reaction is to shrug stoically. Privately she points out that it is *The Team* that supplies the drug. Criminality is a murky phenomenon in which competing accounts and contested realities are inherent. This is rendered remarkably more complex by the need to defend one's own allies and disparage one's enemies.

4.2.5 Illuminating the Underside: Contesting Accounts of 'Progress'

The governing partnership's assertions must be considered in light of conflicting accounts and observational data.

Whilst valuing education and aspiring to white-collar employment has grown, in many cases traditional notions of early school leaving in pursuit of manual labour remain popular. The focal concern is often the realisation of income as opposed to academic achievement. 'I'm finished with school. Start up me apprenticeship, €200 a week and once I'm working I can price jobs meself!' enthuses Byrnesy on completion of his Junior Certificate, expressing views commonly held by his peers, delinquent or otherwise. Willis (1977) famously described how behaviour in the classroom reproduces class (and indeed culture) through successive generations. 'Half of them [the class] are in anger management, and they still kill the teacher' reports Keano. The *Northstreet* youth frequently speak of censure, suspension and expulsion. Most are sprightly and energetic and do not take well to the formal environment and constrictive regulation of the classroom. Parents in *Northstreet* do not always posses the cultural capacity to support their children's education, acquiescing to demands for days off, misunderstanding school communication, becoming intimidated by superior-seeming staff, or simply deeming the

process largely irrelevant. Jacinta, who above praises the academic achievements of *Northstreet*'s youth, is embroiled in conflict with a community worker encouraging her daughter to pursue higher education. Jacinta insists her interests would be better served by eschewing college and taking a cleaning job. Similarly, conspicuous consumption is not a universal phenomenon in *Northstreet.* Problem families, in particular, tend to lack the resources to afford luxuries. Their flats tend to be in poor repair, with shabby furniture and fewer modern electronic devices. A number of families labour under considerable debt; others have no remaining avenues to credit. Post-urban-renewal, poverty remains a feature of life in *Northstreet.*

Ultimately, the rhetoric of governing forces obfuscates the less appealing aspects of life on the street, particularly in terms of criminality. Whilst contemporary community leadership attempt to sever links to criminality past and present, numerous forms of illegal and pseudo-legal activities persist. Manipulating the social welfare system is so central to *Northstreet* life that it has permeated its culture. Many couples maintain the illusion of living apart to maximise the amount of benefits claimable. Engaging in casual labour while continuing to receive unemployment benefit is popular, allowing young men a reasonable income while preserving a sense of independence from the working world. Traditional notions of working-class masculinities persist. Casual trading through street-side stalls, ticket touting and bootlegging official merchandise demonstrates a continuing antipathy to the regulations imposed by wider society. The illegitimate economy remains vigorous in *Northstreet*, where goods of dubious origin are sold door-to-door, and even so-called pariahs such as *The Crew* find willing customers. Indeed, a particular resident profits by selling their stolen bicycles in large lots.

A number of factors point to the ongoing prevalence of violence in *Northstreet.* Soccer hooliganism enchants local youth who follow the antics of their team's *specials* on YouTube[69]. Local bar staff report that a number of men have reputations for instigating brawls, while others participate in bare-knuckle boxing circles. In *Northstreet*, personal

[69] According to Garda sources groups of fans from opposing teams at Dublin soccer matches organise public brawls. A key organiser is said to reside in *Northstreet.*

space (emotional and physical) is scarce and tempers frequently run high. Public fights serve as a method of dispute resolution and rapidly become a feature of local conversation. Darren arrives to his interview with several stitches following a drunken altercation but bears no enmity to the perpetrator who visited him in hospital and offered to cover medical expenses. Violence has permeated the *lingua franca* of the flats which is laden with threats and curses. Facets of 'street' culture are evident in these elements of community behaviour.

4.2.6 Rough or Respectable? Contested Accounts of Criminality

Brewer et al. (1997: 142) note that accounts of criminality in their participant community are 'contextualised and varied'. The governing partnership impugns *The Crew* and isolated drug addicts as the sole source of criminality in a community otherwise progressing in tune with hegemonic values. *The Malcontents*, however, insist that certain members of *The Team*, the 'bogies'[70], are engaged in high-level cocaine dealing and armed robberies. These are individuals whose alleged crimes were the basis of community conflict during the heroin years and *the Malcontents* assert that their activities have grown increasingly sophisticated and profitable while the governing partnership focuses on trifling offenders. These descriptions are informed by community structural and political concerns. Contemporary leaderships' perceptions are underpinned by working-class norms necessitating defending from censure those within particular bonds of trust (Yates, 2006)[71] and a desire to protect their 'partnership'. Consensus on falling crime rates is essential to this latter purpose. The Council cannot be seen to be heavily vested in a community that allows criminality to proliferate. *The Malcontents*, with intransigent adherence to their failed vision of community, reaffirm their previous position and question the judgement of their successors. Perceptions of crime are inherently tied to group positions and interests.

'Neutral' accounts of criminality are a rarity in *Northstreet*. The majority of residents are reluctant to discuss the issue: 'I keep myself to myself', 'I don't look for the bad in

[70] People who are not as innocent as they seem.

[71] These norms fuelled internal conflict within the old committee, where decisions to censure other members' own children were reportedly controversial.

others'. Towards the end of fieldwork a non-aligned resident tentatively voices her concern around drug-related shootings and complains about neighbours who drive a 'fancy car and haven't worked a wet day in their lives'. She asks the researcher to guess how such luxuries are afforded; the reply of 'drugs?' raises a knowing smile. *The Team*'s criminal status is ambiguous; if they offend, few within the community (nor the researcher) directly witness it. Cocaine, often perceived as benign, and with connotations of affluence, does not raise community hackles in the same manner as heroin, which is associated with death and devastation. *The Team* vigorously consuming strengthens the image of *Northstreet* community leaders wish to promote, while rumours of their criminality are sufficiently vague to be dismissed. In *Northstreet* 'crime' is attributable to the 'Other'.

Whilst Saris et al. (2002) argue that the under-privileged community they studied were at pains to differentiate themselves from wider society, to mitigate the shame of failing in the new economy, the opposite is occurring in *Northstreet.* Contemporary community leadership are keen to demonstrate that through an improved environment, disassociation with crime, and greater commitment to education and careerism, the residents conform to the prosperity of the New Ireland. Middle-class individualism encroaches on traditional working-class notions of community solidarity, as factional groups move to secure their interests using allegations of wrong-doing to discredit the opposition. Value clashes are part of working-class life where neighbours must constantly negotiate their differing commitment to street culture (see: Mullins, 2006: 13; Anderson, 1999: 320). Labels of 'rough' and 'respectable' cannot be drawn with ease in the murk generated by cross-accusations in *Northstreet.* Whilst there are families which are readily classified in either category, many more possess a more ambiguous identity. Stark categorisations do not sufficiently express the fluid, contextual and contingent responses to crime in Northstreet.

Belying the language of progress espoused by community leadership in *Northstreet* is the observable social reality prevailing in the area. An ostensibly 'middle-class' outlook on education, employment and consumption exists to a varying extent within different sections of the resident population, although it is tempered through the continuing

tolerance and widespread practice of traditional working-class cultural responses to social welfare manipulation, property crime and normalised violence. Cultural change within the area is nascent and reflects more accurately the aspirations of *Northstreet*'s leadership than the reality of life on the ground.

4.2.7 *The Crew* in a Community Context: Delinquents in the New Working-Class Milieu

The community's power structure and the rhetoric of its leadership remains the most useful manner in which to examine the exclusion of *The Crew*. Partnership with authority and prosperity are relatively novel concepts to *Northstreet* residents, yet are cited in support of removing *Crew* members Mano and Adam from the complex in the vignette at the conclusion of the previous chapter. *The Crew* are represented as regressive, relics of a darker time in *Northstreet*'s history: 'Them little fuckers that rob the bikes? They're trying to bring things back to the way they used to be' (Jacinta, extract from field notes). Jacinta's statement frames the activities of *The Crew* as a threat to the community's advancement. They are identified along with the notorious offenders of the 1980s and early-mid 1990s, as 'outsiders', without connection to the community and in possession of alien values. On the other hand, Darren, a member of *The Team*, views *The Crew* as their successors: 'That was me years ago'. Efforts to exclude *The Crew* resemble in many ways the old committee's attempts to challenge *The Team* during the heroin years. Fundamentally, *The Crew* cannot be classified as an outlandish group possessing novel values, but are part of an established community dynamic which is increasing in intricacy.

Without the attendant advocacy and support that accompanies membership of the dominant kin structure, *The Crew* represent a soft target in community leadership's symbolic crusade to represent *Northstreet* as respectable. Moreover, their lived experiences have greater resonance with facets of 'old' working-class life. They continue to 'struggle', be it for a culturally relevant notion of esteem and financial independence, as opposed to survival. Contrasting *The Crew* to their 'non-delinquent' peers, illustrates the difference of their 'street' subculture to the hegemonic values community leadership is attempting to display allegiance to. In contrast to *The Crew* the general youth

population to a greater extent participate in, and derive esteem from, structured, 'pro-social' activities, whilst offending on a far less frequent basis:

> I love sport. Adam and Mano and all those boys thinking they're mad 'cos they smoke and rob and all. (Imitating): 'I smoke, I'm mad.' Put in your book how we just play sport (Kev, *Northstreet* resident, 13-years-old, extract from field notes).

Kev and his peers, younger than *The Crew* and embedded in the dominant kin structure, are subject to collective community supervision and support and were born into local friendship networks of like-minded youth. Nurtured and accepted in their locality, they are less inclined to require the extreme ruggedness and independence afforded by adherence to oblique 'street' culture. *The Crew* occupy a different, more desperate, social reality in which tragedy, poverty, addiction, violence and crime feature prominently. *Crew* members use disposable income to purchase *inter alia* hash and cigarettes, 'ordinary' youth consummately purchase clothes, durables and music. In contrast to the general youth population *The Crew* are 'flawed consumers' (Bauman, 2000). Their difference is borne out stylistically. The pristine attire favoured by the general youth population stands in contrast to the older, dirtier, 'hot-rock'[72] pocked tracksuits sported by *The Crew*. Through their dress and demeanour they are visually identifiable as rougher and less mainstream-orientated. The wider youth both 'respect' and fear them, whilst also replicating the sense of distaste for their uncouth nature and inability to 'progress', dominant amongst *Northstreet* leaders[73]. Palpably located at the bottom of *Northstreet*'s internal hierarchy, *The Crew* face exclusion, though their values are merely stylistically contrary to those widely held within the community.

Contemporary cultural responses to crime in *Northstreet* demonstrate the influence of the community's history as well as current concerns: traditional tenement values, rugged street norms, and the exigencies of maintaining the approval and financial backing of

[72] The cannabis joints that members of *The Crew* smoke let fall a barrage of smouldering chunks of hash with each draw and even more when shaken or disturbed. These burn distinctive holes in their clothing.
[73] See: Hayward & Yar (2006) on similarity to the concept of 'chavs' in the UK context.

municipal government. Street culture, on the other hand, is born of desperation (Anderson, 1999: 320).

> The sub-ordinate class brings to this 'theatre of struggle' a repertoire of strategies and responses – ways of coping as well as resisting. Each strategy in the repertoire mobilizes certain real material and social elements: it constructs these into the supports for the different ways the class lives and resists its continuing sub-ordination (Hall & Jefferson, 1976: 44).

The *Northstreet* community is attempting to reach beyond its traditional status as 'marginalised', to disconnect from the criminality that is typically associated with working-class, local authority housing complexes, through down-playing poverty and exhibiting similarity to hegemonic attitudes to education, crime and respectability. *The Crew*, responding to the demands of their social reality, continue to adhere to norms reproduced from working-class culture in times of desperation. The exclusion this generates further isolates them and heightens their commitment to street culture. 'The dialectics of exclusion' amplify deviancy and further 'marginality' (Young, 1999: 13). Irony lies in the fact that the behaviour of *The Crew* remains in tune with norms and values, which though contested by leadership, are observable to varying degrees within their community. Courting a mainstream identity involves jettisoning traditional working-class attitudes, yet they are never far from the surface and continue to exhibit a strong influence. *The Crew*'s offending, thus, may still be conceived of as underpinned by generations of deeply encultured norms and patterns of behaviour. This creates difficulty where wider society attempts to alter these modes.

Conclusion

Though elements of the *Northstreet* community leadership present *The Crew* as an outside group possessing alien values, a historical examination of the development of locale and culture within the area calls this depiction into question. The values and activities of *The Crew*, examined in detail in the previous chapter, conform to cultural imperatives derived from 'traditional' working-class values developed in an era of

extreme poverty. During the tenement years, theft of a predominantly petty nature became part of the repertoire of culturally condoned survival strategies amongst a desperately poor inner-city population. Violence was recognised as a legitimate mechanism of dispute resolution where state intervention through policing and the legal system was distrusted. These normative principles accompanied the population into the newly constructed *Northstreet* flat complex during the brief resurgence of the Irish economy in the 1960s. The subsequent decline in industrial employment destabilised the financial bedrock of working-class Dublin and resulted in the growth of a rugged 'street' culture amongst certain *Northstreet* residents, some of whom participated in the newly established heroin trade. The drug's attendant criminality brought about such deterioration in quality of life and physical environment that concerned sections of the community engaged in vigorous grass-roots activism. This resulted in state authority renewing its interest in *Northstreet* and entering into partnership with residents who considered themselves victimised under the previous anti-drug leadership.

High levels of state investment in urban renewal combined with the strength of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy in recent years has brought the community to the point where its leadership attempts to disown the area's marginalised status through emphasising a shared commitment to hegemonic values around education, employment and respectability. This representation fails to capture the nuance of *Northstreet* residents' varied and contingent cultural responses to these issues, where community-political concerns and kin allegiance play a key role. *The Crew*'s local exclusion can be thus properly understood in terms of their low community capital and adherence to values from which leadership is keen to exhibit difference, as opposed to possessing norms which are fundamentally incompatible with those prevalent in the area. *The Crew*'s values are a 'rough' variant of working-class culture, and though radically different to 'respectable' working-class attitudes, traditionally the extreme point of a spectrum of perspectives which comfortably coexisted. The turmoil of years of open heroin trading and anti-drug activism have blurred the lines between 'rough' and 'respectable' residents and render the community's relationship to crime, considered in this chapter, as well as its interaction with the Garda Síochána, considered in the next, increasingly complex.

Figure 3: Urban Renewal: Contemporary Dublin City Council public housing.
Photograph by Anne Maree Barry.

Chapter 5
The Gardaí, *Decent* Citizens and *Gougers*: A Class-cultural Analysis of Policing in *Northstreet*

Introduction

This chapter examines the class-cultural exchange that underpins the policing of *Northstreet*. As the gatekeepers of Irish criminal justice, the Gardaí bring before it the young, disadvantaged males who constitute the bulk of defendants. As the principal source of such offenders, the working-class community interacts with wider society to a large extent through policing. The Gardaí, by enforcing the criminal law, can be understood as enforcing society's dominant normativity, albeit mediated through the idiosyncrasies of their particular occupational culture. As previously noted, the *Northstreet* community traditionally constructed policing and the values it represents as largely alien and oppositional. Currently, the 'blurring of boundaries' (Young, 1999) occurring in *Northstreet* is rendering relationships with policing more complex, as community leadership endorses hegemonic values, governs in partnership with state authority, whilst 'representing' a population amongst which street culture and offending subsist. The first sub-section of the chapter examines the *Northstreet* community's relationship to policing, probing the rhetoric of partnership policing and identifying 'residual' groups such as *The Crew* as lying outside of the new consensus. The second sub-section is concerned with the practical and normative issues inherent in policing *Northstreet*, focusing on the manner in which they reflect the transitions occurring in the wider force. The third subsection focuses on the manner in which the Gardaí constitute their profession, highlighting the rugged lifestyle and perceptions of the working-class district which inform the execution of their function, and in particular how these clash with the 'rough' values championed by *The Crew*, in effect, representing one of the 'games' perpetuating their criminal status.

5.1 Varying Responses to Policing in *Northstreet*

The following vignette, extracted from fieldnotes, demonstrates some of the various different attitudes to the Gardaí observable amongst the *Northstreet* population:

A Garda Car is parked at the top of *Northstreet* and two Gardaí are in front of it talking to Wacker, Adam and two other young men dressed in tracksuits. There is a very sorry looking stripped down moped at the edge of the square. Its casing is missing, exposing a half-full petrol tank and a variety of mechanical parts. When it becomes clear that mass arrests are not imminent, Mano crosses over to the group. The Gardaí tell one of the lads I don't recognise to turn around, he cuffs him and puts him in the back of the car. Sharon (a young woman from the flats) walks by and I ask her what has been going on: 'I hate that copper', she tells me, 'he stopped me for nothing. I start giving him cheek as I do and he says to me the next time he sees me he's gonna take me in. He's a cunt.' She tells me that the young man arrested is a friend of hers; he is from the [general] locality, not the flats but often hangs around *Northstreet*. She tells me that the Gardaí stopped him on a moped the day before and confiscated it because it wasn't insured, even though he had bought it 'legitimately'. The situation seems to be developing with a potential for drama or at least entertainment. People have come out of the flats to see what is going on. The Guards are questioning the remaining boys on the footpath: 'Where did he get that bike?'

'He bought it, out straight, it's not stolen.'

'How d'ya know I'm saying it's stolen?'

'Sure who'd steal it, can't ya see it's in bits?'

The lads are maintaining their position to the right of the police car and the Guards are beginning to lose patience: 'Have yis no where better to go? We'll take yis for loitering.' This isn't something they want to hear. Mano becomes aggravated and makes comments to the Garda that I don't make out. One of the Guards walks right up to him, bending his tall frame to bring his face only an inch away from Mano's, staring him down. He speaks angrily at the young man, pointing his finger (I am later told he was threatening to arrest Mano). 'Do ya want that fucker arrested?' calls the other Guard (Pigsy as he is known locally by the young people, an unkind reference to his features) from the car. Mano loses it and Adam has to hold him back as he attempts to go for Pigsy. A middle-aged

woman, friendly with the Residents Association walks by and says to Sharon: 'Burnt. Well it's good enough for him.' Sharon explains to me: 'Herself and her sisters saw them (*The Crew*) turn in here, they knew exactly where they were going, she was roaring at them. She must have called the Guards.' The Gardaí are still waiting for a van to pick up the moped. *The Crew* members have retreated to where we are. Mano is still staring at the Guards with hatred in his eyes: 'Yis dirtbags!' he shouts over. They are outraged that they have been threatened with a loitering charge. Adam: 'Loitering? What are we meant to do? Where are we meant to go? These are our flats; you can't charge us for being in the flats!' More people have come out to see what is going on (including several of *The Team*), and the lads look over at the growing crowd. Adam: 'That's what I hate about these flats, everyone can always see what you're at.' A Garda van comes around the corner to park beside the car. They watch as the moped is loaded into the van. Wacker: 'Look at the state of that bike, why would anyone want to take that?' He doesn't understand that it is Garda procedure to impound stolen vehicles; he sees it as a waste of time. As the police drive off, Adam pulls down his trousers and shows his backside to them. Dommer who has seen the whole incident from a distance and walks over, he tells us that his mother has gone to get the arrested young man out of the Garda station. I ask if they are related. Dommer: 'He's our cousin.'

'Is he?' I enquire.

Adam: 'They're not cousins; she's just saying it to get him out.'

The Crew display opposition to the Gardaí born out of perceptions of victimisation. The woman associated with community leadership has called the Gardaí and is pleased that they are taking action against *The Crew*. Meanwhile, *The Team*, allegedly serious offenders, remain peripheral, quiet and watchful. Sharon expresses solidarity with *The Crew*, and Dommer's mother is prepared to lie on behalf of a peripheral member. Structural positions within the community and in particular relationships to offending behaviour directly influence the manner in which the residents interact with the local police force. The different reactions to the Garda actions in the above vignette can be

described as: enmity, wariness and tentative cooperation. The manner in which structural and community political positions produce these standpoints is explored in detail below.

5.1.1 Enmity

Certain elements of the *Northstreet* community exhibit a strong anti-Guard sentiment, manifested through derogatory statements and a refusal to co-operate that can extend to concerted efforts to confound policing activities. Central to this outlook is the assertion that the Gardaí are corrupt and heavy handed. This position is cited by some participants as the 'old ways', the manner in which working-class communities traditionally perceived the Gardaí. Nevertheless, in certain inner-city flat complexes the throwing of small stones or fruit and vegetables persists as a response to police incursion. The strength of antipathy varies between residents and can be understood as approximately correlative with age and the degree to which individuals are embedded within 'rough' or 'street' culture.

5.1.1a Rough Elements

It is logical that those individuals that offend on a regular basis, and as a consequence have frequent contact with the Gardaí, would tend to view them in a negative light. 'It's only the people who we have to stop committing crime that hate us, and that's because we interfere with them' is how one Garda participant rationalises this phenomenon, a common sentiment in *Northstreet Station* echoed by community leadership in *Northstreet*:

> The ones saying the Guards are scumbags are the ones that have something to fear if they are apprehended. They're trying to tarnish the Guards in a way that they should be tarnished. They throw mud 'cos they know it sticks, people will start believing them. That: 'they're only after us because they're scum', you know, and then their mothers will all defend them (James).

