

The Hoods

Crime and Punishment in Belfast

HEATHER HAMILL

T H E H O O D S

T H E H O O D S

Crime and Punishment in Belfast

Heather Hamill

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

PRINCETON & OXFORD

Copyright © 2011 by Princeton University Press

Published by Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton,
New Jersey 08540

In the United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 6 Oxford Street,
Woodstock, Oxfordshire OX20 1TW

press.princeton.edu

All Rights Reserved

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hamill, Heather, 1971–

The hoods : crime and punishment in Belfast / Heather Hamill.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-691-11963-2 (cloth : alk. paper) 1. Crime—Northern
Ireland—Belfast. 2. Criminals—Northern Ireland—Belfast. 3. Juvenile
delinquents—Northern Ireland—Belfast. 4. Punishment—Northern
Ireland—Belfast. 5. Paramilitary forces—Northern Ireland—Belfast.
I. Title.

HV6949.N67H36 2011

364.9416'7—dc22 2010014342

British Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available

This book has been composed in Giovanni Std and Din Pro

Printed on acid-free paper ∞

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For my parents

CONTENTS

	<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
	Introduction	1
ONE	West Belfast	17
TWO	The Hoods	51
THREE	Search for Status	81
FOUR	Signaling Games	105
FIVE	Loyalists	127
	Conclusion	143
	<i>Notes</i>	149
	<i>Glossary of Terms</i>	167
	<i>Bibliography</i>	171
	<i>Index</i>	185

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research began as the basis for my doctoral thesis in the Department of Sociology at the University of Oxford under the supervision of Diego Gambetta, whose influence is writ large across this book. I am indebted to him for his patient intellectual guidance and critical eye. He gave me the confidence and support I needed to keep going, and this book would never have been completed without him. Stephanie Allen, Edmund Chattoe-Brown, Paddy Hillyard, Roger Hood, Valeria Pizzini-Gambetta, and Federico Varese all contributed very useful comments on earlier drafts of this work. My thanks also go to Ian Malcolm at Princeton University Press for his patience and support and to Linda Truilo for her excellent copyediting. I am also extremely grateful to the British Academy for granting me a postdoctoral fellowship that enabled me to carry out additional fieldwork needed for this book.

The primary obstacle in carrying out this research was gaining access to the groups and individuals who are the subjects of the research. Colin Roberts's very practical support at the beginning of this work was invaluable in helping me to negotiate access to a variety of field resources that made this research possible. The Probation Board for Northern Ireland eased my path considerably. In particular, Breidge Gadd and Brian McCaughey facilitated access to a number of statutory and voluntary agencies and introduced me to the West Belfast Youth at Risk Programme.

I owe an immense debt to the staff and volunteers of West Belfast Youth at Risk, who allowed me squatter's rights in their office and helped me gain access to many of the young people who participated in this research. My special thanks go to Jimmy Quinn and Angela Morris, and I am especially indebted to Mark Jordan for his insights into life on the "wild side."

On a more personal note, fieldwork can be a lonely endeavor, and I am sincerely grateful to Julie Wilson and Arthur Magill for their friendship during this time. My husband, Steve Fisher, inherited this project with me and has helped me in every possible way—thank you for everything.

If I have gone any way to understanding crime and punishment in Belfast, it is primarily because people were willing to talk to me about the issues affecting their lives. Therefore, I thank each individual who participated in this research and in particular the young people who talked to me. In the main, they responded with openness, honesty, intelligence, and humor. I am deeply saddened that three of these young people have recently died under very tragic circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

On January 16, 1999, the headline in the *Andersonstown News*, West Belfast's local newspaper, read "Joyriding: The scourge returns." The paper reported that the evening before, forty-two stolen cars were abandoned in West Belfast, "many of them burned out, while others were seriously damaged or vandalised."¹ There followed a series of articles over the following months detailing the damage caused by young people driving stolen cars recklessly and often under the influence of alcohol and drugs. This included the tragic death of Patrick Hanna, who was killed when a stolen car traveling at approximately 100 mph jumped the pavement in a residential area and struck him. An eyewitness described what happened afterward: "Other joyriders returned shortly after the ambulance and police left and started doing hand-brake turns at the police tape where the man had been killed. I couldn't believe that anyone could be that cruel and heartless."² This incident followed a similar accident in which seven-year-old Eamon Armstrong was killed when he, too, was struck by a stolen car. His mother and her partner were seriously injured: "With two deaths and so many injuries in the space of such a short time, there's a real sense that the joyriders have taken over the streets and that anyone could be the next victim,"³ reported the *Andersonstown News*. When joyriders smashed a stolen car into a school bus carrying pupils to school during rush hour traffic, the culprits were condemned as "worse than irresponsible."⁴ In March 2000, District Nurse Maureen Sheehan was killed when a car driven by a joyrider caused a three-car collision on the Falls Road. In the same week, John McDonald, another local resident, was killed in a hit-and-run accident.⁵

For West Belfast residents, a disrupted night's sleep is all too common. Night raids by the British army and the police were a familiar feature throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. The noise of rioting and shots being fired in gun battles between Republican paramilitaries and the security forces, or between Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries, once kept many households awake. In recent years, however, it has been