James eludes to the perception amongst *Northstreet* residents that individuals and families identified as criminal or rough are more likely to be targets of policing. Whilst

this represents a logical policing strategy, the tendency, on the part of the impugned is to perceive constant inspection as harassment and improper behaviour. In the following fieldnote extract, Grainne, a woman in her mid-twenties who lives in a flat complex close to *Northstreet* and whose brother is a known offender explains her attitude to the Gardaí in conversation with the researcher outside the court in which she is being charged with a public order offence:

> 'They (the Gardaí) are dirt. If they see you in the street they just move ya on. They stitch people up. They plant drugs on you if they don't like you. They're all the same, they're all dirty bastards.' She tells me that her mother, while under arrest for snatching a handbag (although the daughter does not believe the charge) got hassled because she was friendly with a local armed robber: 'they were givin' it loads tellin' her that he deserved to be shot an all'.

As previously noted, kin and friendship group ties are principal mechanisms through which rough or street working-class values are generated and perpetuated. Those close to the frequent offenders are more likely to offend themselves or at least culturally condone a certain level of criminality. They tend, therefore, to sympathise with the predicament of a close offender and seek to deny or defend their actions. The Gardaí are thus constructed as the villainous party. A popular story amongst Garda participants concerns a particular officer who was speaking to a young child. A mother quickly runs out of her flat and slaps the child: 'You're not to be talking to those scum'. Antipathy to policing is an important facet of the manner in which rough normative orientations are reproduced across generations and is an intrinsic element of 'rough' working-class culture.

5.1.1b Young People

In *Northstreet* hatred for the Gardaí is articulated almost universally by young people, who spend much of their time on the streets and in public places, exposing themselves to a heightened likelihood of contact with the police. They feel that they have no mechanism through which to complain about mistreatment and hence hold the mantra:

'you can't win against the Guards'[74]. There is general agreement amongst the youth that the Gardaí are 'scumbags':

> They're scum and that's it. That's not to say that they're all scum... I mean they're just doing their job, it's just some of them don't do it the right way. They don't treat people nice. They gave me a good kicking when I was younger and I needed ten stitches in me head (Darren, mid-twenties, *Northstreet* Resident and former young offender).

Growing older allows Darren to qualify his criticism. Youth is a period of uncertain identity and most young people in *Northstreet* are somewhat enchanted by the miasma of toughness that surrounds those who adhere to street culture, echoing its attendant anti-police stance. There is pressure amongst young people especially to conform to group norms. A Garda participant states that some young people who are abusive to her when with friends, speak politely to her when alone. Younger boys around *Northstreet* can take pride in the notion that some Gardaí know their names and use them in the presence of their peers. This recognition allows them to generate a persona of rebelliousness and danger that will be admired. A Garda presence furthermore offers the opportunity for these younger men to demonstrate their courage by declaring 'to their faces' that the Garda are scum. Such incidents tend to be met with restraint and mock serious warnings from the Gardaí at the receiving end[75].

The relationship, however, is not necessarily characterised by the hatred *simpliciter* proclaimed by young people. The presence of Gardaí creates the potential for the excitement of a chase, or the amusement of banter (see also: Welsh, 1991). A group of particularly vociferous young boys arrive at *Northstreet Garda Station* on a Sunday afternoon, accepting an offer made by a community Guard to bring them on a guided tour of the building. Professing hatred of the Gardaí in youth can be tied to identity formation

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[74] For their part the Guards feel that many young people concoct stories of violence to illicit sympathy from parents or to gain 'war stories to tell their mates'.

[75] Although, during field work a ten year old boy was arrested for spitting at a Guard, who felt this constituted an infraction that could not be ignored.

and notions of play and its entrenchment is contingent upon committing to rough norms in a concerted manner. *The Crew*, being both young and deeply entrenched in street values, articulate a particularly vehement anti-Guard stance, as evidenced in the vignette above.

> You're branded a scumbag just 'cos you're a young fellah from the city centre ... I was coming out of the archway, I hadn't even stepped out and I get nicked. Says he's charging me under section eight of the Criminal Justice Act or something. I says: "How can ya charge me for being in me own estate?" ... They grab me the other day and call me a scumbag (Philo, *Crew* member, 19).

> Yeah, they always stop me. They're always stopping me and harassing me. They really are harassing me like (Adam, *Crew* member, 14).

To a greater degree than most residents of the *Northstreet* community, *The Crew* feel that they are held in low regard, harassed and abused by local Gardaí. Perceiving their activities as ordinary and the policing response as illegitimate, they are prompted to construct the Gardaí as their natural enemies. This extreme articulation of enmity can be understood as a product of *The Crew*'s affinity to 'old' facets of working-class culture, their adherence to rough working-class values and youth, all of which are factors precipitating an oppositional stance to policing.

5.1.2 Wariness

Certain *Northstreet* residents, whilst harbouring a hatred for the Gardaí, or at least strong disagreement with some of their actions, feel it necessary to articulate a more neutral sentiment in public. Darren's qualified criticism above serves as a good example. This participant hopes to divorce himself from the reputation for criminality he once possessed and enter the youth-work profession. He must be careful to 'code switch' and demonstrate an ability to co-exist with mainstream values. *The Team* choose to avoid confrontation with members of the force. Whilst they left their homes to view the spectacle in the vignette above, they choose not to react to the police presence. As

allegedly, mature and savvy offenders they recognise the value of maintaining a civil relationship with the Gardaí: it renders the group less conspicuously criminal. Alternatively, *The Malcontents,* who led *Northstreet*'s anti-drugs campaign in the mid-nineties, became associated with subversive Republican organisations and thus were the targets of intense Garda activity. Key members were arrested, detained and questioned, while individuals they believe were trading in heroin remained free. *The Malcontents* are therefore highly wary of the Gardaí, yet recognise that they are necessary allies in achieving the removal of drugs from their community. Indeed, due to a history of poor relations with the Gardaí, a certain wariness generally pervades most sections of the community and thus affects the quality of co-operation that can be achieved.

5.1.3 Tentative Co-operation

Certain *Northstreet* residents make use of the Gardaí, a mainstream, 'respectable' manner of responding to behaviour deemed unacceptable. This represents a new departure from traditional working-class cultural responses to crime, under which 'ratting' is considered taboo (see: Yates, 2006). A limited class of resident contacts the police (for example the middle-aged woman in the vignette above), against a particular type of offender (conspicuous, nuisance offenders who are unconnected to the complainant). As a result *Northstreet* Gardaí maintain that they receive few complaints from the community, emphasising the power of rougher elements to intimidate the respectable. A participant officer explains:

> People don't have a lot to do with the Guards wherever possible and they might call an hour after the event after consulting with the neighbours. This is not much good in terms of catching people, but people in the flats don't really seem to want people getting into trouble. People can be made into targets and have their windows put in if it gets out that they were in contact with the police (extract from fieldnotes).

Contacting the police can thus be understood as a site of tension between rough and respectable elements within the community. More salient perhaps, is the influence of

community-political concerns. 'Ratting on' an unsupported and relatively powerless group such as *The Crew*, could not entail the same consequences as informing on well supported and powerful criminal elements. The complexities inherent in phoning for police assistance, coupled with residual disdain or suspicion explains why co-operation with the Gardaí occurs in such a tentative fashion. The boundaries that traditionally existed between the residents of a working-class area and a police force perceived of as aloof and heavy-handed have blurred. For the most part, *Northstreet* residents agree that community Gardaí are more approachable, 'chatty' and less confrontational, although a distinction tends to be made between this branch of the force and 'real Gardaí'[76]. Cross contact now exists to the extent that there is impetus for community leadership and community Gardaí to work in partnership.

The residents of *Northstreet* react to the Gardaí with enmity, wariness, or tentative cooperation, contingent upon socio-structural position and specific community-political concerns. The antipathy exhibited by 'rough' and young elements of the community demonstrates continuity with traditional working-class responses to policing and suggests the existence of opposing value systems. The 'wary' residents exhibit attitudes to policing which highlight their complex and ambiguous position within the *Northstreet* community and indeed to offending. Those who cooperate demonstrate their acceptance of mainstream values on crime and policing, although in *Northstreet* the exhibition of normative allegiance is an intricate process.

5.1.4 An Unlikely Partnership

By the beginning of fieldwork, the *Northstreet* community was engaged in a process of consultation and partnership with local branches of state authority. Drawing on the 'partnership' between the community and municipal housing authority, discussed in the previous chapter, an organisation to increase co-operation with local Gardaí was established. Currently, a structure is in place through the Community Policing Forum[77],

[76] Adam of *The Crew* was so fond of a particular community Guard he befriended in his early childhood that he bestows the ultimate compliment: 'Ya wouldn't even call him a Guard'.

[77] The Community Policing Forum was established following the 'drugs crisis' to ensure that communities have dialogue with the Gardaí and need not out of necessity resort to self-policing.

by which community leadership meet with designated community Gardaí and Council staff, monthly or bi-monthly to discuss relevant issues. Though without statutory origin[78], and existing essentially on a 'pilot' basis, the structure resembles in some ways the proliferate 'Community Safety Partnerships' throughout Britain, on which there is a burgeoning literature (see for example: Crawford, 1997; Hughes, 1998; Ballintyre, Pease & McLaren, 2000; Hughes, Muncie & McLaughlin, 2002). Positive aspects of partnership are: the growth of trust and a return to consensus policing (Crawford, 1997: 45), further accountability and improved provision of service (Stokes-White, 2000: 110; Ballintyre & Fraser, 2000: 173-4). Academic critiques of the partnership process point to a tendency to construe 'community' in a narrow fashion (Hughes, 1998: 148), replicate patterns of exclusion (McLaughlin, 2002: 79) particularly against young people (Crawford, 1997: 171; Dawn, 2006) and to difficulties in securing meaningful community participation and representation (Crawford, 1997: 170; Follet, 2000). Partnership and consultation are tied to notions of community policing (Crawford 1997: 47). The novelty of these concepts in the Dublin context does not permit direct comparison, although a number of these themes appear in the case of the *Northstreet* partnership.

In the British context partnership was generated as a response to policy calculated at a national level (in particular the justice policies of New Labour), whereas in Dublin it arose as a response to local factors. As previously noted, the processes of urban renewal and economic growth have fostered in *Northstreet*'s community leadership a desire to project an image of respectability. James equates the regeneration of *Northstreet*'s physical infrastructure with the renewal of the community's relationship to policing:

> When this complex here was regenerated... the Guards were actually handed back a new complex as such, and they got a new start on it. And any, you know, bad impressions that they should have been wiped away and, you know, any bad impressions of the Gardaí should have been wiped away... which was at the time

[78] Community Safety Partnerships were placed on a statutory footing in Britain through the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In Ireland statutory provisions for 'joint policing committees' have been put in place through Ss. 35-37 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005.

> and people started afresh, and a whole new ethos in the community started up, and that kind of prevailed.

James overstates altered outlooks on both sides of the equation. Rather, the Gardaí had mistrusted the 'vigilante' leadership and yet were heartened by the marked reduction in crime and anti-Garda sentiment that was prevailing in the years post heroin epidemic, which rendered the locale more conducive to policing:

> Now I know from personal experience that the place has quietened down quite a lot. Some of the older flats are gone and the rocks have stopped being thrown and the washing machines and stuff have stopped coming off ledges, a lot of the older ones (hardened criminals) they're all gone, whether that's from the drugs epidemic that was there before the vigilantes came out, it was very bad then, I do remember that (Colm, mid-thirties, experienced community Guard).

The power vacuum left by the dissolution of the anti-drugs movement created the opportunity to insert a meaningful Garda presence in areas where it had previously been lacking (see also: Mulcahy & O'Mahony, 2005: 11-15). Greater cooperation serves to further the aim of both parties to the partnership: developing within *Northstreet* a more mainstream police-community relationship.

5.1.5 Assessing the Impact of Partnership on the Police/Community Divide

The consultation process guides community Gardaí and holds them accountable to the expressed desires of community leadership. Michael, a community sergeant at *Northstreet* station, describes his role as providing 'assurance' to the citizens he polices. There is thus accessible and accountable policing provided and a sense that the community is being served. This is, however, contingent on the quality of the communication received through the forum. The previous chapter's treatment of *Northstreet* community politics demonstrates that leadership (who 'represent' the entire community at forum level) have a particular conception and articulation of offending behaviour within the area. The Gardaí are in dialogue with a narrow, involved section of

the community. As a result meeting agendas are dominated by 'quality of life' issues: the anti-social behaviour and public drinking of a particular group of young adults, the activities of *The Crew* and the ever-vexing proliferation of illegal parking on the street[79]. There is never discussion of the ambiguous, alleged drug dealing of *The Team*, who are connected to and supported by leadership through kinship ties. The consultation process thus serves as a vehicle for the targeted policing of *The Crew*, who do not receive advocacy at this level, amplifying their exclusion.

Several community Gardaí interviewed hold to the logic that dialogue with the community generates trust, that as members of the community see the Gardaí responding to their needs and performing tasks as requested, a sense of reciprocity may prompt the sharing of information. Partnership can thus advance an 'authoritarian' bent, facilitating subtle 'information-gathering and surveillance', and thus 'co-opting' the community into the policing function (McLaughlin, 2002: 82). The inclusion of the 'respectable' and the exclusion of the 'troublesome' in the process of partnership (Crawford, 1997: 171) could thus drive a wedge through the working-class community, creating an alliance of the 'decent citizen' and state authority against the rough element in its midst. The complex, ambiguous and nuanced relationship between rough and respectable norms in *Northstreet*, noted in the previous chapter, frustrates this process, where kinship ties and community politics lead to the limited sharing of information described above.

The partnership is a community political device where personal feelings and traditional oppositions are ostensibly set aside for the purpose of advancing dialogue and improving relations. James, whilst giving a glowing account of partnership, fails to mention that his flat was raided by Gardaí a week prior to his interview, as a result of his daughter's relationship to a member of *The Team*. The Gardaí are unsure of the level of serious offending in *Northstreet* and have adopted a 'wait and see' approach. Whilst community Gardaí engage in consultation, detectives and members of specialist units conduct their own enquiries. Within the leadership families, opinions of policing differ to those that are expressed publicly. The partnership is a triumph of local expedience as opposed to

[79] For similarities in accounts of British Community Safety Partnerships, see: Follet (2000).

embodiment of a barrier-free relationship between the police and 'respectable' elements of the working-class community in *Northstreet*. Boundaries remain in place, but are increasingly blurred, contingent and nuanced in late-modern Dublin. The 'new' relations with the Gardaí in *Northstreet* have not softened *The Crew*'s stance, and in fact render their criminality as the primary acceptable topic in partnership meetings.

The partnership process, whilst celebrated as radically altering the relationship between the Gardaí and the working-class community, is rarely a forum for the discussion of serious criminal issues, where mutual suspicion remains and boundaries between 'rough' and 'respectable' residents are ambiguous. In this context, *The Crew*'s vexatious activities and lack of community-political clout render them 'safe' targets for condemnation, suitable offenders to offer the Gardaí as evidence of increased dedication to mainstream attitudes to crime and policing.

5.2 Policing *Northstreet*

Attitudes to An Garda Síochána amongst *Northstreet* residents form one side of a complex class-cultural dynamic. Crucial to understanding the relationship between the *Northstreet* community and the Gardaí is considering the issue from the perspective of the latter group. Policing is a difficult job by nature, and the Gardaí with self-deprecation commonly refer to themselves as 'mules', 'because we do all the donkey work'. 'The job' (as it is constantly referred to) entails a vast number of different functions and calls for a wide variety of competencies. This is compounded in the inner city, which houses a large number of what are referred to amongst the force as 'resident criminals'. Inner-city policing is constructed as *real* policing. From the perspective of the Gardaí, there are both practical and normative factors that underlie their complex relationship with the *Northstreet* community.

5.2.1 *Northstreet Station*

Northstreet Station[80] is a microcosm containing everything on and off duty Gardaí require for their work and recreation. There is the maze of locker rooms where uniforms and personal possessions are stored (along with the ubiquitous files that will not fit into cubby-holes), a recreation room fitted with snack and soft-drink machines, a well equipped gym, a comfortable canteen and a number of functioning television sets. There are numerous offices where various units perform their administrative tasks, a parade room where the regular units assemble before going on duty. There is the cluttered 'public office', which is anything but, as members of the public do not enter but converse with duty Guards through a small glass window. The waiting area outside it is the most that the public tend to see of the interior of the station. Prominent in this area, facing the bare benches, is the Garda Mission Statement promising: 'Community Commitment', 'Personal Protection' and 'State Security' and various other posters advertising adult education and other services to the community. Scratched into the plaster are messages left by members of the public: 'Diarmo was here 04', 'Anto is a rat' or simply names and initials. Inside the office and out of eyeshot of the public, posters feature photographs of suspects, notices of Garda social functions and advertisements for part-time college courses and special mortgage rates available to members of the force. The Gardaí operate in two distinct social worlds: Their private world, where amongst like-minded officers they express their common values, and their public world, in which they police a public they view as 'hostile' and containing elements whose norms they find alien.

5.2.2 Policing in Transition

An Garda Síochána, as originally constituted, drew legitimacy and moral authority from its constitution as a force of and for the people, steeped in Gaelic culture and integrated within the community (O'Mahony, 1996: 125-127; McNiffe, 1997; Mulcahy & O'Mahony, 2005: 3). Historically, the force's recruits were overwhelmingly young, male, rural, primarily from an agricultural background and educated only to primary school level (Allen, 1999). Public faith in the force was damaged by a steep rise in crime rates

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[80] A physical description of the extern of the building is intentionally omitted. The Garda Stations in the inner city are relatively distinctive and any such information would threaten the anonymity of participants.

between the 1960s and late 1980s and failures to address a lack of accountability standards (O'Mahony, 1996: 130-159; Walsh, 1998: 11; Allen, 1999: 174; Connolly, 2002b: 483-486). Public confidence in the force is falling[81], due in part to high profile incidences of misconduct both investigated (see: Reports of the Morris Tribunal: 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006) and suspected[82]. Policing in Ireland[83] is now in transition. Recent legislation, The Garda Síochána Act 2005, has strengthened accountability and independent monitoring structures, with the creation of an Ombudsman Committee and Inspectorate, and ushered in increased civilianisation and the inception of a 'reserve' force (see: Report of Hayes Committee 2006). Perhaps most significantly there has been an alteration in the forces composition, demographically and in terms of the level of education of its members. Figures supplied by the Garda Research Unit demonstrate that recruits to the force since 2004 have a mean age of 23, 53% of whom have undergone some form of third-level education. Of the cohort, 21% were recruited from Dublin and 32% are female. The Gardaí are accepting applicants of foreign nationality for the first time in the force's history. The proliferation of community policing, exhibited in initiatives such as the partnership considered above, signals a willingness to explore innovation (see: Vaughan, 2004). The transitional nature of policing in Ireland must be understood as underscoring the blurring of the traditional barriers that existed with working-class communities in Dublin.

5.2.3 The Dichotomy of Regular and Community Policing Functions

First focusing on the practical aspects of the policing function, there are distinct divisions in the manner in which services are provided by the Gardaí of *Northstreet Station*, which to some extent embody the schism between traditional and progressive policing philosophies. The 'mainstream' policing of the regular unit and the specialist approach of the community policing unit are examined in detail in the following two sub-sections.

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[81] Brady, Tom, *Public is less satisfied with Garda service*, Irish Independent, 26/02/04

[82] Terence Wheelock died in 2005 following a number of hours in Garda custody. See: Holland, Kitty, *Clothes Worn by Wheelock soiled by blood, vomit*, The Irish Times, Saturday 12/02/2007. Brian Rossiter died in police custody in Clonmel in 2002. See: McDonald, Dearbhall and Scott Millar, *Parents sue Gardaí over boy's death*, Sunday Times 19/06/05.

[83] Leaving aside developments in Northern Ireland, on which see: Mulcahy 2006.

5.2.4 Fighting Fire with Fire: The Regular Unit

The regular unit are the backbone of An Garda Síochána. Members of this unit are dispatched in response to emergency calls, form the front-line of contact with the public and investigate the bulk of volume crimes[84]. New recruits enter the force through this unit. The unit is separated into four divisions A, B, C and D, one of which is on active duty at all times of the day. An informal *parade* constitutes the beginning of the unit's shift where Gardaí present themselves to their sergeants and receive instruction. Some are assigned to car duty, as driver or 'observer', others are allocated a beat, whilst a further number man the public office or complete outstanding paperwork. Members of the unit describe their shifts as generally 'rushing from call to call'. 'Quiet time', where there are no pending calls, is spent serving summonses, interviewing witnesses, building cases[85] and patrolling: stopping suspicious cars and individuals.

The function of the unit and the fact that (in *Northstreet Station*)[86] it is composed primarily of younger, less experienced Gardaí, and those who have not achieved promotion, lends itself to a particular style of policing. 'The regular' (as they are referred to informally within Garda circles) tend to see themselves as being involved in 'real police work' (Holdaway, 1983: 52), responding to crime with immediacy and thus class their other functions as a lower priority. Members discern if there is a particularly serious incident in progress or whether it is 'the usual shit', calls of a petty nature with no real criminal issue, often the ubiquitous but ambiguous complaint of 'youth causing a disturbance'. Robberies or assaults in progress, (or calls for assistance from fellow Gardaí) merit a 'blue light' response, where no effort is spared to reach the incident at speed. Each shift presents a wide variety of situations and time is frequently a scarce resource. The call and response style of policing does not require regular Gardaí to build a positive relationship with the public. Rather they must arrive when requested, deal expediently with the issue at hand and move on.

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[84] 'Specialist' crimes are allocated to specialist units: detectives, the Drug Squad, the Street Crime Task Force, or the Emergency Response Unit.

[85] Gardaí themselves prosecute 'non-serious' offences in the Irish criminal justice system.

[86] Garda participants report that regular units in rural areas are often staffed with more experienced officers, who choose to return to their counties of origin, or at least escape the more criminally-active city of Dublin.

Regular Gardaí, therefore, generally maintain a distance from the members of the public through the adoption of a certain attitude. In the extreme, Gareth, a more experienced Community Guard, notes that younger members of 'the regular' can be 'heavy-handed', gruff and exercise their discretion in favour of a tough response:

> Yeah I'm out there, I'm active like, now I have to deal with this, I'll deal with this as quickly as I can, I know rush in there, bark around a few orders blah, blah, blah and get lads to move… I've heard it said about some stations in the inner city that they are very, very heavy handed… generally junior members yeah, they don't make things easy on themselves and they don't make things easy on people that they're dealing with at times, you know.... Whereas is there any benefit to bring that person to court for something small? These guys just jump in, prisoner, return of work[87], that's it.

Such behaviour is informed not just by the exigencies of expedience, but demonstrates the influence of occupational culture. Particularly, less experienced regular Gardaí are keen to construct their role as that of 'thief-taker' (see: Fielding, 1988: 125-127) and seek opportunities to manufacture 'action'. Framing their job as an exciting battle against the forces of criminality lends to what Michael, the community sergeant, describes as the 'Starsky and Hutch' approach, emphasising a macho and less professional manner of conduct. Certain members of 'the regular' blur the lines between behaviour acceptable in private and public by bantering with colleagues in the presence of prisoners or extending the quips and wisecracks, staples of interaction between Gardaí within the station, to members of the public.

Whilst displaying a disrespectful attitude to the community they police, this section of 'the regular' do not tolerate their authority being undermined and may respond to lapses in the respect they feel is due to them with more than harsh words. Police violence is an ambiguous issue. Various Garda participants point out that difficult arrests are violent but

[87] 'Return of work' is a phrase used by Gardaí to denote the quantifiable results of their work e.g. bringing in a prisoner, issuing a charge or summons.

no more than is both necessary and legitimate. This extract from fieldnotes illustrates the manner in which one prisoner is treated:

> A man is brought in (to a station in the same district as *Northstreet Station*). He is very vocal about being arrested. His dress and accent mark him out as a local of the area. He is protesting loudly: 'I just ask for help and youse arrest me? I didn't resist, I didn't obstruct', but the plain clothes patrol insist that he had been. 'I was just asking for help. Why have I got these burns on my face?' He begins to struggle and the Guards bring him to the ground, he kicks out not too forcefully but receives a sharp punch in the stomach for his troubles. He screams loudly. 'Happy birthday' says one of the Guards, to the smiles of some of his colleagues. 'Why are you doing this?' the man continues, 'I've no criminal record, I've no drugs, I just want some help, I haven't been abusive to yis at all'. I have no way of knowing what the prisoner had done to earn the arrest, his manner has been somewhat aggressive, but he keeps protesting his innocence. The Guards make no attempt to really engage with what he is saying. 'Why are yis standing on my head?' he yells, (one is kneeling on him) 'am I a scumbag?' He is brought to his feet, grabbed by the Guard at the hatch and shouted at: 'Shut up and listen while you are in this station, you don't call the fucking shots!' He is taken to a cell and the Guards banter away as if nothing had happened, putting on gloves in readiness to conduct a search. The plain clothes officer walks back in casually and wipes his cuffs with a bio-wipe, smiling at a joke someone else makes.

By enquiring as to his status as a 'scumbag' the prisoner above demonstrates his awareness of the manner in which the practitioners of the muscular variant of regular policing perceive residents of the inner-city. A significant proportion of the unit articulate an oppositional view of the district: 'It's a kip; we're dealing with the bottom of society's barrel. They're scumbags'. It is important to note that such sentiments are often expressed in the heady macho environment of the 'canteen' and do not necessarily reflect the officer's true perceptions (Waddington, 1999). Indeed, several of 'the regular' articulate a socially conscious view of inner-city residents during interviews, recognising

that their criminality must be motivated by the conditions in which they live. Nevertheless, the oppositional attitudes to working-class areas held and the variety of vigorous traditional policing practiced by individual Gardaí within the *Northstreet* Regular Unit, must be seen as supporting negative perceptions of the Gardaí within the *Northstreet* community.

5.2.5 Breaking Boundaries: Community Policing

Community policing is a priority at *Northstreet Station*, which houses a large unit dedicated to the task. Community policing is a means of addressing perceived failures of police effectiveness and loss of moral authority through 'emphasis on the preventative and non-conflictual aspects of policing, on local service delivery, on public participation and responsiveness to the public, and on voluntarism and self-help' (Weatheritt, 1993: 124). Community Gardaí adopt a less immediate approach to issues of crime, seeking sustainable, long-term solutions. Ron, a recently appointed and enthusiastic community Guard, explains that he sees their role as in tune with the original aims of An Garda Síochána as established in 1924: 'to be amongst the people, to know and understand them, and to bring young people on side'. To this end, community Gardaí tend to eschew vehicle patrol in favour of the traditional 'beat'. They take 'calls' selectively; they are afforded time to wander around their assigned areas, making conversation, listening to complaints, attending meetings and becoming involved with voluntary sector projects such as youth clubs. This has a definite effect on the manner in which the community Gardaí interact with local people. Unlike the regular unit who have the luxury of sporadic presence in the various communities, this unit must build a relationship and therefore must utilise a different notion of policing:

> Immaturity and high blood pressure of childish policing is a resource that's tapped into, in the detectives, in the plain clothes. If you're like that, its easier to motivate you to run into back gardens after a large burglar, that's on the positive side, you might only do one of those calls a month but it's frightening to think of the 29 other days in the month or the 30 for that matter and how many negative contacts people have (Michael, community sergeant).

Community policing involves an element of 'public relations' (Mulcahy & O'Mahony, 2005: 15). The unit is attempting to undo the community's suspicion of the Gardaí, encouraging residents of the district to report crimes rather than maintaining silent tolerance. Residents must be assured that their interests will be served by contacting the unit. Sean, an experienced community Guard in his early thirties, explains in this extract from fieldnotes, how he agreed to do a favour for a notorious female criminal in the district by having a word with her son to 'scare him straight':

> A lot of Guards wouldn't have handled it that way, they would have come in and given it all that (makes a hand gesture symbolising a flapping mouth). They would have given them the bollock or might take them in for a drug search. We just talk to them, like you know, they're human beings... It puts them at their ease when, you know, you talk to them like people and I'd swear, they don't mind it's what they'd know. I'd say 'fuck this' and 'fuck that' and that's good even because they can see then that you're alright, you're not trying to be somebody that you're not and they do respond to it... And that's alright. We talk to the people you know. Don't get me wrong, they don't like us or anything, but they'd have a little respect for us, a little more than they'd have for the Guards that go in and give them the shit and search them for drugs. They talk to us at least.

Community Gardaí attempt to build primary, personal and positive relationships with both criminal and respectable residents of their district, recognising that levels of trust and appreciation will vary. This cannot be achieved through formal consultation processes and involves direct engagement. Establishing a meaningful presence in the lives of residents is crucial to the softening of resistance.

> A sergeant tells me that the situation in the inner city is 'not just them and us'. He remembers an occasion where he brought a sick child and its family to hospital. A few days later he had to arrest the father and they had a very gruelling interview

> where pressure had to be applied, but after it he was thanked for their services 'the other day' (extract from fieldnotes).

Displays of empathy and quality service provision through community policing challenge traditional working-class perceptions of Gardaí as harsh and distal. An essential quality in a community Guard is therefore the ability to 'get on with people'. Recruits are thus selected from the Regular Unit on the basis of their personability and 'maturity'. Members of the Community Unit tend to articulate a greater degree of social consciousness in interview, citing a desire to 'help people' and 'make a difference' as a rationale for joining the force. Despite a more sympathetic attitude, Community Gardaí conduct a range of standard policing functions. Their office houses a board displaying the names and mug-shots of established local criminals. Community Gardaí have unrivalled local knowledge and perform crucial intelligence functions, such as identifying offenders from CCTV footage. They utilise information obtained through personal relationships forged with inner-city residents, conducting surveillance, searches and arrests of their own.

The delineation of policing styles, personality types and views on community is not as stark as this sub-section may imply. In reality, these vary individually, although broadly speaking the distinction is illustrative. Nevertheless, the dichotomy in policing roles provides, to some degree, an explanation from the perspective of the Gardaí, which corresponds with the tendency of *Northstreet* residents to view regular Gardaí as confrontational, whilst conceding that their counterparts in the Community Unit are 'nicer'. The additional element of normativity sheds further light on the complexity of the relationship between the Gardaí and working-class community in late modern Dublin.

5.2.6 The Normative Dimension of Policing the Inner City

A system of normative assumptions derived from their occupational culture guides the Gardaí in interpreting their function and supports them in its execution. The policing function involves both legal and symbolic or normative aspects. The procedures for identifying a breach of the law, gathering evidence, apprehending a perpetrator and

bringing him/her before the courts are part of the legal function of policing: enforcing the law, using the powers and mechanisms granted to them through it (while complying with the safeguards it contains). The Gardaí however, often deal with the public in a context where none of the above actions are perceived of as appropriate. The Guard has discretion to exercise his/her judgement and look beyond the letter of the law in deciding on a beneficial course of action:

> A good Guard is a person who has a good sense of fairness. And uses his cop-on more so than using the legislation and the law, do you know what I mean? Size the situation up, you know, work out the rights and the wrongs and make a good strong decision I think, sometimes can be a lot better than going to the books, and getting out the legislation and saying, well he is right because of this and he is wrong because of this (Brendan, mid-forties, Community Sergeant).

In doing so, the Gardaí utilise the legal authority they embody and symbolise to enforce situational sanctions based on their own normative calculus. During fieldwork several Gardaí issued warnings in lieu of charges. Equally, the restraints of the law will not necessarily thwart the Gardaí in pursuing a result which promotes what is perceived of a 'right' over 'wrong'. The Gardaí 'bluff', requesting searches they are not legally empowered to conduct, which can then be considered 'consensual'. Much as legalities define and support the policing function, it has an inherent normative dimension.

Clare and Digney (2003) in their research on public order offences note how Gardaí tend to treat members of the public differently based on their demeanour, age and class[88]. The authors note how Gardaí treat youth from an area with a reputation for criminality with considerably more aggression than young adults enjoying themselves at night in the city centre (2003: 67). An explanation for this phenomenon lies in the normative assumption made by Gardaí in selecting preferable targets of scrutiny out of the mass of the 'law abiding' public, and in formulating a response to various individuals and situations. The Gardaí in *Northstreet Station* tend to divide their local clientele between two camps: the

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[88] See also: Choong 1997 for an account of *Policing the Dross* in Britain.

decent, the generally law abiding citizens of the district, and the *gougers*[89], incorrigible criminals who pose a threat to the *decent*. Local knowledge is a significant means of categorisation. Within the limited geographic space of the district, most Gardaí rapidly become familiar with the 'usual suspects', who are the most identifiable as *gouger*: frequently offending and displaying a hateful attitude to policing. 'Suspected' criminals represent a definitive grey area, although Gardaí often feel restricted by legal evidentiary requirements: 'I'd say ninety-nine percent of the people we charge are guilty', and will assign *gouger* status regardless of who the courts might regard as 'innocent'. Certain individuals or groups, such as *The Team*, can divide opinion somewhat within the same station: 'maybe they're alright, I don't know'.

Stylistic and class-cultural markers such as dress[90], speech and demeanour facilitate at-a-glance distinctions between the categories. Indeed, as the outward expression of class and values, style plays a crucial role in attracting Garda attention: 'Legal authorities read and respond to the styles of lower-class ... kids, to their collective presentation of self and construction of identity, and in so doing push them into downward cycles of criminalization...' (Ferrell, 2004: 62). Modes of interaction with Gardaí provide further important indicators. A member of the public's 'attitude' will have an important bearing on how they are perceived. The researcher whilst shadowing two community Guards on patrol asks if an approaching group of young men are *gougers* and is told: 'I don't know them. They look too sporty to be. Anyways, look how they're crossing at the green light'. They pass the first test, they are not known offenders. Their clothing and body language suggest that they are members of a sports team returning from a game, rather than *gougers* intent on breaking the law. The final piece of evidence is the fact that they show strong regard for social rules by waiting at a pedestrian crossing rather than running across the road. These young men radiated *decency* and were thus ignored. *The Crew*, however, are notorious within the station, wear particular clothes and carry themselves with an aggressive swagger in a manner that marks them as *gougers*. Any doubts as to

[89] This term clearly has a history of acceptable use within the Gardaí. The renowned 'tough but fair' Jim Brannigan routinely spoke it in the court room to describe those who did not perceive to be from a 'good family' and fundamentally decent. This summary assessment would often mean the difference between probation and a custodial sentence (see: Neary, 1985: 60).

[90] Again see similarities to the experience of British 'Chavs' as per Hayward and Yar (2006).

this would likely be assuaged by a litany of abuse or at least hateful stares that *Crew* members tend to cast at 'Garda scum'.

These categories of *decent* and *gouger* trace a similar pattern to the rough / respectable divide in working-class communities. Class-cultural concerns, expressed through normative assumptions, can therefore be seen as inherently informing the policing function, where the rough working-class are targeted and the respectable working-class are protected. Gardaí view themselves as primarily serving *decent* elements of the inner city population, protecting respectable citizens and public spaces from criminal and anti-social elements. Ron makes the point that it is 'nice' being a community Guard as: 'You're not only dealing with the scum of the earth that you would be in the cars. You get to deal with decent people'. They must, however, reckon with the community and kinship bonds that often tie rough and respectable elements of the working-class community together and the overarching working-class cultural concerns that encourage tolerance of certain illegal activities:

> There's loads of criminals and there's a culture there. There's a culture to a certain degree that it was tolerated and it would always have been; they're still part of the community even though they're criminals and that meant a lot and they were never betrayed. Well they were as well, like you know, because there was always people ratting on them but to a certain extent the community would back them up or hide them or he could run into your gaff, even though that person mightn't be a criminal. If there was a fellah running from the guards a door would open somewhere and whose door it was, could be anyone's, you know and more than likely it would just be a Joe Soap, you know (Paul, experienced community Guard).

Recognising that a communal enmity towards the Gardaí informs this state of affairs, the positive, personal relationships generated through community policing are utilised to intensify the frequency of 'ratting'. Effective policing requires a flow of information from the public, channels of communication must be maintained with both rough and

respectable residents of *Northstreet*[91]. As previously noted, formal consultation meetings do not, for the most part, facilitate the discussion of specific serious offenders and are dominated by 'quality of life' complaints frequently concerned with young people playing football on the streets. Nevertheless, community Gardaí at *Northstreet Station* report that relationships, built through the consultation process within the wider inner-city, have yielded vital information, swiftly whispered or scribbled on pieces of paper following the meeting's conclusion. In the case of crimes deemed especially controversial such as drug-dealing, *decent* residents are more likely to assist Gardaí, albeit with as much anonymity as possible. The Gardaí require the assistance of the *decent* to more effectively pursue the *gougers*.

Disdain for *gougers* on the part of many Gardaí informs the adoption of harsh attitudes and tough treatment described earlier. Community Gardaí, however, have discovered that there are considerable advantages to achieving tentative co-operation with this segment of the community. Through exercising their discretion in the interests of offenders, a Guard may gain a certain grudging respect and acceptance, which allows them to become privy to 'snippets' of insider knowledge. Sean, an experienced community Guard jokes that he 'knows all the gougers'. He commonly visits local projects working with heroin addicts to provide them with a useful service. He 'sorts out warrants' for the addicts, collating all the outstanding warrants against them, agreeing on a date for them both to attend court, and asks the judge to deal with all the outstanding issues at once and to afford lenience on account of their co-operation and attendance of the project. Acts such as this draw Gardaí into casual conversations with *gougers*, yielding packets of information which when collated begin to form a broad body of knowledge on offending in the district. Within the privacy of the station community Gardaí are occasionally subject to mockery from 'the regular' for speaking to their 'friends', the *gougers*. The implication is clear: that engaging with rough element of the working-class community is antipathetic to notions of *real* policing. There is something within policing values that makes it difficult to accept the need to foster better relations with the 'criminal classes'.

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[91] The use of *touts* and *snouts* (informants) is a method of acquiring information used frequently by Gardaí. This issue will not be explored in any great detail here. Community Gardaí have more subtle means of gathering information.

5.2.7 Conflicting Values: Gardaí vs. *Gougers*

> They think they're working-class heroes, but to be working-class you have to work. They aren't ever going to get jobs (Finian, a regular Guard noted in the station for his particularly dim view of the people he polices, comments on a group of *gougers*).

Much of private Garda conversation is concerned with the sorts of issues that have become the mainstream *zeitgeist* in Irish society, certainly amongst individuals of a certain age and class: houses, mortgages and the struggle to pay them. Members of the Gardaí tend to invest time and money in self-advancement, attending courses in law, criminology, foreign languages and a wide variety of subjects perceived as bolstering the potential for career progression. Committed careerists, Gardaí are firmly entrenched in the aspirations and mind-set of the 'respectable' classes. They find it difficult to comprehend the values and ways of life common in inner-city flat complexes. Pascal, a relatively new recruit to the Community Policing Unit, originates from a rural area, which lacks public services to the extent that his family even dispose of their own waste. He reports a sense of 'culture shock' on arriving in the inner city where the residents are reliant of Dublin City Council for numerous services, whilst at the same time paying low rents and 'getting every state benefit possible'. Within the Gardaí is the widespread and insidious perception of the public-sector-housed working-class as chronically dependant, yet demanding. This view is used to rationalise and deflect many complaints made against them by residents of these communities.

For the Gardaí, who work long hours, frequently going into overtime, it is particularly difficult to comprehend the notion that a significant population of their district eschew 'work' and rely instead on criminal tactics.

> 'Some people in the area will work hard and do well even if they are not working in a particularly good job, but others will not work, even where now it is more readily available. They claim that they have not had the same opportunities as

> anyone else.' He says that whilst this may be justified to a certain extent others have had the strength of character to persevere but others don't. They don't work, essentially give up and turn to robbing banks or shops or selling cannabis or cocaine or ecstasy: 'recreational drugs'. Rather than wake up early in the morning to take a job, they use crime to generate income, they see nothing wrong with it, claim that the drugs do no harm and the goods are insured (Trevor, community Guard in an extract from fieldnotes).

There is a tendency to 'Other' inner-city residents, particularly those who adhere to and practice 'rough' working-class values. The values of the Gardaí, in terms of work ethic and attitudes to criminality, are diametrically opposed to those of the 'rough' working-class. This supports their negative perceptions and vigorous over-policing, a crucial factor in explaining what O'Mahony (1996: 160) describes as the 'them and us' approach to policing the Irish urban underclass. A gulf in cultural understanding underpins a huge amount of the negative interactions Gardaí have with inner-city communities. The Gardaí can, however, identify with *decent* elements of the community who utilise legitimate employment and disapprove of criminality, tolerating it only to some extent. Their values are more in tune with those of the Gardaí and wider society. The exigencies of community policing have placed the concerns of this section of the community to the fore and Gardaí taking their complaints report developing a sense of sympathy with *decent* victims of crime[92]. This serves to further their identification with respectable citizens and increases their disdain for the *gougers*.

There is a strong normative element to policing; Gardaí possess middle-class values and are antipathetic to those of the rough working-class. They, therefore, tend to construct this latter group as the principal target of their efforts. This contributes to the 'criminalisation' of young, urban and underprivileged males.

[92] On the other hand, 'rough' elements of the community are less likely to utilise the Gardaí, and thus they are under-represented as victims in the consciousness of the Gardaí.

5.3 Partners in Crime: *The Crew* and Gardaí Playing the Game

The interaction between police and disadvantaged urban populations adhering to street culture can be understood as a clash of values. It is also at this nexus that certain young people become classified as 'criminal' and inducted into the youth justice system (Gill, 1977: 10). Robins and Cohen (1978: 103-104) in their London field-site describe the relationship between police and urban youth as a contest between two different groups of working-class males, one of which has the full backing of the state. There is indeed a game-like quality to the interaction, although in the Dublin context it is the case of urban working-class youth opposing an older, middle-class force of predominantly rural origin. For the Gardaí, there is a degree of certainty that *The Crew* participate in offending behaviour. Their concern can exceed attempting to establish this beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law, and at times can manifest in a competitive-like desire to foil their criminal intentions. For their part, *The Crew* are conscious of the gaze to which they are subject and attempt to actively outmanoeuvre the Gardaí they proclaim to despise. Hobbs (1988) demonstrates that east-end gangsters and CID detectives share a number of cultural concerns, particularly in terms of displaying 'entrepreneurship'. A game-like interaction is sustained through unlikely similarities in the culture and behaviour patterns of *The Crew*, discussed in Chapter 3, and those of the Gardaí, discussed below.

5.3.1 Setting up the Game: Frequency of Contact

Fuelling the poor relationship and competitive mentality that traditionally existed (and persists albeit with greater nuance) between the *Northstreet* community and members of An Garda Síochána, is the frequency with which the two parties interact. The district covered by *Northstreet Station*, one of several within the inner-city, is of small area, thus ensuring a high Garda to resident ratio. The station is, furthermore, proximate to the flat complex. This has lead to the phenomenon of surveillance being traded between residents and the Gardaí. Interested residents can distinguish between a *Northstreet* Guard and that of another station, classifying the former as 'ours', and will be aware of Garda movement within the district. A significant proportion of both groups know each other's names, with

Northstreet youth assigning colourful monikers to various Gardaí[93]. Garda respondents feel that levels of familiarity challenge deference[94] and complain that residents do not 'fear' them. Residents opine that they are not treated with the courtesy that would be afforded to members of the middle-class. The proximate relationship ensures that each party inspires copious conversation in the other. Gardaí trade tales of the *gougers*' misfortunes and utilise the information to add sting to personal quips against them, whilst hostile residents exchange accusations about particular Gardaí who they consider to be particularly cruel or corrupt, which in turn are used to taunt various members of the force. The balance of power rests firmly with the Gardaí, whose colleagues are unlikely to take seriously allegations made by known offenders.

5.3.2 Snstaining the Game: 'Cop Culture' and Similarities to 'Street' Culture

The occupational culture observed amongst the *Northstreet* Gardaí exhibits numerous similarities to those noted in British police forces, (see for example: Holdaway, 1983; Fielding, 1988; Reiner, 2000). Considered below are a narrow number of relevant facets of the culture which either curiously mirror elements of 'street' culture, or further explain vigorous opposition to it.

5.3.3 Sense of Mission

Gardaí justifiably assert a sense of responsibility over public behaviour, maintaining that they are the sole 'thin blue line' containing society's potential to anytime erupt into 'barbarism' (see: Reiner, 2000: 89-90):

> We have to judge and if it wasn't for us the world would go mad. So 4 o'clock on a Friday when all the social services: the doctors, the community, the psychiatric, the whole lot, all the politicians (go home). What's left after 4 o'clock on a Friday? Nurses, cops, taxi men, firemen, that's it, there's nothing else. Those drinkers, dysfunctional people, hapless individuals, victims of crime, they're all

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[93] A particularly well-groomed regular Guard is known as *Westlife Wannabe*, in reference to the popular clean-cut boy-band.

[94] Commentators have linked the loss of deference to Gardaí with a wider loss of faith in the traditional authoritarian institutions of Irish society including the Catholic Church, teaching profession and politicians (see: Connolly, 2002b: 486).

> like a stream passing by you. We're the pillars. We're the thing that keeps the show on the road and what's there to stop anyone believing that they're right in having the view that they have to judge every situation (Michael, community sergeant).

Their judgement, as previously noted, tends to be exercised against the *gougers*, who are considered particularly 'dangerous' due to their disregard for mainstream social rules:

> They have no guilt, no remorse. One fellah, his Ma passed away and his Da is real sick, and every time he is in court he uses that as a defence. He doesn't give a fuck about his Ma or Da when he's out drinking and breaking into cars and givin' us abuse. They have no respect for property. They just take what they want. The rest of us have to work and earn it. That doesn't enter into their minds. (Mick, community Guard).

Mick, in articulating a common view held throughout the station, expresses concern at the manner in which *gougers* attempt to subvert the criminal justice system. This enforces the 'sense of mission' (Reiner, 2000: 89) to contest and apprehend recalcitrant individuals and groups, and vests them with the sole responsibility for doing so. Gardaí interviewed generally perceive the courts to be agonisingly ponderous and lenient to a fault. In the case of *The Crew*, the *Northstreet* Gardaí acknowledge their tragic upbringings and express sympathy, but nevertheless remain staunch in their efforts to thwart them, as Trevor and a colleague explain in this extract from fieldnotes:

> The two admit that they come down hard on the lads (*Crew*), and that it is not really a two way thing, with the lads 'walking away with their tails between their legs'. They say that they can't stop them robbing, and claim that there is little chance of any of them seeing prison (at least at their young ages). It is a large group and charges are usually diffused through it. Charges take time and a lot of them are dropped. They say, therefore, that they will keep pressure on the boys as long as they rob.

The Gardaí feel duty-bound to pursue *The Crew*, despite harbouring the knowledge that their efforts yield few tangible results in the short-term. This reinforces the image of a perpetual game that both parties are culturally commanded to enjoin. Bolstering the impetus to 'play' are a number of curious parallels in behaviour which offer further explanation as to the manner in which the two groups fall so naturally into opposition.

5.3.4 Monotony and Action; 'Masculinity' and (Im)maturity

The average day of the rank-and-file Guard has similar characteristics to that of *The Crew*, as described in Chapter 3. A large portion of their time is spent in routine activities, constructed as monotonous: answering calls, taking details, patrolling, surveying and administration (see also: Fielding, 1988: 116). Though a relatively diminutive aspect of the policeman's use of time (see: Vaughan, 2004: 52), the task of directly confronting and ultimately apprehending criminals is of intense symbolic value through which, particularly regular Gardaí, construct their occupation. '*Real police work*' is constructed in terms of action: speeding, scuffles and arrests, during which time passes quickly (Holdaway, 1983: 52). To Gardaí the prospect of engaging in *real* police work while breaking routine and producing adrenaline is attractive. Raymond, a Guard in one of the regular units at *Northstreet Station* explains in an extract from fieldnotes:

> He says that in a chase all regard for the car goes out the window (unless it is unmarked) and they will do everything they can to apprehend the individual they are pursuing. He says that there is nothing like a successful chase, all the other (Garda) cars pull up around the capture and everyone gets out, congregates and discusses the incident: 'You'll light up a cigarette and it'll be the best cigarette you've ever had in your life'.

A high-speed car chase resulting in a capture is the manner of activity that is relished by many Gardaí and earns peer-to-peer praise within the rank-and-file. Competence is valued within the force, exhibited through physical prowess and efficient judgment. A level of respect is afforded to good 'pilots' (drivers) who embody this competence and an

ability to produce results in *real* policing situations. The researcher arrives on one occasion to witness a 'good capture'. A suspect attempts to run over the arresting Guard in a stolen car, crashes it, attempts to flee on foot but is wrestled to the ground. The incident becomes central to canteen conversation for the next two days and the arresting Guard is roundly congratulated. 'The very masculine character of police work, emphasizing aggression and bravado, combines with the generally hedonistic perspective of the lower ranks to magnify the importance (almost the pleasure) of fights' (Holdaway, 1983: 130). Much like *The Crew*, Gardaí adhere to a culture that is masculine, aggressive and 'hedonistic'.

Displaying a further similarity to *The Crew*, Gardaí utilise conversation culture to support their values and pass periods of monotony: 'story telling, joking and banter are typical and important aspects of life at a police station' (Holdaway 1983: 55). Exciting incidents are recounted, colleagues are discussed and *gougers* are denigrated. Humour is deployed by members of the force as a coping mechanism to insulate from the tragedy, danger and suffering they witness. It thus pervades conversation, manifesting in constant playful banter, jibes levelled at the bald heads and protruding stomachs of colleagues. There are joking references to the incompetence of female officers and equally jocular threats to report the remarks and their authors to the 'Chief'. The humour glosses over the genuine dominance of masculinity within the force. A number of male Gardaí report that they prefer to be partnered with men, fearing that the women cannot 'hold their own' to the same extent in pressured situations. In male company, several Garda participants sexualise women deemed aesthetically pleasing, in a similar manner to *The Crew*, albeit in a far less vulgar manner.

Overt aggression and thrill-seeking are linked to what Michael, the community sergeant describes as 'immaturity', and are thus less widespread in the Community Unit. Maturity is linked to professionalism and focusing on the efficient execution of long-term goals. Mature Gardaí are cognisant of the advantages of remaining on civil terms with *gougers*:

> There's no point in getting fucking thick with people. If you get thick with people, that's what you're going to get back, and if you rile a fellah up and he ends up hitting you, when you go into court it's going to get pretty embarrassing (Gareth, mid thirties, experienced Community Guard).

In a similar manner *The Team*, who are more experienced and mature than *The Crew*, maintain an ambiguity around their alleged offending, and avoid overt confrontation with the Gardaí as far as possible. This is another parallel between 'street' and 'cop' cultures. Levels of maturity do not prevent the Gardaí from taking action against *The Crew*, but influence the style of their confrontation.

5.3.5 Exclusion and Solidarity

Informing the machismo amongst Gardaí in *Northstreet Station* is the sense that they are policing a hostile population and face criticism from a wider public (see: Waddington, 1999: 99-101; Reiner, 2000: 91). Despite their status as an 'in-group' in Irish society (MacGreil, 1996), Gardaí, much like *The Crew*, experience isolation and exclusion, albeit in a qualitatively different fashion. Gardaí feel estranged from a public whose behaviour they must regulate:

> The policeman goes to a party and out of necessity he will not stand at the door, he will not stand beside the heat, he will stand in the corner so that he can watch everyone coming in. Now he might only be a traffic cop but we're all paranoid, we all have to see who is in the room, we all have to look around and know. Now you know St. Peter in the bible who denied 3 times. If I said: "are you a cop?"
> 'No.'
> 'What do you work at?'
> 'I'm in the government service. I'm a public servant. I work in town.'
> You're not going to say you're a cop. Now you're the guy who jumps out of the patrol car and you run up and you decide whether people have robbed, assaulted, domestic violence or traffic accidents. You can judge anything and yet you're scared of this specky little eejit in front of you, male or female it doesn't matter.

> Somebody insignificant and they mention: "what do you work at?" and all your barriers come up, because you're scared he'll judge you. We're all paranoid so when we get together socially we do it all in the common trough... And you see this is why you go and you see a child dead, sudden cot death, traffic accident or whatever, the same bastards that have neglected society for the weekend will neglect us and our needs, nurses and firemen, whoever else has to deal with the shit. And the shit is the shitty incidents, not the shit people, I don't mean it that way but that's why they play cards and they have to socialise in courts in groups, in compact little (groups) (Michael, Community Sergeant).

Much like *The Crew*, the Gardaí are insular and self-reliant. They must necessarily insulate themselves from the public if they are to police it. Gardaí tend to see themselves as under siege from all sides, articulating distaste at the manner in which they are represented in the media viewing this as fuelling negative perceptions of the force amongst wider society. Gardaí in *Northstreet Station* live in the suburbs and commuter towns on the edge of the city, often close to each other, and travel long distances to work. In a process that begins at training (or earlier if recruits have family in the force) Gardaí learn to constitute their social world in the extended membership of the force. Canteen talk and gossip focuses on the career progression, relationships, and the personality quirks of their colleagues. Members of the force tend to socialise together and a significant number find partners and spouses 'in the job'. Shift-work and anti-social hours certainly play a role in this process, but it does not explain the uneasiness some members complain of when in the company of the general public. Gardaí prefer to drink in particular pubs, primarily early in the week, ensuring that they are the dominant presence.

Again, with similarity to the manner in which *The Crew* hold their community leadership in disdain, rank-and-file Gardaí tend to resent high-ranking officers, representing them as out of touch with the realities of policing, corrupt and inept:

> The failing of management to account and an inability for anybody to rate or judge productivity of anyone else is perpetuated because people are promoted because they're politically reliable in the little pond. If you're ok, you get promoted because of the job you just did as distinct from your inability to do the next job or the ability to do thereafter... How much of a bigger bollix could [new management] make than the current Mayo or Cork, Kerry or Tipperary mafia? It's the inadequacies of current management that facilitates nepotism, super(intendent)s' sons (getting jobs and promotions without merit)[95] (Maurice, regular Guard).

Garda feel isolated from their management as well as the public. Thus, again much like *The Crew*, they attach a substantial premium to solidarity: socialising together and more significantly insulating each other from harm, both in the street and in relation to disciplinary matters. Tribunals of inquiry into police corruption in Ireland have reported difficulty in coaxing Gardaí to inform on their colleagues[96]. 'Ratting' is as taboo amongst the Gardaí as in *The Crew*.

5.3.6 'Cat and Mouse': The Rules of the Game

Certain Gardaí recognise that they are participating in a clash of distinct and opposing cultural responses to crime:

> In certain areas it's like, you know, we are responsible for, they would rather if there was no law and order so when we catch them committing a crime we are responsible for putting their sons, daughters, brothers, mothers, fathers in prison but they don't see, they only see us putting them in prison, they think it's okay to commit the crime (Trevor, Community Guard for *Northstreet*).

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[95] "Supers' sons" is a byword amongst the Gardaí for corrupt management. It is widely believed that the children of ranking officers achieve career progress that often exceeds their merit.

[96] Several of the cases relating to Garda misconduct in suppressing a May Day protest in 2002 collapsed due to several members of the force claiming an inability to identify their colleagues in photographic and video evidence.

Conflict between the Gardaí and *The Crew* plays out the dichotomy of values and world views championed by their 'parent' cultures: mainstream and working-class respectively. Through surveillance and searches, the Gardaí assert symbolic control on the person and property of *The Crew*. *The Crew* resist, engaging in 'cat and mouse', constantly evading the presence of the police. The Gardaí are frustrated by *The Crew*'s frequent offending as much as *The Crew* resent the frequent obstruction from the Gardaí.

Fundamental differences in values combined with curious parallels in culture and behaviour perpetuate the conflict. Both cultures are based on long periods of tedious routine broken by sporadic high-energy action. Both groups value quick-wittedness and physical prowess. Both groups hold solidarity in high regard. Both parties feel sure of their beliefs and are dubious of the other's normative position. The *raison d'etre* of the Gardaí is tied up with frequent offenders such as *The Crew*, for whom crime and evading arrest occupies a significant proportion of their group identity. In this way, the traditional working-class youth gang and members of a police force are playing a game, occupying opposite ends of what Young (1999: 16) calls the *dyad* of crime. There tends to be symbolic victories on either side. *The Crew* conduct many offences for which they are not charged, yet on occasion they will be captured and charges will be issued. If the conflict between the two parties has a game-like quality then there are fundamental differences in what each side stakes. Whilst the Gardaí can afford failing to detect minor offences, for *The Crew* accumulating charges will bring them within the youth justice system, with potentially profound consequences for their life progression.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the nuanced manner in which different sections of the *Northstreet* community perceive of and interact with state policing, whilst maintaining a focus on the class-cultural dynamics that underpin this process. Locating the relationship in an era of blurred boundaries, it has been demonstrated that the traditional conflict between working-class, inner-city communities and the predominantly rural middle-class Gardaí has been rendered increasingly complex by the bolstering of 'respectable' values both concrete and projected within *Northstreet* and an emphasis on community policing

within the local Gardaí. Nevertheless, a game-like conflict persists in earnest between *The Crew*, a residual section of the community, who espouse a 'rough' variant of traditional working-class values, and the Gardaí, who adhere to and enforce mainstream norms. The game is facilitated, supported and perpetuated through opposing fundamental normative assumptions and corresponding elements of culture and lifestyle in the two groups. The 'game' is weighted in favour of the Gardaí, who are backed by the authority and resources of the state, and is an aspect of their job, distancing it from consuming their lives. *The Crew* inevitably lose and progress to playing against further aspects of the youth justice system.

Figure 4: A Garda van is damaged by battery acid thrown by antipathetic residents of the inner-city. Photographs by author.

Chapter 6
The Welfare Game: Identifying Needs, Planting Seeds and Ultimate Frustration

Introduction

Mutual enmity lends intensity and definition to the 'game' between *The Crew* and Gardaí described in the previous chapter. Whilst nevertheless evident in the interaction between the urban youth group and the numerous 'welfare' workers who attempt to moderate their behaviour, the 'game' becomes less concentrated and oppositional sentiments are muted. This chapter focuses on the manner in which *The Crew* interact with the professional workers who attempt to intervene in their lives by inculcating 'mainstream' values particularly in relation to crime, leisure and education, with the hope of curtailing further offending. Such an examination necessitates understanding the legal and institutional structure in which workers function, the tactics they utilise and the difficulties they encounter (particularly the modes of resistance deployed by *The Crew*). The chapter notes the manner in which *The Crew* experience the *modus operandi* favoured, and values championed by youth justice workers as alien, framing the process of welfare youth justice as a further class-cultural dynamic. The first sub-section examines the role of Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers and Garda Youth Diversion Projects in dispensing 'welfare' justice. The second sub-section focuses on the challenges inherent in this task, whilst the third centres on the experience of Mano, the *Crew* member, in the Children Court.

6.1 Irish Juvenile Welfare Justice in Practice

Within the Irish criminal justice system young offenders are dealt with in a distinct fashion. In an effort to conform to international standards (Beijing Rules, 1995) young law-breakers cannot be treated in the same manner as their adult counterparts. Rather, juvenile justice in Ireland (since the enactment of The Children Act 2001) is couched in the language of 'welfare', recognising that youth is a period of unformed identity and developing normativity in which offending may occur that will not persist into adulthood; a special duty exists to protect and nurture young people in place of dispensing

punishment (Lynne, 2004; Griffin, 2004; Kilkelly, 2006: xvi; see also: Goldson, 1999; Doob & Tonry, 2004). A principal manifestation of this approach is the deployment of 'youth justice workers' to divert young people from offending as opposed to relying solely on deterrence and punishment as represented by the Gardaí, courts and detention.

The young people in *Northstreet* interact with myriad (commonly middle-class) professionals, most prominently through school. For the interested, there are numerous clubs in the inner city, staffed by youth and sports development workers offering all manner of recreational activities. Whilst *The Crew* tend to avoid such institutions, certain of its members have the additional attention of youth justice workers, social workers, youth advocates and tutors. Adam and Mano, identified as particularly 'at-risk' can have up to five different adults involved in their lives at any time. The plethora of relevant actors and shifting personnel in the various organizations can add a further level of complication and instability to lives identified as requiring 'normalisation'. Nevertheless, through their best intentions, these professional workers, educated in social, psychological or pastoral models of care endeavour tirelessly to create an environment in which young people in difficulty can find the mechanism to progress through life without resorting to those methods of support offered by street culture.

6.1.1 Blurred Boundaries: The Juvenile Liaison Officer

In *Northstreet Station* young offenders are held in a specific windowed cell following arrest, constantly visible to duty Gardaí and separate from adult prisoners. A parent or guardian is informed and asked to collect the youth and notification is sent to the station's Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO). The JLO straddles the world of social care and policing, issuing cautions for breaches of the law but referring young people to relevant agencies where necessary. Central to the initial stages of juvenile justice in Ireland is the Garda Diversion Programme[97], operated on a local basis by the JLOs and nationally by the Garda Juvenile Office. S.49 of the The Children Act 2001 stipulates that a youth may be cautioned without prosecution in the court system, dependant on certain conditions

[97] This system has operated informally in the state for a number of decades and was placed on a statutory basis by the Part 4 of the Children Act 2001. Between its inception and 2004 the Gardaí report that 160,918 young people have participated in the scheme (Garda Annual Report, 2004:55).

including an admission of guilt[98]. The JLO may issue informal cautions to young offenders in the presence of their family or a formal version within the station[99]. The aspiration is that supports may be placed under young people, through their family and an increased involvement in structured leisure activities to the extent that they may be dissuaded from further unlawful behaviour. The JLO then 'monitors' the progress of the young person, yet it is not clear how much time is available to them for this purpose (Kilkelly, 2006: 72-73). For many young people this will amount to the totality of their involvement with criminal justice and thus the system functions well to give a 'second chance' to those involved in nothing more sinister than youthful mischief. It is a different scenario where individuals have deeply embedded connections to offending behaviour.

Juvenile justice aspires to recruit the young offender's family as a primary vehicle of positive socialisation, assuming that parents will share the state's concern in relation to their child's behaviour. Members of the *Northstreet* community have several cultural mechanisms by which they can neutralise the caution conveyed by a JLO. *The Crew* tap into constructed 'enmity' against the Gardaí to frame accusations of offending as persecution. The young men do not accept that the *Northstreet* JLO has concern for their welfare. They deride his country accent and often refer to him as 'that bastard'. Keano explains that the kind manner the local JLO maintains in the presence of adults disintegrates into shouting when the two are alone. Whether this is the case or not, it indicates that members of *The Crew* perceive even the 'softest' arm of criminal justice as oppositional. The veracity of the requisite 'admission of guilt' that is required for entry into the diversion system falls into question. It is probable that, as opposed to any signal of 'guilt' or remorse, the admissions offered by *Crew* members are an exercise in ostensible co-operation with recognition that it insulates against the 'trouble' (Miller, 1958) represented by progressing further into the criminal justice system.

The reactions of *The* Crew's parents to a JLO caution can vary greatly. Whilst Keano's mother is sufficiently concerned about the arrival of the JLO to seriously intervene in her

[98] See generally: Chapter 3 *Diversion from the Criminal Justice System* (Kilkelly, 2006).
[99] There is furthermore the option of utilising a restorative element which involves meeting the victim of the crime and providing compensation (Kilkelly, 2006:89; O'Dwyer, 2007).

child's behaviour, this would not be a common reaction amongst the parents of *The Crew*. Wacker's mother does not express concern at the JLO's regular visits to her flat. Having experienced high-level offending,[100] she is less likely to view the righteous concern and kindly-worded warnings offered by the JLO as a cause of consternation. The polite intervention fails to combat her natural conception of her son as a 'good kid'. Ultimately, the JLO system would seem to function with prime efficacy when dealing with young people whose attraction to offending behaviour is weak, or who have access to other socialising factors which negate its appeal. Those who seem at a greater risk of re-offending (or who have demonstrated this risk through actually engaging in it) may be referred to a Garda Youth Diversion Project.

6.1.2 Garda Youth Diversion Projects

Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDP) (see generally: Bowden & Higgins, 2000; Kilkelly, 2006: 91-94) represent an attempt to suppress youth crime through non-oppositional means. Through their guidelines, the projects define themselves thus:

> Community based, multi-agency crime prevention initiatives which seek to divert young people from becoming involved (or further involved) in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development and promote civic responsibility. The Garda Youth Diversion Projects are funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and administered through the Garda Community Relations Section (CSER, 2003:1).

The Gardaí maintain control of the projects, through macro-supervision and the placement of officers in key local management positions. The recruitment of youth service providers[101] to operate the projects and employ their staff, suggests recognition that youth justice work requires specific competencies and a layer of separation from policing. The formal management structure of the projects demonstrates partnership

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[100] According to one Garda source she is linked to the drug trade. Her ex-husband, moreover, has spent many years in prison.

[101] Organisations who focus on professional and or voluntary youth work, such as City of Dublin Youth Service Provision, or Foróige, a national association for the development of young people.

between the Gardaí and youth service providers. An Advisory Committee, consisting of the project coordinator, his/her line manager, a local Garda Inspector acting as treasurer, a JLO, two Community Gardaí, an education and welfare officer and a member of the local community (in the case of *Northstreet,* James, the manager of the community centre), discusses formal reports, strategy, funding, purchasing, policy and procedure. A fiction of anonymity is maintained, details of clients are never discussed in this forum, although the Gardaí tend to be familiar with their membership. Reference is restricted to 'groups', whose progress is discussed in general terms: 'attendance has not been great with the boy's group'. A Referral Assessment Committee, consisting of another JLO, the coordinator and the manager of a local community service monitors clients. This body retains responsibility for selecting suitable candidates for membership, ensuring they are progressing satisfactorily and ultimately deciding when the young person should cease attending. A variety of sources refer candidates: JLOs, schools, other youth services, or in some cases young people self-refer. Based on capacity and subscription, coupled with risk factors exhibited by existing and potential candidates, places will be allocated on the project or its waiting list.

A significant portion of the coordinator's time is vested in the preparation of reports: annual, bi-annual and quarterly for consideration by the advisory committee and Garda Community Relations. There is a sense amongst the coordinators, who prefer to concentrate on their work with young people, that they are engaging in a rather empty bureaucratic exercise:

> There's reports to be made to the Department of Justice which are done, and you really have to wonder, is there any benefit at all. Like your annual budget, we submit an annual budget, but before it's actually submitted we've been given our annual budgets. So we're actually submitting it and there's nothing, absolutely nothing being fed back on what was being done the year before or what was missing or lacking the year before, we're just given: okay your budget last year was x, so this year you're getting x, minus five percent, which is great (sarcastic tone). Then it's the same with the annual report, you do it, spend a lot of time doing it and there doesn't seem to be any

> feedback or any recognition of things that have been done at all. And then on a smaller level the quarterly and six monthly reports... (Yvonne, youth justice worker, mid-twenties).

It can be frustrating for the coordinators who can sometimes feel that their management is distal, out of touch with the reality of their jobs, requiring placating but offering little in the realm of constructive feedback. Complaints of under-funding are a refrain throughout the accounts of those coordinators interviewed. Through the GYDP system, the state is concerned with ostensibly displaying the trappings of welfare justice as opposed to radically overhauling the manner in which young offenders are dealt with. Welfare justice requires that consideration is given to the social conditions which span youth offending. This is implied within the GYDP guidelines, which emphasises instead the need to foster mainstream norms:

> The purpose of youth crime prevention work is to engage young people who have offended in a process of learning and development that will enable them to examine their own offending and to make positive lifestyle choices that will protect them from involvement in criminal, harmful or socially unacceptable behaviours. To implement this, the work involves linking young people with non-offending peer groups and the forming of stable and trusting relationships with adults in the community. The intended impact of this process is that those who are engaged in this process develop into responsible and valued citizens and the intended outcome is that young people engaged do not offend and do not progress into the criminal justice system (CSER, 2003:4).

The objectives of the projects make clear that offending behaviour is the antithesis of 'good citizenship', or adhering to mainstream values. The projects in effect function as cultural *pedagogues* (Bowden, 2006: 26; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977: 7) promoting a way of life more in tune with that of wider society and further away from that of the street gang. Project coordinators tend to tie notions of their clients' welfare with adherence to mainstream values. Young people should attend education, avoid substance

abuse, refrain from offending, but crucially tend to perceive difficulties in their family and personal lives as impetus for failing to achieve these goals.

6.1.3 Youth Justice Work: The Central Task

At the heart of the welfare approach is the task of youth justice workers[102]. In their work they balance concerns for the welfare of their clients with the deployment of pedagogy. They tend to operate under the belief that their clients engage in offending due to needs that have been unfulfilled in their lives, which in turn prevents meaningful self-critical reflection on the manner in which they behave. Secondly, that needs can be identified and met, and that through increased stability and effective intervention, young people can become increasingly committed to moderating their own behaviour. With the arrival of the young client in the project, the process of familiarisation between worker and client begins. The worker aims for a position where, in the future, honest discussion around certain key issues will be possible. Whilst the worker is considered a stranger, clients commonly maintain suspicion around the motives of the worker and are unlikely to divulge frank accounts of their lives and family situations[103]. The central task of youth justice work occurs in casual conversation, when clients raise issues that the worker might address and hopefully set in motion a chain of critical thinking within the young person's mind.

Dermot, a youth justice worker in his mid-late twenties, describes his efforts in dealing with a client's tendency to consume excessive amounts of alcohol and engage in violence as such:

> 'So I was just chatting to him and I was saying: Do you know them? How did you react? How did you feel? And really trying to connect actions and feelings I suppose was the core of what I was trying to do. It was really small, I was like fifteen, twenty minutes talking to them. I'll need to stay with them for a year

[102] GYDPs tend to be 'single worker projects' with the coordinator also engaging in the bulk of youth work.
[103] This is of course a generalisation. Some young people, particularly those who are accustomed to interacting with professionals through a long history in care, can be exceptional in their tendency to reveal a lot of personal details to a relatively unknown worker whom they identify as being sympathetic.

> nearly before finally I could say to them... the basis of my argument, all I could say to them really was try to connect the feelings and the actions of both parties, and then to try and say like that they just kicked the crap out of two randomers, they could have been anybody... They have to be aware like that they might be the kings of the block, but they're not the kings of the world as such and they can't do anything that they want to do... that would need to be constant, constant, constant all the time, at least a year anyway for any impact to be had or for any sensible drinking ethos to be instilled or understanding to be instilled, you have to be realistic about what you can achieve.'

The youth justice workers have a unique relationship with their young clients, concerned adults, without the more formal stance of a teacher, though less proximate than a parent, paid to remain calm, listen and help them with their 'problems'. It is this function, they maintain, that can have the most potent transformative effect on a client's thought and behaviour. The primary, personal and trusting relationships developed over months and years of organised activities are the vehicle through which, youth justice workers believe, behaviour modification takes place. The relationship that these workers share with their clients is in contrast to the opposition that exists between the youth and the Gardaí (see also: Souhami, 2007: 46-47). Effective welfare justice is a product of personal relationships as opposed to the mere existence of welfare structures and considerations of legislation or GYDP guidelines. The coordinators have wide autonomy to execute their task in the manner which they deem most effective and appropriate. 'Every project runs differently' is the mantra of those interviewed. Coordinators bring their own particular vision to bear on the *modus operandi* of their particular project and moderate how the general guidelines translate in a local context.

The JLO and GYDP structures are key strategies in the Irish State's efforts to employ a 'welfare' approach to the youth crime issue. Though steeped in the language of support and espousing non-oppositional tactics, these schemes are essentially concerned with behaviour modification and cultural pedagogy. The challenges of attempting to inculcate

'respectable' values in a group committed to 'street' norms become apparent, as the local context in *Northstreet* is considered in-depth.

6.2 Youth Justice Strategies in the Local Context: *The Club*

This subsection sets out the manner in which youth diversion work occurs locally in *Northstreet*.

6.2.1 *The Club*

The Club is a GYDP situated on *Northstreet*, spatially marking the boundary between the state owned flat complex and the privately owned shops, offices and apartments. It occupies the top floor of *Northstreet Hall*, the remainder of which continues to be disused. The heavy steel door at its entrance is painted an inviting green and a video-intercom has been installed for security purposes. The building's exterior remains unchanged from the pre-renewal era, where it once served as a community amenity. The same rusting cages protect the windows. The same grimy sign above the front door identifies its address. The same sharp metal posts guard the concrete back yard. In the interior a dramatic transformation has taken place. Relying on a network of personal contacts and volunteers, Gerry, *The Club*'s coordinator spent a summer renovating the premises: painting, laying carpet, installing a kitchen, and organising charity events, the proceeds of which would equip *The Club* to cater for the needs of its sceptical clientele. Entering through the thick security door, one climbs a number of bare concrete stairs, the uppermost of which is flanked by a number of windows providing essential light (the landing lamp is broken, and the cage around it rusted solid for some time). One of the windows bears a large circular hole that Mano had punched through on the day his mother signed him into care. The drabness and coldness of this landing area stands in stark contrast to the space that lies inside the inner door. Upon entering this space, one is immediately struck by light and warmth. *The Club*'s hall is painted in bright multi-coloured murals and is lined by functioning radiators.

Stemming off the hallway, which runs like a spine through the floor are a number of rooms, each housing a central function of *The Club*. First is the office, which is brightly painted lavender and is the domain of the staff. There are a number of computers (which the young people are permitted to use under supervision), printers, a photocopier and fax machine, all the trappings of the professional office. Here, Gerry performs the administrative and bureaucratic functions of youth work, secondary, but essential to the central project. The management committee requires reports, funders must be sourced and later placated, communication must be kept up with various stakeholders and interested agencies. Indeed, the office sometimes acts as a hub, where different professionals working with *Crew* members arrive to discuss issues around their offending and welfare. Next is the kitchen, dominated by a large wooden table occupying most of the space in the room and flanked by a number of large wooden chairs. Along a side wall there is a modern yet Spartan cooking and washing facility with everything one would expect: sink, stove, kettle, microwave and presses containing a variety of foods that can be quickly made into a meal for hungry clients. Beside the sink a large number of heavy mugs stand top-down drying; the ubiquitous cup of tea is an essential feature of any community work in Dublin and represents a forum over which many negotiations are held.

Last is the main room in which group work takes place. It is large enough to cope with up to fifteen young people and is filled with soft green bean bags on which they (or an exhausted volunteer) can sit on in comfort. The walls are painted a cheery lilac and feature photographs of *Crew* members, looking cherubic as pre-teens, posing in a number of locations visited as *Club* excursions. In one photograph Adam flicks a V peace symbol while smiling impishly, in another Keano squirms uncomfortably in his seat with a look of painful embarrassment on his face, beside a smiling volunteer playing the guitar. There are televisions, complete with Playstation2s, a pool table on castors, to be placed to one side when group sessions are in progress. The clients generally seem to dislike a formal session utilising the white board on the far side of the room; perhaps it is too reminiscent of school. In any event, markers are stored in the office when not in use lest the young people seize the opportunity to write graffiti on the board: 'Delboy is class', 'Steo

smells'. Female clients record the names of all the young women present, signing it off: 'pals'. Gerry has attempted to create a space with which the clients can identify, whilst facilitating the numerous facets of his occupation.

6.2.2 Gerry

Gerry is the founder and coordinator of *The Club* and its only professional youth justice worker. He is a tall, well-built man, whose rural upbringing is evidenced in his distinctive accent. As much as there are institutional and managerial directions and regulations underpinning the services offered by *The Club*, there is also a particular debt to Gerry's personal philosophies:

> We can't condone crime, but we can recognise that it does exist. We can look at positive ways of intervening and diverting. Give support and advocacy for young people, rather than the negative role of disenfranchising young people within community. So I primarily… I recognised it would be embrace rather than reject. You have community that's interested in your well being, once you've participated positively within community, but if you work against community you have no place in community (Gerry).

Gerry holds a deep sense of spirituality that drives his work with the disadvantaged. He sees the emotional damage that certain young people in *Northstreet* have inherited as an obstacle to their self-realisation and happiness, and that 'behavioural difficulties they present' are symptomatic of this. Aware of the precarious position that *The Crew* occupy within the community, he strives to provide a safe haven in which they can find personal development, meaning and effective coping mechanisms. He hopes that by boosting their esteem and consciousness that they will realise their capabilities to interact 'positively' with those around them. In the meantime he makes considerable effort to 'challenge their behaviour' particularly around issues of interpersonal interaction and criminality. Gerry has an ability to move between roles as enthusiastic jester and compassionate mentor: singing songs and laughing one moment, whilst listening intently, maintaining a sympathetic gaze and solemnly offering advice the next.

Informing the manner in which Gerry operates *The Club* is 'identifying and meeting the needs' of young people in *Northstreet*. Applying this abstract concept in practice is challenging. First the young people must agree to participate in the project, which is voluntary. Time spent in the project will need to appear to the young person as, at least, equally appealing to time spent unsupervised with their friendship group. *The Club* therefore tends to trade in *Northstreet* as a purveyor of activities and entertainment with the additional element of instructing young people in new skills. Although *The Club*'s *raison d'etre* remains tied to notions of behaviour modification, Gerry avoids publicising this objective lest it stigmatize clients.

6.2.3 Building a Profile and Client Base

Building a profile within a community is an important aspect to youth justice work. Community residents then understand why groups of 'notoriously anti-social' young people are congregating around certain areas at certain times. The Gardaí gain a public relations victory by demonstrating efforts to approach young offenders through non-confrontational means. The *Northstreet* residents tend to view *The Club* in accordance with the image it projects.

> A woman shouting down to Gerry from her balcony in *Northstreet* inquires if he is: 'Taking the boys up the mountains?' (Extract from fieldnotes).

Residents realise that *The Club*'s mission is to keep clients 'out of trouble' but the manner in which this is achieved is not widely appreciated. Most residents (including the bulk of clients) associate the project with providing 'rational recreation' as an antidote to crime-inducing idleness (see: Robins & Cohen, 1978: 126-127). *The Club* cannot thus avoid local criticism for 'rewarding bad kids', yet must retain desirability around membership to hold the interest of potential clients.

GYDPs must also build a profile amongst local welfare and education agencies, both state and voluntary, as these provide a significant source of client referrals. During his

first year in operation Gerry receives a variety of these whom he works with as groups or individuals with varying success, before Mano, Adam and Keano are brought to his attention by the *Northstreet* JLO as a result of their attempted JCB theft, described in Chapter 3. Byrnesy and Wacker, already friendly with the three, refer themselves and are accepted due to the heightened risk factors they share (primarily the existence of histories of offending behaviour within their families). Aged between eleven and fourteen, the six young men become a regular fixture at *The Club* and develop an attachment to Gerry and the activities he offers.

6.2.4 Activities

A routine is established as these *Crew* members attend over the course of fieldwork. The six *Crew* members attend sessions at specific times, encouraging them to adhere to the system of structure, schedule and appointments, around which 'mainstream' society tends to be organised. The boys arrive (usually in ones and twos) and sessions begin in the kitchen, where food is provided. Prior to the commencement of fieldwork full meals were offered, but reduced funding and an increased reluctance on the part of *Crew* members to eat persuades Gerry to alter the menu to optional sandwiches, which are frequently rejected. *The Crew* reminisce occasionally about the early days. They recall with laughter how Gerry presented them with freshly cooked lasagne from the oven, claiming to have baked it from scratch, only for them to discover the discarded packet in the rubbish bin. Kitchen time provides the opportunity to achieve two youth work strategies. Firstly, that clients 'eat at least one decent meal' and secondly, that the young people have the opportunity to discuss forthcoming activities. This kitchen table forum is an important aspect of Gerry's strategy, he hopes to involve these *Crew* members in the planning process, to contribute opinions and thus take ownership of the youth justice process.

Each week the principal activities offered vary between indoor and outdoor. Attending *Crew* members participate in art and craft projects and report favourably on the time they built remote control cars in pairs. Alternatively the young men don *Club* owned hiking boots and waterproofs and engaged in a range of outdoor pursuits: trekking across the Wicklow Mountains, canoeing, rock-climbing and others. At the conclusion of sessions,

Gerry or a volunteer sit individually with clients to complete a 'self-evaluation', awarding points for punctuality, language, respect for others and staff, and participation. This process provides a rational basis to award good behaviour, challenge problematic conduct and is a rare opportunity for the client and worker to speak face-to-face. In response to Gerry's questions *Crew* members occasionally report problems at school, with the Gardaí, or their families.

Residential excursions represent a reward for satisfactory participation over the year and remove *The Crew* from the familiar urban setting. The rural setting presents the young men with a challenge to their perceived 'mastery' of the streets and they demonstrate a captivation with farm animals and sea creatures that is inconsistent with their self-styled aggression. The screams of terror they release when confronted with small crabs indicates that underlying their overt daring is a low fear threshold where the unfamiliar is concerned. The 'residentials' are a challenge for youth justice workers; a thirty-six hour period presents numerous opportunities for 'trouble'. Gerry hires part-time staff and recruits volunteers to ensure a balance of one adult per child. The degree of supervision is such that *The Crew* have no opportunity to offend[104]. The activities Gerry organises are essential to his strategy. They raise the profile of *The Club*, represent an attempt to interest *The Crew* in pro-social leisure and develop their self-esteem through the achievement of reasonable goals. Crucially, they bring youth justice worker and client closer to the ideal 'space' from which behaviour modification can be achieved.

6.2.5 Getting Closer

As noted earlier, familiarity and trust are decisive factors in the ability of a youth justice worker to effect behaviour change. At one stage, Gerry hosts a series of meetings between Mano, his mother and Health Board staff. Mano is signed into voluntary care. Adam becomes upset; Gerry finds him sitting on the stairs, dejected, head in his hands: 'Do you know of any other twelve year old who has to go through this?' he asks. Gerry

[104] Ironically, during a residential excursion *The Crew* group share an adventure centre with a number of middle-class youth who are on a school trip. These youth are afforded a wide degree of autonomy by their teachers and they have ample opportunity to consume alcohol, consort with the opposite sex and engage in other forms of rule-breaking behaviours.

has formed a close relationship with those *Crew* members with which he works. He is present to offer his support when Adam and Mano enter care and when Byrnesy's sister passes away. While Gerry is assured of the young men's presence in *The Club* at least once a week, he is well positioned to fulfil his mentoring role and act as a caring confidant. He does so instinctively rather than out of a sense of duty. Through such kindness he reinforces his position within the lives of the young people. He can guide the youth through tumultuous events, encouraging them to be aware of and express their emotions as opposed to resorting to the coping mechanisms of disassociation and hedonism offered through 'street' culture.

GYDP workers straddle different social worlds: the structures and exigencies of managerialism, the concern, language of emotion and professional boundaries of the care worker, and the social reality of the streets and communities from which their clients emanate. Workers such as Gerry attempt to utilise the structure of youth justice work, their amicable personalities and a close relationship with their clients to effect changes in their behaviour and culture. Significantly, the activities organised by the GYDPs can be understood as part of its strategy to inculcate 'decent' or 'respectable' values amongst its clients, in and of themselves, or through the relationship they facilitate between worker and client.

6.2.6 The Paradox of Youth Justice Work

Ultimately, the efficacy of youth justice work is premised on numerous variables, including the dedication and skill of the workers, but principally the willingness of clients to entertain the possibilities of behaviour modification. The demands placed on individual behaviour by street normativity stand in stark contrast to those required by the rules of *The Club*. The paradox of youth justice work is that those who most urgently require the service are the least amenable to it. The prospects of success are greater where clients are not deeply committed to street values. Those with greater commitment to offending behaviour are more likely to 'resist' youth work (Gillespie, Lovett & Garner, 1992: 114). 'Respectable' youth possess norms resembling to a greater degree those the projects attempt to inculcate. The paradox creates a crisis of identity for the GYDPs: should there

be an emphasis on 'curing' frequent offenders, or on 'prevention', supporting those who are not particularly committed to criminality and street values to remain so? Whilst the guidelines recommend that clients are selected as far as practicable from JLO referrals, there is divided opinion amongst coordinators:

> The forms that are in the guidelines to use I think are completely unreflective of what work is actually being done. It's fully divided into: 'has this young person been referred through the juvenile liaison officer or have they not?' Whereas I have a lot of kids who have not been referred through that system but who are at incredibly high risk and I think that they are the type of person, with the resources we have generally, I find that they're the type of kids that we can actually most of the time, do the most work with (Yvonne).

> The vast majority of our young people have been referred through the JLO, and I think that's what the justice programmes were really set out for. I have a gripe and I feel that lots of people have taken the money, taken the funding and they've turned it into a general youth club. Which, when a young person needs help and needs support, you know there should be a minimum wait that a young person has. But this money was meant for young people who might end up in jail in the future, and therefore it should be focused on them... it should be focused on those who have been JLOed[105]. That's not to say you can't have others involved, you can have 6 JLOed kids and they just play off each other and they just get worse and worse and worse, working with those people (Sam, youth justice worker, early thirties).

Youth justice work is distinct from general youth service provision but in disadvantaged communities where there is a dearth of amenities and a generalised propensity towards offending at a young age, the boundary is ambiguous. As previously noted, the demarcation between rough and respectable is not absolute, arguably the entire youth population of *Northstreet* are 'at risk of offending' to a varying degree. Gerry thus further

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[105] This is the manner in which most Dublin youth would refer to a caution from a Juvenile Liaison Officer.

provides 'prevention' services, aimed at the 'lower risk' group, supporting them in their pursuit of education and structured leisure: a homework group and a 'drop in centre'. He leans heavily on volunteers from a local college[106] in this endeavour and retains the bulk of his availability to engage with *The Crew* and 'high risk' youth. Attempts to integrate the two categories during a summer project highlight the role of street culture in thwarting youth justice work in contrast to the relative ease with which 'prevention' work with 'respectable' youth can occur. What follows is a description, condensed from fieldnotes, of a *Club* 'Summer Project' open to clients and all young people resident in *Northstreet*.

The five *Crew* clients (Keano is on holiday with his family) feel slighted and complain about the presence of others in *their* club. Gerry has employed professional teachers to assist the young people script and perform a play to be performed in a local community theatre. The wider youth participate heartily, albeit with an over-exuberance and disregard of Gerry's pleas that they 'focus' (a word which they come to mock him about, imitating his country accent). *The Crew*, however, are unenthused although perform roles in set production and design under the supervision of a volunteer. They are at best indifferent about the show that *The Club* is working toward. The tedium of show preparation is relieved by alternate days spent engaging in various adventure sports. Differences in the community's internal standards of respectability become points of conflict between individuals from *The Crew* and general youth. During a lull in a rock-climbing activity, as everyone relaxes in the sun, Adam becomes involved in a dispute with a young woman who persists in calling him a 'gypsy-knacker'. Sandwiches are quickly deployed as missiles by the other young people, eager to contribute to the conflict. Order breaks down completely as the two begin to grapple. Volunteers by necessity abandon their training and physically intervene, pulling them apart. The bus arrives and the exchange of insults continues throughout the return journey, occasionally reigniting into violence, again forcing volunteer intervention. *Crew* members begin attending only intermittently and when present contribute to lapses in discipline and

[106] Members from the local community tend to eschew voluntary work with *The Club*, although this situation had begun to alter significantly following the completion of fieldwork.

concentration in the others who are keen to get involved in the mischief created. The general youth share values with both *The Crew* and project staff and yet the influence of the former group can counteract the efforts of the latter.

As *Crew* clients solidify their relationship to Macker, Paddy and a plethora of offending youth in the wider district, they are presented with a choice of milieu between *The Club* and the street. Their cultural orientation directs them to the more familiar, lucrative and seemingly enjoyable company of the peer group. Byrnesy, Dommer, Wacker, Adam and Mano exhibit behaviours that challenge Gerry's ability to achieve his goals as a youth justice worker. The night before the show Gerry observes the young men rifling through the contents of a rucksack. They initially claim to have discovered it in a skip, though one of the general youth reports that Adam had used a pellet gun to rob it from a foreign student. When confronted with this version of events Adam aggressively warns Gerry against notifying the police, placing the youth justice worker in an impossible predicament. He chooses to vest trust in Adam's account. The group's behaviour on the morning of the show demonstrates the degree to which they are dedicated to their own values and are uninterested in subscribing to the pedagogy of youth justice work.

> The whole *Crew* show up at the door of the theatre, lead by Wacker and Dommer. They charge through, many still on their bikes, they split up and I follow a number down a corridor, Wacker slips out of my vision and I try to stop the others randomly opening doors, as they do so on a group of women getting changed. It all happened so quickly, Adam on a pink BMX, Macker with a joint in his hand. They acted with a kind of practiced aggression that could only be attributed to their confidence in numbers (extract from fieldnotes).

One of the theatre staff reports his keys stolen and *The Crew* are subsequently banned from the venue. Seemingly, they continue to take some sort of ownership of *The Club* and its show, as they protest angrily when they are refused entry in the evening. The event is well attended by the women and children of *Northstreet* (there is a notable absence of men in the audience). Gerry has established an ability to nurture the talents of

the general youth population and 'keep them out of trouble' for the month in which the project ran. He pays tribute to the efforts of *The Crew* in set building, the audience is aware of the theft of keys and their enforced absence[107]. Gerry's efforts at impressing pro-social values and behaviour upon *The Crew* could not defeat the leanings generated by their own norms and outlook, and his attempt to present the group to the community in a positive light is undermined.

Working with troubled young people is challenging and 'success stories' are rare. Youth justice workers speak therefore of 'planting the seed', imparting modes of thinking and behaviour they hope will become relevant to their clients as they grow older. In prevention work with the less 'at risk', however, there is considerable scope for success, which heartens the worker and can sustain them through the numerous frustrations of their job. The paradox of youth justice work is at play, those with the most urgent 'need' for assistance are the young people who are the most difficult to engage with. They have developed a way of life and system of values that is most at odds with that promoted by youth justice projects.

6.3 Frustrating Youth Justice Work: Playing a Different Game

Adherence to street culture renders youth justice work difficult through its difference to the mainstream culture championed by youth justice projects and furthermore through offering an arsenal of responses which young offenders such as *The Crew* can utilise in order to 'resist' its ministrations. Members of *The Crew* attending the project (with the exception of Keano) are becoming increasingly committed to rough values and criminal activities. The young men are growing older and have experienced a summer in which theft has yielded a significant profit, providing income for copious hashish consumption, in turn facilitated by a female friend who, left unsupervised in her home, provides them with a daily safe haven. By the resumption of project activities following the summer break, Gerry begins to voice concern at the manner in which his clients are 'communicating with far higher levels of aggression'. Their attendance and participation in activities become increasingly sporadic, yet there are aspects of *Club* membership that

[107] The theatre caretaker is a *Northstreet* resident and flat talk publicises misdeeds rapidly.

continue to appeal. Thus their interaction with staff takes on a game-like interaction as each group adheres to their own cultural imperatives. This subsection sets out the circumstances surrounding, and means by which, *The Crew* subvert youth diversion work.

6.3.1 Selective Attendance and Evasion

The niceties of youth justice work scheduling, offering *Crew* member clients access to the project at specific times of the week, for pre-arranged programmes, whilst at the heart of Gerry's project, and designed to inject structure into the lives of the generally free-roaming young men, clash with *The Crew*'s cultural predilection to seek independence and dictate the direction of their own day. The tendency of *The Crew* to live each hour at a time, eschewing structure and regulation is evident in the manner in which they arrive at *The Club* without arrangement, demanding entrance and access to the games' consoles and pool table. This is especially common on rainy days. They become frustrated when their requests are not met:

> The lads are clearly bored and are milling around by the entrance. They put Macker against the door and pull down the shutters. He shouts until they let him out. Macker has a metal bar in his hand and swings it at the door and the walls. Wacker attacks the door with palm and foot. They want to get in out of the rain and promise not to mess if they are allowed in. There is no relenting (there is a meeting in progress upstairs with other workers). Byrnesy announces that he has a 'score' (€20) so they decide to go off to the chipper, but not before letting out some parting shots at Gerry.
>
> Macker: 'Well if I can't come in I'm going to get mad baked' (consume hash).
>
> Wacker: 'I'll smash up some cars.'
>
> Paddy: 'If you don't let us in we'll get arrested.' (Extract from field notes)

The Club represents an unrivalled facility to the young men containing numerous means to amuse themselves, but another factor that inhibits them from doing so: intensive adult supervision. They are keen to access the building on their own terms, which Gerry is

adamant should not occur. He communicates to them that they must attend appointed sessions, and only where a stable structure exists can they be granted informal access. *The Crew* members exhibit affront at the refusal of entry, and are culturally obliged to respond. They thus taunt Gerry with threats of offending, recognising that as behaviour he attempts to curtail, this assaults his position as a youth justice worker.

When attending, the young men frustrate the course of the youth justice work process, refusing to sit and talk, rushing towards the pool table as soon as they enter the building, bantering loudly about the order of play and trading offers of 'slaps' and 'boxes'. It requires numerous requests before they will enter the kitchen to begin the session proper. The young men do not set aside their street manner whilst in attendance, creating the impression that they do not respect the proceedings. The significance of the male, peer, friendship group in the lives of *Crew* members further exacerbates the challenges of working with them. They become restless during 'self evaluation', urge the staff member to 'fill in whatever you think' and dash away to join the others. Moreover, the fact that Macker, Paddy and the extended *Crew* are not members of the group creates a tension for those who are. Their encultured loyalty dictates that they should eschew attendance in favour of participating in the peer friendship group. During sessions Paddy and Macker are visible from the window of *The Club* and the attending clients frequently leave early. Gerry arrives at the realisation that the two young men are ideal candidates for *The Club* but feels that a period of acclimatisation would be necessary before they could join the main group. For their part, the two brothers express interest and they agree to undertake three sessions of individual work, after which they would join the *Crew* group. Macker arrives for one appointment, but seeing that some local young women had stopped by to speak to Gerry, he refuses to enter the premises: 'I don't wanna be in there with all those young ones (girls)'. In this instance, attending *The Club* would represent the polar opposite of spending time with his male peer group and Macker is culturally obliged to evade attendance, although this prevents him eventually joining *Crew* group sessions.

The Crew, now further imbedded in the immediacy and hedonism of their street culture are becoming significantly less interested in the activities on offer at *The Club*. Gerry

instigates a wood carving programme, believing that skilled manual work would appeal to the young men. They attend only the first session, with the exception of Keano who alone completes the programme. He is rewarded with a trip to McDonalds and the cinema, where he is bought popcorn and a soft drink. Gerry wants to make it clear that there are incentives available to those who engage well. He is concerned however, that due to organisational restrictions and funding cuts he cannot offer the types of activities that *Crew* members express an interest in: karting, horse riding, and various other pursuits that involve high speeds and the generation of excitement. The young men seek service provision that conforms to their culturally mediated vision of an ideal project. Gerry and GYDP coordinators must operate their projects according to the state's vision of behaviour modification. Meanwhile the parties are joined together through an established close relationship and mutual benefit. Gerry wishes to help the young men, and they enjoy lenient treatment by the criminal justice system while attending. Nevertheless, contested expectations of *Club* rules and activities create a game-like interaction, in which the client *Crew* members attempt to evade youth justice work, whilst at the same time obtaining such benefits as they can glean.

6.3.2 Misunderstanding, Mistrust and Manipulation

Through its relationship to its clients and links to numerous local and national, state and voluntary agencies[108] *The Club* is a crucial nexus point at *The Crew*'s interaction with wider society. The agencies are recruited by Gerry to help meet what professional workers would consider as his clients' unfulfilled needs, such as: unstable living arrangements, incomplete education and aggression management difficulties. Differences in the culture that informs the operation and aims of the GYDPs and that which underpins *The Crew*'s day-to-day lives manifest in divergent perceptions of 'needs'. As previously

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[108] On an institutional level, the various agencies involved in supplying support to young people at-risk tend to operate in isolation and there is massive potential for duplication of work. On a local level, the various individuals employed by these agencies, tend to be united in a common aim and similar social views and work together on a less formal basis to ensure that the optimum level of support might be offered. In this vein the efforts of the Young People at Risk Initiative to co-ordinate health, education, social and justice services around young people are of note. This organisation makes frequent representations to the Government in order to highlight the need to provide an all-inclusive and coordinated response to the needs of young people at risk. The GYDP coordinators and others locally active in working with young people at risk tend to be present at meetings and would support the philosophy being promoted by this organisation.

noted, street culture and values negate any sense of deficiency through evaluating life based on a schema that is separate from, and often antithetic, to hegemonic means. A number of incidents during fieldwork illustrate the manner in which *Crew* members attending *The Club* challenge the efforts of welfare justice to meet their needs, by asserting their own culturally mediated versions.

Adam is ejected from his hostel accommodation due to extensive breaches of their rules and urgent action is deemed necessary. A plethora of workers gather: an education-welfare officer, Adam's social worker, his hostel key-worker, his voluntary tutor and Gerry with the purpose of 'formulating an intervention based on his needs'. Adam has been offered a placement in another hostel for homeless boys, provided he has a 'day programme' in place. The placement would represent a significant step-up in stability for the then thirteen year old who had been accessing an 'out of hours' bed or sleeping on the cold hard benches in the public waiting area of *Northstreet Garda Station*. Prior to his arrival the professional workers had established that re-entering school would be the preferable choice of day programme as it would return him to some sort of 'normal' thirteen-year-old life. This extract from the field notes sets out what occurs in the meeting:

> Adam walks into the kitchen of *The Club* and is visually struck by the number of adults present. He immediately takes the defensive, sitting down in an overly relaxed manner. When the proposal is set out he objects: 'I'm not going to [that school]!' Despite pleas for reasons, he maintains that there are none, and that he just won't go. [The tutor] sets out the formulated plan. He will attend tutorials with her as normal, but within the school. After a number of weeks he would enter mainstream classes but on a 'restricted curriculum'. He becomes annoyed after a while: 'look, I'm not going'. His social worker cajoles him, saying that he will get Christmas presents at the hostel, all he need do is attend school, but Adam knows he can access a homeless allowance if he does not comply. It is a stalemate and the only conclusion that can be agreed upon is that he would think about it for a day. He hungers, in a way, for attention. This might explain his refusal: knowing

> that so many adults will be concerned about him, he can play this game. He does not realise, however, that he is playing against himself and that the stakes are his future and his happiness. He has learnt to manipulate carers to satisfy his short-term desires and can live happily and well respected by some other young people, and do it his way.

Meetings, a staple of youth justice work, illustrate well the gulf in cultures between professional staff, the clients and their families. Meetings represent an aspect of professionalism and formality in contrast to the unplanned familiarity that underlies life in *Northstreet*. Furthermore, workers utilise a *lingua franca*, which much as it is toned down for the benefit of clients and parents, is freckled with words and, crucially, concepts that puzzle and perplex. Adam, in the intimidating surroundings, misunderstands his workers motives and responds accordingly. Deeply embedded in street culture with its compunction towards asserting an independent ruggedly competent persona, Adam is moved to perceive the formulations and efforts of his numerous workers as unwarranted undermining of his autonomy. He is ambivalent to their genuine good intentions. The divergence in culturally defined concerns between worker and client ensure that their dealings are frequently competitive. Underlying this 'game' occurring in youth justice work is the mistrust of the workers' motives:

> I wonder do they ever get over the fact that you're not a rat and I'd just wonder about that. That despite the fact that I've told them and since the first day I've been challenged as being a Garda or whatever, I don't know if they fully believe that I'm not, there's a lingering doubt in some of their heads (Dermot, youth justice worker).

Street culture dictates that the young men should be wary, the deceivers rather than the deceived, and thus *The Crew*'s relationship to Gerry exists on the cusp of trust. *The Crew*, perhaps to some extent out of deference to the level of trust Gerry places in them, though certainly to propagate an appropriate impression of innocence, maintain ambiguity around their offending status in their dealings with him. This is well illustrated in this

extract from fieldnotes describing an interaction between Gerry and Mano before he attends court to answer charges for the theft of power tools and two bicycle wheels:

> Mano tells Gerry that he found the power tools in a skip 'sure they didn't even have plugs' he insists. He says that he 'got the wheels off a junkie' and was going to fix them up and sell them on. Gerry believes him and Mano seems a little taken aback. Gerry maintains that he should stick to his guns and if he had no involvement in the thefts to fight the charges. There is an awkwardness as Mano alludes to the fact that these are stories he has told to the Gardaí. They quite possibly aren't true and it shows that there is still a reluctance to trust Gerry entirely.

The Crew proffer a particular face to welfare workers, mitigating to some extent the power imbalance they face interacting with agents of the state. Worker participants explain that by 'telling us what we want to hear' clients attempt to promote their own agenda. On one occasion Macker arrives at *The Club* to seek the assistance of Pamela (The youth justice worker who replaces Gerry following his departure discussed later in this chapter):

> Macker: 'I've been suspended from FÁS for good, I get blamed for everything, everyone was messin' with pens and I get suspended for a week, when I goes back he tells me not to bother. Out straight, he doesn't like me.'
>
> Pamela: 'Do you want to do your Junior Cert? You know you have a *right* to do it?' (Pamela's approach to working with the young people is to encourage them to seek all they can in terms of entitlement and potential.)
>
> Macker: 'Can you give us a reference to the working farm (Where Mano is currently based)? He feels aggrieved by his treatment in the school and seeks instead to be located close to his friend. All those who work with the two lads, however, feel strongly that they 'rub each other up the wrong way' and influence each other towards offending behaviour. Pamela tries another approach: 'What about your behaviour?' Macker thinks quickly on his feet: 'That's what the working farm is there for, to get

> you out of trouble.' He once again insists that he has been suspended (treating it as expulsion) and seeing that Pamela is not coming around to his way of thinking, soon tires and leaves (extract from field notes).

Macker's sense of persecution gains him little leverage. Those who work with *The Crew* in a welfare setting tend to be aware that what they consider to be appropriate discipline is frequently constructed by the young men as targeted maltreatment. The workers are bound by the constraints of their profession and occupational culture, and whilst they are predominantly patient and sympathetic, providing a margin of appreciation to the limit of their boundaries, there are occasions where they cannot acquiesce. In combination with the culturally informed obstinacy of *Crew* members, noted earlier, an impasse results which frustrates the course of welfare youth justice.

6.3.3 Intoxication and Subversion

Crew members can radically subvert the youth diversion process by ostensibly submitting to it whilst concurrently flaunting its central strictures. By consuming cannabis prior to, or surreptitiously during *Club* activities, the young men celebrate the hedonism of their street culture whilst limiting the impact of the youth justice project's pedagogy. At one session the young men arrive and fall upon a packet of chocolate biscuits sitting on the kitchen table, laughing all the while[109]:

> Pamela: 'Yis don't look so well lads, maybe some of yis need to go home.'
> Lads (in unison): 'Wha?'
> Pamela: 'Well yis seem very giddy and very hungry, now what does that mean? If I think that someone isn't "feeling well" I'm going to send them home, and the person at home will be getting a call.'
> Mano: (Worried) 'To say what?'
> Pamela: 'To say that they're a little bit ill.'
> Mano: (Relieved) 'Oh, that's ok.' (Extract from Fieldnotes)

[109] Cannabis consumption is linked to increases in appetite and euphoric feelings eliciting laughter

The Crew members still attempt to hide the extent of their cannabis consumption from their parents and Pamela's attitude threatens them. A 'game' is played out between the values of *The Crew* and those of *The Club* with Pamela asserting the latter's power as a state agency, ultimately thwarting attempts at subverting the youth welfare justice process.

6.3.4 Threats and Violence

Whilst threatening and violent behaviour is a routine and normalised facet of *Crew* interaction, youth justice workers deem it inappropriate. A natural balance tends to prevail, where *Crew* members moderate their aggression and workers overlook a certain amount of threatening speech between the young men. *The Crew*'s restraint is tied to their relationship with Gerry (and various workers they hold in high regard) and visibly deteriorates with the announcement that he accepted a transfer to a rural district.

> The lads don't take well to this. Wacker gets really agitated and starts walking up and down the room: 'So we're not good enough for ya Gerry? He's going, so we should be going too!' He looks to Byrnesy for support but he keeps his eyes lowered. 'This is shite' he continues, 'the lads are out there having the time of their lives in town and all [robbing bikes] and we're stuck here' (extract from field notes).

The betrayal and abandonment the young men feel manifests in a heightened display of aggression. High emotions tend to draw out violent reactions from *The Crew*. They begin to interact with *Club* volunteers with increasing hostility. On a return journey from a hiking excursion tensions between *Crew* members and Paul, a *Club* volunteer, run high:

> There is a good-natured scuffle between Keano and Wacker and Paul attempts to intervene. Wacker has to be physically prevented from jumping through onto the front seats and this annoys Paul greatly, his verbal interventions have been ignored all afternoon and understandably he is massively frustrated. He informs Wacker that he will not be allowed to come on the next week's trip. The air fills with tension as Wacker squares up to Paul and begins shouting at him: 'I don't

give a fuck, you fucking queer, ya shite bag!' The air clears as he relaxes from ready-to-strike posture. 'Can't wait to get back to the flats and have a smoke of cannabis' he adds once he has sat down, looking at Paul, waiting for a reaction (extract from Field Notes).

Wacker negates the rebuke of a youth justice worker in much the same manner as he quashes the challenge of a fellow *Crew* member, described in Chapter Three. Adopting an aggressive stance serves to invert the power imbalance and present *Crew* members with a sense of controlling *Club* responses:

Wacker: (Fishing for reasons to become confrontational) 'Where's me tape? I gave it to you to hold.'
Me: 'I can't find it anywhere, I've looked everywhere. It's our fault, we'll make it up to you, get you a voucher.'
Wacker: I don't want a CD, where are you going to get a CD with all those tunes on it. It took me hours to make that.'
Me: 'Truly sorry, I promise we'll make it up to you.'
Wacker: 'See that window? I'll smash it up. I'll rob yis blind, rob a Playstation, it'll be the most expensive tape you've ever lost.' (Extract from Fieldnotes).

Whilst their violence alters the manner in which the young men interact with welfare justice institutions, it is not in the manner which they imagine. During fieldwork, a number of agencies cite health and safety concerns in refusing to provide service to *Crew* members. The young men see themselves dominating staff, but rather alienate themselves from the elements of the youth justice system genuinely concerned with their welfare and happiness. Where threats are exceeded *Crew* members expose themselves to criminal charges and further interaction with the Gardaí.

6.3.5 The Limits of Youth Justice Work

Given that street culture provides impetus and means to subvert the youth diversion process, there are limits to what is achievable with young people who are deeply embedded within it. Workers internalise this realisation out of necessity:

> You get to the windows [of opportunity], you might see them for ten hours a week, in them ten hours, you've only one window, and at that time it's like they're home, because they're at that point in their head, and you get in and you say something and it goes somewhere with them, but it's very hard because they leave you. Two minutes after they leave you, they meet their friends, their friends are up to their eyes in mischief, it's all gone. And it's not gone because they're being bad or anything. I used to get pissed off at it, you know what I mean, I'd come along and go: 'Jaysus, I'm after working ages to set this up and look, two seconds and its gone' and then after a while... if you don't want to mess your own head up you've got to say that, that's exactly the way it is (Jimmy, youth worker).

Irrespective of their efforts workers ultimately have limited control over their clients, who can decide to accept their support and advice, or continue to practice their own street-culture-informed modes of behaviour. The two are largely mutually exclusive. *The Crew*, with the exception of Keano[110], ultimately reject *The Club* in favour of their established lifestyle by communicating to Pamela that they no longer wish to attend. Almost every worker interviewed reports notable successes, but generally the task demanded of them relative to the resources they are afforded is somewhat unrealistic. The existing cultural schism requires considerable effort to bridge.

The Crew, through adhering to street culture, possess a set of normative imperatives that are at odds with those of *The Club*. They are thus prompted to mistrust and misconstrue the efforts of youth justice workers and engage in familiar patterns of behaviour which tend to subvert or 'resist' the welfare justice process. The close relationship that they

[110] Keano at this stage has definitively moved away from even peripheral *Crew* membership and has become firmly entrenched within *Northstreet*'s principal peer group, consisting of 'wider' as opposed to offending young people.

have built with certain workers, and the benefits attendant to membership create a compulsion to remain within *The Club*, and its workers are keen to assist the young people provided certain rules are followed. The interaction between the groups thus takes on a game-like quality, rendering pedagogy considerably difficult.

6.3.6 *In Loco Parentis*? Youth Justice Work and Parent Culture

Ultimately it is not merely peer-learnt street culture that is at odds with the standards expected by youth justice workers. Staff in the GYDPs can often feel that they provide a form of guidance and support for their young clients that is lacking in their parenting. The generally middle-class workers and the youth service providers who employ them adhere to values they attempt to inculcate in their clients: structure, punctuality, education, constructive leisure, active supervision and plenty of adult-young person interaction. This is in contrast to traditional notions of child rearing in the working-class inner-city where as previously noted, ambivalence exists around education and children are afforded a greater degree of independence to use street spaces and eschew adult supervision. *Crew* families, furthermore, contend with heightened levels of social problems, whether addiction, poor physical or mental health, continuous tragedy or raised levels of stress, lending what workers would describe as 'dysfunction' to their relationship with their children and constraining the level of attention and support they can provide.

> (I) try to build a relationship give them advice, try to push them in the right direction. But ultimately it doesn't happen often enough, and when there's young people involved in the project, when they're not showing up, or they're getting into difficulties in school, I feel that 95% of the time it's the provision of parental support that's lacking, and that's not by willing neglect of these parents, it's more due to parents not having the coping mechanisms themselves or the parenting skills to help their children identify what is right and what is wrong. So we've a lot of difficulties with young people attending the project. I make a point of going to parents and saying to them: 'do encourage your child to be there'. And just for the most at-risk kids, this doesn't happen, because the reason they are so at-risk, or one of the reasons is, because their parents haven't had the proper skills to, you know, pass on the proper

> values or positive values to their children. That's something that carries on to their behaviour out there in the streets, to their behaviour in here, to their attendance or their abilities to cope in school and to cope in the outside world. You know, a lot of the families maybe haven't got a value on education themselves and it just passes on as a vicious cycle (Yvonne, youth justice worker).

Yvonne expresses sentiments which are common to many of the middle-class workers interviewed. Securing parental participation in the process of youth diversion is essential. *The Crew* consistently demonstrate fearlessness with regards to the criminal justice system, yet exhibit trepidation at the prospect of earning their mothers' wrath. Gerry states on a number of occasions that much of his disciplinary leverage derives from the relationship he has built up with *The Crew*'s parents. There is also, however, a game-like constituent to the manner in which *Club* staff and parents interact.

Workers often possess concerns and priorities which the parents either do not share or lack capacity to maintain. For example, Dommer's mother leads a hectic life, caring for her sickly toddler whilst employed part-time as a cleaner, raising three children and keeping home for a family of five. She cannot place priority on Dommer's progress in welfare justice. When contacted about her son's failure to attend *The Club*, she tends to make excuses on his behalf: 'he's out with his Da', 'he's at the doctor's', which subsequent sightings of him on the street with other *Crew* members indicate to be untrue. Equally when Dommer's behaviour (a refusal to part with a bottle of contraband Coca-Cola) forces Gerry to cancel an outdoor pursuit excursion, she makes a great show of disciplining him in the presence of workers, sternly 'grounding' him while refusing to entertain his protests. The following day Dommer is observed in high spirits. When asked about the previous day's punishment he assures the researcher that his mother was 'only messing'. Through Dommer's mother's cultural lens, disruption of *Club* activities is not a transgression meriting punishment which would draw heavily on her time and energy and create discord within the family. She nevertheless ensures that the youth justice workers see her supporting their efforts. The relationship between *Crew* parents and youth welfare justice is delicate.

Without a familiar and trusting relationship the parents and workers can only share a sense of mutual discomfort. Child rearing is a central tenet of working-class femininity, and it denigrates a mother to concede bad behaviour on the part of her children. Indeed, with traditional working-class cultural imperatives towards tolerating petty offences and defending kin members, it is quite possible that a large proportion of *The Crew*'s mothers would not realise or certainly publicly admit the extent of their sons' offending and 'inappropriate' behaviour within welfare justice institutions. The very presence of the worker within a *Crew* member's home is an assertion of the young person's transgression and workers must therefore operate with sensitivity and diplomacy in order to avoid giving offence. Similarly the mothers, desiring to be considered 'good parents' in the eyes of workers and especially their fellow residents, take steps to placate the workers and demonstrate support for their endeavour. *Crew* parents heap praise on the staff and volunteers and continuously assert the degree to which their sons enjoy the project, even where confronted with the contrary evidence of their non-attendance.

Ultimately, in a similar manner to their sons, *Crew* mothers are moved to alter their behaviour where they develop a strong bond with the worker, facilitating open communication. At various points in fieldwork the mothers of Adam, Mano and Byrnesy admit despair at the behaviour of their children and seek the support of *The Club* to reinforce their position as disciplinarians. Byrnesy's mother, fearing another breakdown has frequent discussions with *Club* staff, exposing her vulnerability, but eliciting further contact and when referred to a support group she finds the courage to offer steep ultimatums to her son. The mothers' fears seem centred around negative reactions from the *Northstreet* community, particularly its leadership, and their aims are thus limited to moderating the extremes of their sons' anti-social behaviour. A cultural gap with the workers remains as they do not seem to interpret their sons' behaviour as the threat to progress in mainstream society and the legitimate economy that it represents. Ultimately the workers promote a lifestyle that is deeply informed by middle-class values and *Crew* parents cannot more than partially support youth justice work, as they share neither its aspirations nor cultural outlook.

Inasmuch as the youth justice workers tread on the traditionally parental territory of socialisation, *The Crew* are not tempted to view *Club* staff *in loco parentis*. Though they exhibit a degree of emotional attachment to Gerry, the manner in which they interact with workers is in marked contrast to their rapport with their parents. The earnest and sympathetic invitations to speak frankly about their emotions are alien and presumably absent from their home environments. The language of 'knowing your feelings', 'appropriate behaviour' and 'respect for others' is foreign. Though parents espouse similar sentiments, their culturally mediated versions are dissimilar and within *Northstreet* a language of threat is frequently utilised in parenting as much as in other areas of life. Ultimately, family remains a potent socialising force and the degree to which parents can be wary of the workers serves to reinforce to their children that the values being inculcated are alien.

The project of youth justice work with *The Crew* is ultimately limited by its own isolation. Though promoting norms and behaviour patterns similar to those expected by schools and enforced by the Gardaí, *The Crew* tend to evade the former and vilify the latter. *The Club* is a rather unique institution in terms of its relationship with clients and their families and yet it is a singular socialising force whose influence is countered in part by the young men's parent working-class culture. *The Crew* are playing a game with welfare justice through their interaction with *The Club*. There is a constant negotiation of values taking place. The meeting of minds, where influence can be exerted, occurs at a level of personal affection, which is outside the realm of the official strictures of the GYDPs. Where the youth justice worker attempts to assert the values and objectives of his/her organisation in the face of weakened personal ties *Crew* members assert their own culture. These street norms clash with those advanced by *The Club* and prompt the young men to seek competing goals, arming them with a repertoire of strategies to subvert the process. Instruction in arts and craft are perceived as irrelevant and effeminate by young men who possess a rugged masculinity and increasingly participate in the informal economy.

6.4 Battling the Law: The Welfare Game in Court

Whilst attending *The Club* earns *Crew* members a certain reprieve from criminal justice, The Children Court 'monitors' their 'welfare' when charges are brought against them, deciding whether to apply a punitive rather than rehabilitative strategy through the imposition of detention. The court is a space of interaction between the various 'players' in the juvenile justice 'game'.

> The Children Court is indistinguishable from the other modern buildings in a 'renewed' inner-city square, apart from the small plaque beside the door and the large number of young people congregated outside it. They are nearly all wearing tracksuits and are talking amongst each other, some are smoking cigarettes, others eating rolls from the nearby Spar [franchise convenience shop]. We have to squeeze past a number of waiting youth in order to get in. One of the group calls my young charge by name, recognising him as he walks past. Inside the door there is a large group of Gardaí gathered, admitting people [checking their identity and ensuring they have legitimate business that day in the court], organizing their folders and evidence and chatting amongst themselves. Upstairs solicitors dressed in suits discuss their cases both with their clients and amongst themselves (extract from fieldnotes).

For all of these groups the court is an important social space, an opportunity to meet counterparts from other parts of the city, discuss their activities and exchange advice. Young men can compare the types of offences they are involved in, their experience with the Gardaí and their progress in the criminal justice system. They establish status in this manner and can display rugged masculinity through feigned indifference to the process which faces them.

> The interior of the court building is painted bright blue, but is marked in various places by graffiti left by the young people who have passed through. There are plain, hard wooden benches around the walls where young people and their

> families can sit as they wait to be called. (Since there are two lists for the day: morning and afternoon, long periods of waiting are involved). The solicitors and Gardaí have their own rooms reserved for this purpose. There are a group of young men congregated at one side of the waiting area, chatting in a relaxed manner and attempting to project nonchalance. One of them is lying out fully on his bench. Myself and Jimmy (who is working with Mano) begin talking and Mano inches away from us and over to the group at the other end of the public waiting area. Eventually he is amongst them, joining in their manner of sitting, arms behind their backs, stretched out and appearing supremely confident. I overhear snippets of their conversation 'just junk and actin' stupid'. They are discussing the reasons for their appearance in a dismissive manner. Jimmy maintains that he can see Mano is stressed by the ordeal. His friends are called in. Without the company of young men like him he falls quiet and fidgets nervously on the bench (extract from fieldnotes).

An appearance in court elicits a number of different and conflicting emotions in Mano. It is one of many interactions with adult officials that yield no clear outcome, causing confusion and consternation.

> A solicitor [not the one Mano is used to dealing with but someone else from their firm] approaches and calls Mano by name. The solicitor is young, wears a well cut black suit and has hair that is tightly slicked back against his head. He holds a number of files under his arm, which he uses to lean against whilst recording both of our details on the back of a large brown envelope. 'Mano, you are in the working farm? Are you getting on well there? What is it that they do there?' Mano talks about his chores there and the solicitor nods approvingly, these are details he can offer the judge about Mano's progress in a welfare institution. 'And you Jonathan', he turns to me, 'you have been working with Mano for the last two years'. I inform him of my status, how Mano has been attending a project, and how I am based there for research. The solicitor seems unconcerned about the particular details. 'But Mano has been attending the project for two years and is

getting on well there, yes?' I hesitate before equivocally agreeing, unsure of whether I do feel this way or am in any way qualified to give such a reference. The solicitor moves on, opening Mano's file and placing the envelope within it. He studies the contents briefly. The testimony of a particular Guard features heavily. He observed Mano taking a mobile phone out of a fuse box in the foyer of his flat complex and questioned him about it. He will testify that Mano admitted the phone was stolen yet denied involvement in its theft. In relation to this incident he is being charged with handling stolen property [there are several other theft charges against him that are ongoing in the court at this time]. Mano immediately takes exception to the evidence levelled against him: 'I only told him I didn't rob it'

Solicitor: 'Right, so you never said it was stolen?' Mano shakes his head.

'Are you willing to give evidence?' asks the solicitor.

'Get someone to say that I never said that?' asks Mano.

'Yes', the solicitor replies, 'you need to say that'.

'Get one of me mates so?' Mano enquires, trying to be helpful. I feel it necessary to intervene at this stage and clear up the misunderstanding.

'Do you mind talking to the judge?' I ask Mano.

'Ah, I don't want to do that' he clarifies.

'Fair enough', replies the solicitor, an idea dawning on him, 'you're sixteen aren't you?' he asks.

'I was fifteen then'.

'And did the Guard caution you or try to find an adult like your mother or Johnny here?'

'No'.

'Well they're supposed to, so maybe we can use that.' He tells Mano not to worry, that there is a good judge and he is 'getting on well in the working farm and with Jonathan at the project' and there is very little chance of him getting sent down. Mano looks relieved (extract from field notes).

Mano's progress in 'welfare' institutions is inversely related to the possibility of receiving a custodial sentence. Criminal justice and welfare concerns are thus linked within the juvenile justice process. The solicitor thus utilises Mano's attendance of *The Club* as part of a strategy to safeguard his client from detention. Mano meanwhile demonstrates that he is confused by legal language and procedure. He is becoming a passive participant in his own trial.

> We sit down and wait an hour until we are called. Mano tells me that he hates the waiting, he is in court nearly every Monday and he hates every aspect of it. When Mano's name is called out, his solicitor is discussing a case with another client and his mother. The door opens and Mano charges in with a well practiced stride, taking his place at the dock. The solicitor slides into the room and into his appointed space at the bench and I look around, confused, before taking a seat at the back of the courtroom, unsure of where else I should sit. A Guard walks into the room, sits at a desk, takes an oath and begins to read from his notebook. The trial has begun. I am struck by the expedience and formality that are defining the procedure. The trial begins with no announcement, and is over almost as quickly as it begins. No one is wearing wigs, but the judge, clerks, and solicitors are wearing suits. No one has welcomed Mano, put him at his ease or offered him any explanation. The room is dominated by heavy wooden furniture and the presence of the judge, and though the space is intimate, Mano is isolated and alone where he sits, the only person in the room wearing a track-suit and an expression of subdued confusion. The Guard, straining to keep his language as legalistic as possible, gives details of the day on which Mano was arrested. It coincided with an important sporting event and a large number of mobile phones had been stolen from various parked buses and cars in the vicinity of the National Stadium. The Guard and a colleague had been on plainclothes patrol and had seen Mano place something into a fuse-box in his own flat complex. He goes on to say that he questioned the youth, who denied stealing it. The solicitor rapidly interrupts to impugn the legality of the questioning, citing the Children Act 2001. The Guard responds with a competing legal rule. The judge decides to allow the Gardaí

> further time to seek legal advice and adjourns the case for a further two months, remanding Mano on bail. Mano makes a sharp exit. He has not said a word in the entire proceedings nor made any sign of understanding what has just occurred around him. The Guard follows him: 'We'll keep battling so, huh?' he asks Mano as he overtakes him.
> 'Yeah right!' Mano retorts out loud. 'The dirtbird!' he curses the Guard under his breath, his face contorted with disgust. Mano has refused to wait to speak to the solicitor: 'they'll be phoning' he reasons. For him the priority is to leave the building and return to his friends as quickly as possible. The preceding events are rapidly fading into irrelevance as Mano's spirits begin to pick up. He says that he does not want to walk back to his flat, he spends most of his days walking and insists on paying bus fare for the two of us. I ask him about the phone and he tells me that one of his friends had stolen it and given it to him to hold, but that he isn't going to admit to anything: 'them bastards aren't sending me down. Fuck them' (extract from fieldnotes).

Mano has developed a strategy to cope with the stress of appearing before a judge. He is learning the skill set of the canny criminal: 'say nothing'. He is aware of the disadvantage he faces in the world of legal and procedural rules, well cut suits, and officious professionals. He has constructed the Gardaí as his natural enemy and the court room as the arena where the score is tallied in the 'battle' they continuously fight. His attending the welfare institution of *The Club* has become an empty fact, significant only in its ability to confound further criminal sanctions. He is unable to engage honestly with the charge or publicly evaluate his own behaviour in an environment he feels is inherently concerned with condemning and sanctioning him. He is somewhat elated by his continued freedom, which he perceives as victory. The ever growing bail conditions placed upon him and the charges accumulating do not register as the vehicle of imminent defeat which they are. By setting conditions on young people in terms of behavioural expectations and bail stipulations, without providing support to achieve them, the juvenile justice system sets up many of those who come before it for failure (Kilkelly 2005: 66). The system appears to have no cognition of the fact that Mano's offending is

underpinned by cultural imperatives and norms that equip him with the means of negating the ministrations of criminal justice.

When questioned about fearing detention, Mano shrugs stoically and supplies the cliché: 'do the crime, do the time'. Ultimately, detention and prison are acceptable risks to those who adhere to street culture. The decisive punishment that stands at the end of criminal juvenile justice is hollow, although a deterrent and retribution to those who fear it (the middle-classes), it is normalised by those who frequently experience incarceration (the 'rough' working-classes). Philo complains that: 'they have no time for ya in court'. The young men cannot appreciate the independence of the judicial process and view it merely as an extension of their interaction with the Gardaí. Viewing the justice system as alien and punitive, the members of *The Crew* are prompted to resist genuinely engaging, and instead construct court appearances as game-like.

Conclusion

Criminal and welfare models of youth justice retain large similarities through the shared goal of promoting mainstream behavioural expectations. Ireland's youth welfare justice structures such as the JLOs and GYDPs can be viewed as cultural pedagogues seeking to promote mainstream attitudes to offending, leisure, education and employment. Young offenders such as *The Crew*, however, tend to construct the agents of criminal justice as oppositional and are suspicious of welfare workers, whose efforts are rendered less effective by the degree to which its targets are embedded in a contradictory street culture. Considerable scope for success can exist where workers can support 'positive' socialisation, which is more likely where young people are less 'street' and embedded rather in 'respectable' norms. Where young people are deeply committed to the rough variant of working-class values, however, they engage with welfare justice in a game like manner, construing workers as 'soft' targets for manipulation and subversion. Where this occurs, they find themselves interacting, after a time, solely with the forces of criminal justice, against whose endeavours they too have developed cultural responses, negating the censure of their conduct and transferring it to the Gardaí and judges who deliver wider society's condemnation of their contrary behaviour. Youth justice is game-like,

with two opposing sides engaging each other according to their own class-encultured values, pre-empting their opponents each move and at all times vying for victory. The class-cultural dynamic underlying youth justice forges its game-like quality, with street culture providing an impetus to offend, whilst negotiating the intervention of wider society through the Gardaí, courts and welfare workers without losing its integrity.

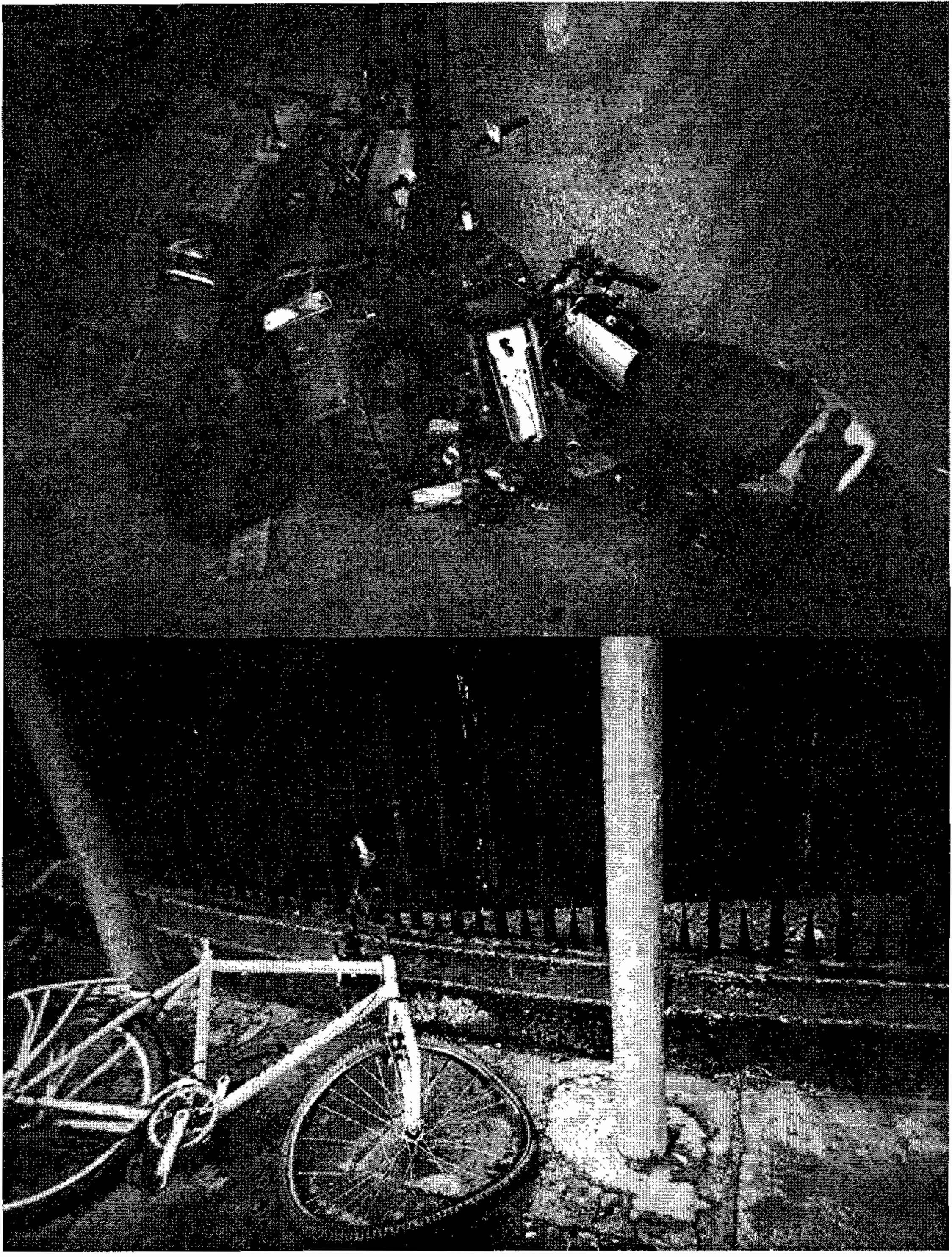

Figure 5: Above: 'Stripped' mopeds. Below: A bicycle is battered in frustration, where only its saddle could be stolen. Photographs by author.

Chapter 7
Discussion / Conclusion

Introduction

The concrete events described in this thesis locate the interactions between *The Crew*, the *Northstreet* community, the Gardaí and youth justice workers within a complex and nuanced class-cultural dynamic. Establishing that crime is principally the domain of the young, urban, disadvantaged male who breach those (markedly 'respectable') behavioural expectations enshrined in the law, the thesis pursues a 'dyadic' explanation (Young 1999), investigating the role played by class-shaped values in the process of supporting, defining and condemning criminal behaviour. Close attention has been paid to the manner in which personal relationships and socio-economic circumstances impact on class-based notions of crime and safety: issues of power and blame, inclusion and exclusion, loyalty and alienation, acquiescence and resistance, play a central role in the unfolding of class-cultural dynamics. Crucially, tensions between the 'street' culture of the 'underclass' criminal, and the culture of respectability and 'control' (Garland, 2000) espoused by mainstream society are played out rather than resolved in the mechanisms of the justice system. The police and courts become contested symbols of protection or threat, which 'rough' criminals resist while wider society increasingly despairs. The criminal justice system takes on a game-like quality, failing to recognise that it operates on a separate normative plain to the vast majority of its subjects, who have developed potent strategies to defend themselves against a structure and language identified as alien and hostile.

7.1 Crime and Class-Cultural Tension

Belying the popular conception of class as invisible in Irish society, are sociological arguments stressing that tensions exist between a middle-class majority and a marginalised 'underclass' (Tovey & Share, 2000; Allen, 1999). This 'underclass' or 'rough' working-class can be understood as having developed values and norms separate and often contrary to those championed by the majority society from which they are excluded. Ethnographic works in America and Britain have highlighted the role played by these alternative value systems in sustaining lifestyles that incorporate criminal

behaviours as means of surviving endemic disadvantage and personal tragedy through facilitating the retention of dignity and autonomy. Men, in particular, experience cultural pressure to display ruggedness: to spurn the appearance of subordination required by menial employment and respond to potential slights with aggression. Wider society, however, tends to confuse opposing values for moral weakness, hence the underclass are 'Othered' and blamed for a variety of social 'problems': unemployment, substance abuse and crucially, crime.

Broadly, the tension is exhibited in the over-representation of the disadvantaged male in youth crime and prison population figures and in the fundamental distinction in governing perceptions of class criminality: while working-class youth crime has been defined as a threat to the social order (Bowden, 2006) the offences of the middle-classes are continuously downplayed (McCullagh, 1996). This phenomenon is most likely indicative of class-cultural alienation: middle-class society is more capable of identifying with the middle-class offender who can be constructed as fundamentally 'decent', though having made mistakes, whereas the lower-class offender possesses alien values which in and of themselves generate suspicion and mistrust. Scepticism is mutual; the 'rough' offender normalises the attention and censure of the criminal justice system, constructs it as persecution and oppression and resorts to the beliefs and practices of resistance inherent in his own culture. In this thesis, the oppositional attitude of the Gardaí towards *gougers*, and the enmity returned by those identified as such to the police illustrates this phenomenon, as does the gulf in understanding and cooperation between *The Crew* and their youth justice workers. The tensions which permeate class-cultural dynamics in the arena of crime and justice ensure that the interactions between the relevant actors take on the appearance of a zero-sum 'game'. The metaphor should not be overstated; the issues pertaining to crime and justice are especially serious. Nevertheless, with either side of the criminal justice equation encultured into particular systems of norms and behaviours which might be seen as creating opposing 'teams' propelled into competition, it remains compelling. 'Victory', however, is denied to either side where the pattern of interaction is maintained.

7.2 Crime as a Facet of 'Street' Culture

Ethnographic methods facilitate the consideration of criminal behaviour from the perspective of those directly involved in its production, a position frequently overlooked by 'administrative' criminology and the justice system itself. Structural factors such as class and gender, combine with biographic factors such as familial strain, personal tragedy, local exclusion and geographic dislocation to underpin the values and activities of the group of young offenders referred to as *The Crew.* They are young people propelled to seek adult status; to exist with a sense of stability in a particularly harsh social reality. Traditional aspects of working-class masculine and youth cultures inform their lifestyle. They seek autonomy and thus spurn education and structured leisure, leaving their days empty, monotonous and in need of excitement to provide distraction and fuel for their conversation culture. Theft facilitates the realisation of income and provides the mean to engage with the underground economy, whose merchants they emulate. Cannabis consumption and joyriding represent routes to thrills, which again are accessed through the informal economy as opposed to mainstream commercial services, whose security personnel frequently treat them with suspicion, rendering them a less autonomous, and therefore desirable, option. Ultimately, through their activities the young men can construct themselves as 'big men' or 'hustlers', as opposed to failed, subordinate pupils or menial workers. Their way of life provides a route to dignity, defined through their own cultural lens that could never be achieved through the culture or condoned personal trajectories of mainstream society.

The behaviour of *The Crew* conforms to notions of 'street' or 'rough' working-class culture identified through a review of the relevant literature from Britain and America. Their reliance on this particular subculture places increased significance on the integrity of their friendship group, which serves as a milieu in which their generally tragic biographies become the norm rather than the exception. Just a single core *Crew* member has frequent contact with a father; most members have high-level offenders in their immediate family, most members were prevented from associating with the wider youth population of *Northstreet* from a young age. Indeed, the group is targeted by contemporary community leadership and constructed as the sole remnant of offending

behaviour in the 'renewed' community. They are represented as 'outsiders', 'Other' and regressive, possessing values and practicing activities in no way condoned by the wider *Northstreet* community. 'Street' culture becomes a central mechanism for *The Crew* to maintain a sense of esteem in the face of the exclusion they face from wider society and locally within their own community. Significantly, the norms and activities of *The Crew* are a response to the complex combination of numerous socio-structural, cultural and biographical factors and are thus not constituted on the basis of simplistic 'criminal intent' or 'moral weakness'. Therefore, attempts by the justice system to moderate their behaviour on this assumption, and through language and structures alien to working-class culture are unlikely to resonate with the group.

7.3 'Rough' vs 'Respectable': Community and Ambiguity

The manner in which *The Crew* are perceived of and treated within their own community correlates to the manner in which young offenders are constructed in wider Irish society. Strong condemnation and demands for strict measures against their behaviour speak more about power structures, inclusion and exclusion than *The Crew*'s misdeeds. The assertion of *The Crew*'s difference does not stand up to a historical examination of the *Northstreet* community, whose traditional working-class responses to crime condoned certain forms of illegality which arose under conditions of extreme poverty and alienation from the justice system of mainstream society. Traditionally, the *Northstreet* community shared *The Crew*'s antipathy to education and policing, and due to prevailing socio-economic conditions were precluded from attaining middle-class social mobility and consumption. Categories of 'rough' and 'respectable' became increasingly difficult to draw in the murk of cross-accusations created by the grass-roots response to the influx of heroin into the community and its subsequent regeneration. *Pusher* families deny the involvement of their members in heroin trade and accuse *Vigo* families, fundamental objectors to drug trading, of paramilitary affiliation and targeted persecution and violence. Furthermore, those families whose members currently have an ambiguous relationship to the cocaine trade and serious criminality, occupy key positions in *Northstreet*'s dominant kin structure and contemporary leadership.

In their elevated position, community leadership figures preside over a 'partnership' with state authority that has generated benefits in terms of massive investment in, and the redevelopment of the publicly-owned, social housing complex in *Northstreet*. This, combined with the increased opportunities for employment and income realisation facilitated by Ireland's 'Celtic Tiger' economy, has created the impetus to redefine the community's class-cultural identity and relationship to state authority. *Northstreet* leadership is keen to express solidarity with hegemonic notions of citizenship, particularly, a commitment to education, participation in social mobility and the pursuit of white-collar employment and the widespread espousal of 'respectable' aversion to criminal activities. Whilst there has been a widespread alteration in the residents' way of life, specifically in terms of displaying conspicuous consumption, the rhetoric of leadership must be understood as overstating the degree of cultural change. Numerous traditional working-class cultural outlooks persist, specifically: ambiguity around education, use of the underground economy, tolerance of property crime and the widespread continuance of welfare manipulation and locally condoned violence. In this context, *The Crew* should not be understood as representing an alien set of values, but rather championing an exaggerated version of traditional working-class values, which contemporary leadership now seeks to downplay. The group, on account of their lack of community-political connections and clout, therefore constitute, on the basis of their conspicuous offending, marginal status and uncouth consumption, the ideal target in a campaign to represent *Northstreet* as 'respectable' and broadly in tune with hegemonic values and norms.

In late-modern Dublin, where the boundaries between classes are blurring in the manner described above, *The Crew* are 'scapegoated', 'Othered' and vested with blame for the social ill of local crime. This allows *Northstreet* leadership to divorce the majority population from the spectre of iniquity, tying it to a particularly marginalised group. The correlation between local and national responses to crime in relation to inclusion and exclusion are powerful (see also: Young, 1999).

7.4 Class-Cultural Norms and Policing

The role played by class culture becomes increasingly clear through examination of the manner in which the *Northstreet* community interact with Gardaí. The varied responses to policing are directly related to community structural and political concerns and position on the 'rough' / 'respectable' spectrum. 'Rough' and young residents tend to articulate traditional working-class antipathy to policing, most extremely represented by *The Crew*. Those with reason to avoid tension with local Gardaí instead react to policing with wariness, whilst those who subscribe or wish to exhibit a more hegemonic position on crime and policing, i.e. 'respectable' residents and contemporary community leadership respectively, cooperate tentatively with the Gardaí, depending on the status of the subject and nature of their grievance. The improvement of communication between local Gardaí and the working-class community in *Northstreet* can be understood as a blurring of traditional class-based boundaries. Nevertheless, the manner in which this has occurred stresses the importance of class-cultural values. The Gardaí identify with, and thus seek to serve and recruit to their cause 'respectable' residents in their crusade against the 'rough'. Internal kin loyalties and power positions within the *Northstreet* community impede this process.

The practical distinction between regular and community policing functions, and the force's emphasis of the latter, to a certain extent explain the manner in which the blurring of boundaries is occurring. The normative basis of the Irish policing function, nevertheless, continues to support the typical Garda's tendency to separate the public he/she polices into 'rough' *gougers*, and 'respectable' *decent* citizens. The Gardaí construct their role as protecting the interests of the latter group against the recalcitrant *gougers* and both regular and community policing strategies are subsumed into this wider normative crusade. Gardaí thus focus their attention on those that are identifiable as *gougers*, whether through local knowledge or stylistic markers. *The Crew* are pursued, not as a top priority, but with vigour. The interaction between the young offenders and those who police their criminality takes on a game-like quality, supported by fundamental differences in class-based values and curious similarities in aspects of both groups' lifestyles. Both groups experience long periods of routine and monotony punctuated by

bursts of high action activity and both groups tend to construct their identity on the basis of these temporarily less significant but symbolically crucial events. Both Gardaí and *Crew* members tend to construct themselves as part of excluded groups, whose particular subcultures and activities become crucial to maintaining esteem in the face of majority society whom they construe as critical.

Ultimately, the game between the two parties plays out in symbolic victories and losses which occur when *Crew* members are apprehended and charged, or where offences go undetected and/or charges fail. Through a process of 'cat and mouse' the Gardaí pursue *The Crew* members who focus their efforts on evading and resisting the policing process. The 'game' is fuelled by the mutual distrust and enmity members of both groups reserve for members of the 'Other'. Ultimately the 'game' is weighted against *The Crew*. The Gardaí are supported by the resources of the state and, despite their perceptions, firmly embedded within mainstream society. *The Crew*'s interactions with the Gardaí further alienates them from majority society and hegemonic normativity by encouraging them to construct criminal justice as oppositional and fostering a sense that police attention and involvement in the criminal justice system is normal, further socialising them towards a criminal adulthood.

7.5 Youth Welfare Justice and Class-Cultural Pedagogy: The Game Persists

The logic of youth welfare justice is appealing: by treating young offenders in a manner that addresses their unmet needs and attempting to ensure their personal development is unimpeded, the exclusion at the heart of 'street' culture is at least addressed. Nevertheless, in Ireland, the youth welfare justice project is hindered by under-resourcing and an approach favouring cultural pedagogy is prioritised to the exclusion of other (e.g. restorative or therapeutic) perspectives. Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers offer 'cautions' rather than criminal charges, through the Youth Diversion Scheme in which the offenders' family is recruited as a positive socialising influence and activities are sought to provide the young person with a heightened degree of structured leisure. Ultimately, this process must be understood as an attempt to foster 'respectable' behavioural expectations and leisure practices where individual young people and families who are

embedded in 'street' culture tend to utilise their opposition to policing to negate and ignore these measures. The Garda Youth Diversion Projects, to whom young people identified as requiring additional support are referred, function according to guidelines which highlight their mission to encourage 'good citizenship' on the part of their clients. Their efforts are aimed at inculcating 'respectable' values relating to: education, employment, leisure, community participation and crucially behaviour amongst a clientele who adhere rather to 'street' values. Achieving this rather nebulous goal is difficult, and youth justice workers attempt to foster a close personal relationship with their clients through which they can hope to communicate honestly and challenge preconceptions and behaviour. As the system of GYDPs is voluntary the staff must also strive to maintain their clients' interest in attending and participating, so that the reprieve from the possibility of a custodial sentence that accompanies membership does not remain the prime motivation for associating with the projects.

Ultimately, through considering the case of Gerry and *The Club*, a GYDP based in *Northstreet*, it becomes clear that *The Crew* members attending have a repertoire of mechanisms derived from their lifestyle to reassert their 'street' culture in resisting the pedagogy of youth welfare justice. They reduce their attendance, increase disruptive behaviours such as 'messing around', threatened violence and cannabis consumption, constantly striving to attend *The Club* in a manner that conforms to their culturally mediated ideal of project participation. Again *The Crew*'s interaction with youth justice workers displays a game-like quality, as both parties constantly vie with each other for a desired result: the *Crew* members wishing to use its facilities and contacts with various state institutions as they see fit, to further their class-cultural goals, whilst workers attempt to impose structure on, and encourage pro-social conduct in the lives of their clients. This creates difficulties for youth justice workers who are faced with the paradox that the youth who require the greatest level of support and assistance are precisely those who are difficult to work with and least likely to cease offending. The pedagogical approach to youth welfare justice has a greater likelihood of 'success' with clients who are closer to 'respectable' as opposed to 'rough' values. Thus, *The Club* must be understood as an important factor in Keano's departure from *The Crew*, but in

combination with support from his family, success in structured leisure through a local football team, and his acceptance within the *Northstreet* community. The other *Crew* members discontinue their attendance of *The Club*, deciding to face the criminal justice system without its protection.

7.6 In the Courtroom: Alienation *par excellence*

In the courtroom, the fundamental gulf between the 'street' culture of *The Crew* and the 'respectable' bureaucratic culture underpinning the criminal justice system comes into sharp focus. Mano, *The Crew* member, is alienated by the proceedings of The Children Court, which utilises a language and set of principles he has not been encultured to understand, appreciate or respect. It is the key arena of the 'game' played by young offenders and the agents of criminal and welfare justice. The prosecuting Garda, regarded as the enemy of *The Crew*, brings his case against Mano, who makes no contribution to his own hearing. Nevertheless, his lawyer introduces his then participation in the welfare justice institution of *The Club* to support an appeal for clemency. Uncomfortable, alienated, suspicious, and deeply immersed in 'street' culture, young offenders eschew engaging with the court process or the culturally constructed behavioural expectations it endorses, hoping to remain free, refusing to fear the possibility of a custodial sentence. 'Street' culture demands that they remain rugged and, through normalising the experience of state sanction, allows them to negate the threat of prison or detention. Their 'street' culture, born of exclusion, both facilitates greater marginalisation, through supporting criminal behaviour, and restricts the abilities of wider society to moderate this deviance through fostering an opposition to state sources of authority. With this facet of class-cultural dynamics firmly in place, as it has been for countless generations, criminal justice can be little more than a 'game' where opposing values clash, and those who hold them seldom engage with each other meaningfully.

Summation

The lived experiences of criminality and justice in the various different groups considered in this thesis demonstrate the central role played by class-based values in defining, preventing and participating in illegal behaviours. The class-cultural dynamics

underpinning either end of the criminal justice process precipitate a 'game' between parties inherently entrenched in their opposing normative positions. The justice system, as it is presently (and has been historically) constituted can accept that socio-economic disadvantage 'generates criminality' but does not realise the role it itself plays favouring a particular system of class-based behavioural expectations over another. The fact that crime and justice can be understood as playing out tensions between class-cultural value systems may go some distance in explaining the 'nothing works' philosophy that haunts the discipline of criminology to varying extents, though as ever, greater understanding widens the scope of possibility.

Policy Recommendations

The emphasis of this thesis has been on understanding the complexity and depth of the issues underlying youth offending and the response of the state in contemporary Ireland. The problems of youth crime are the problems of society and thus in order to relate directly to this research and remain realistically actionable these suggestions avoid reference to the mass of socio-economic inequalities and human misery perpetuating 'street' normativity and criminality. The recommendations are addressed to specific state institutions, recognising that whilst it is unlikely that any great sea-change will be forthcoming, a number of practical steps could go some distance in addressing their distance from the residualised urban working-class.

Firstly, given its legacy of oppositional policing in disadvantaged areas and the muscular variant of 'cop culture' evident amongst certain sections of its rank and file, An Garda Síochána is displaying admirable progressiveness in increasingly adopting a community policing model[111]. This should be allowed to grow beyond a minority practice to become a nationwide priority. In particular, the variant of occupational policing culture, which prizes the development of amicable personal relationships with marginalised sections of the public needs to be encouraged and shielded from the demands of managerialism, and the scepticism of those officers who continue to view the residents of disadvantaged areas

[111] This is a recommendation made by the Garda Inspectorate itself, see: Cullen, Paul, *Devolution to Garda regions urged: Inspectorate says community policing with high visibility should be at the core of Garda work,* The Irish Times, 27/09/2007.

with disdain. Further examination is needed however, at a strategic and policy level, into the models of communication and community consultation currently employed. This research demonstrates that particularly marginalised groups such as young people feel that they continue to suffer the 'over-policing and under-protection' characteristic of inner-city policing until recently. A more inclusive and balanced approach to policing young, urban, economically deprived males may reduce their compunction to construct their values and identities in opposition to the mainstream behavioural expectations enshrined by the law.

Secondly, the Irish State should frankly examine its commitment to welfare modes of youth justice. If there is indeed a serious commitment to addressing youth crime without recourse to custodial measures, then effective structures should be put in place. Postponing imprisonment without providing the necessary support required to cease offending does little more than delay the inevitable. This study has demonstrated that persistent youth offending can be linked to the development of oppositional value systems born of marginalisation. In order to reduce the likelihood of young people becoming embedded in these 'street' values, the state must move to practically combat social, economic and cultural exclusion. The state should consider integrating youth services: health, welfare, education and justice, to identify at the earliest stage possible those who are at risk of offending and ensuring that there are strong and positive socialising influences, including parental support, provided from the outset. Instead, the state deploys the limited resources it allocates to youth welfare justice reactively, where hard-to-reach young people have already developed the cultural capacity to resist the ministrations of 'diversion schemes'.

Thirdly, in light of the cultural differences between entrenched young offenders and the agents of youth justice responding to them, the systems in place are straining under a hugely daunting task. The Children Court should carefully consider the recommendations that have been issued on foot of the previous research projects referenced. Although, it must be recognised that this body is severely restricted by the paucity of resources and specialised supporting services available to it. As noted in this research, the Garda Youth

Diversion Projects seem most successful in diverting those who are not as deeply embedded in 'street' culture and possessing other avenues of support to practice behaviours and hold values which are closer to those promoted by mainstream society. There are a number of reasons for this, not least the 'paradox of youth work', discussed in Chapter Six. Successful behaviour modification with 'higher risk' young people would require a depth and consistency of resourcing and clarity of policy and practice that the projects are denied. Most pressingly, the projects are generally staffed by single workers, who are expected to engage in administration as well as handle case-loads of up to and over 10-15 young people. The appointment of second workers to the projects could radically improve their effectiveness. In terms of national policy on youth diversion there has been a failure to establish a 'what works' agenda or even provide a meaningful and realistic guidance on the appropriate balance between prevention and cure[112]. Commissioning collaborative research to chart realities on the ground and seek out a model of best practice would go some way to generating clarity and prioritising effectiveness over the managerialistic demands of the projects' various stakeholders.

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[112] Such issues have also been raised in the public submissions to the Report on the Youth Justice Review (Government of Ireland, 2006).

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