2 INTRODUCTION

the screech of tires and the roar of car engines that has terrorized local residents:

You go to bed at night and then you'd hear the car screechin' somewhere outside. Then, you get frightened about your property and car outside in case they ram into it. You're lying there wonderin' where they are, and if they'll come down your street. Then you jump up out of bed, and there's even more fear about the car, and who's in it, and what if they crash and hurt themselves or hurt someone else who you know. And then you start calling them "wee bastards" because they keep you awake at night. Part of you wishes they'd just crash and get it over with, and let you go back to sleep. (Local Resident H)

Young people (mostly males) steal cars from areas throughout Greater Belfast and beyond and drive them to their home neighborhoods in West Belfast. There are rough estimates of between 50 and 100 different cars being raced recklessly around West Belfast's residential areas on any given night. Several of the area's estates, or housing developments, such as Poleglass and Turf Lodge, are encircled by ring roads, which provide ideal racing circuits for joyriders who describe a sort of relay race where they steal a car in one area, race it to another area, abandon it, and steal another car, and so on until they end up at the finish, somewhere in West Belfast. Most joyriding tends to take place at night, but an audacious few will joyride during the day: "There was a car going fuckin' nuts during the day. It looked like an 18-year-old drivin' with a 14-year-old wee lad in beside him. The neighbours were going nuts and screamin' 'fuckin' bastards' at them. Her up the road was standin' at the corner waitin' for them to come back round again, so she could throw somethin' at them" (Local Resident H). An entourage often accompanies the joyriders; in some instances up to 100 young people will gather to watch them race their cars around.⁶

Joyriding is not unique to Belfast; the English cities of Newcastle upon Tyne and Oxford have experienced sporadic episodes of it. Nor is it simply a contemporary phenomenon: The term "joyride" arrived in the United Kingdom from the United States in 1912 and was defined as "a ride at high speed, esp. in a motor car."⁷ The theft of motor vehicles for temporary use was first legislated against in the United Kingdom in

1930.⁸ Belfast's struggle in dealing with this problem, however, is unique and worthy of investigation, given the number of incidents its residents report; the joyriders' imperviousness to the many diversionary initiatives that the city's statutory criminal justice agencies have implemented and that have been successful elsewhere; and the particular risks of incurring violent retribution from paramilitaries. According to police statistics, on average, 480 individuals are convicted of car theft each year in Northern Ireland, the vast majority for the offense of Taking and Driving Away (hereafter TDA), which is the closest official appropriation to joyriding. For example, in 1995 there were a total of 542 car theft convictions: 530 for TDA and only 12 for the offense of car theft.⁹ In addition, 88 percent of those convicted of TDA and released from prison in the period January 1995 to the end of November 1996 were Catholic, and almost all came from West Belfast.¹⁰ Protestant young people do not seem to joyride to the same extent, a point that will be returned to in later chapters.

Where there is crime, there is also punishment, and a major by-product of the political and civil conflict in Northern Ireland has been a lack of consensus among the population over who should police ordinary crime and how. This is clearly evidenced among the predominantly Nationalist and Republican inhabitants of West Belfast, who have consistently sought to prevent crime and punish offenders by employing a variety of informal strategies, rather than rely upon the police service. The most notorious of these informal approaches are shootings, beatings, and exclusions by Republican armed groups. The police began recording casualties of shootings in 1973 and beatings in 1988. Between 1973 and March 2007, 2463 nonmilitary shootings and assaults had been attributed to Republican paramilitary groups.¹¹ These figures are the tip of the iceberg, and many victims who receive less serious injuries or who have been threatened, placed on a curfew, or exiled from their homes never report the incident. The police do not record which organization is responsible for each incident, but the Irish Republican Army (hereafter IRA) is the largest and most powerful Republican armed group, and it is thought to be responsible for most attacks.

Protestant Loyalist armed groups also shoot, beat, exile, curfew, and warn members of their own community. The Ulster Volunteer Force (hereafter UVF) and the Ulster Defence Association (hereafter UDA) are

4 INTRODUCTION

the two largest armed Protestant groups and carry out most of these attacks. According to police statistics, between 1973 and March 2007 they shot and assaulted 2558 people.¹²

The paramilitary groups use these informal methods against members of their own communities only. These attacks are not sectarian and are commonly used by armed groups to “punish” young petty offenders, known locally as “hoods,” or those who have defected from, disobeyed, or crossed an armed group in some way.

The use of the term “punishment” to describe these attacks has been contested. The Independent Monitoring Commission (hereafter IMC), established in 2004 to report on the activities of paramilitary groups to the British and Irish governments, stated that the term “punishment beating” is misleading and “lends spurious respectability to these attacks and underplays their violence.”¹³ However, people in communities most affected by this violence use the term “punishment” to describe these attacks, and so throughout this book I will use the term “paramilitary punishment attack” (hereafter PPA) to describe a nonmilitary shooting or beating of a civilian by a Republican or Loyalist paramilitary group.

This violence has taken place within the broader context of the political violence in Northern Ireland in which, as of 1998, “thirty years after the conflict started[,] one in seven of the population reported having been a victim of violence; one in seven had a family member killed or injured; and one in four had been caught up in an explosion.”¹⁴ As figure 1 illustrates, however, PPAs perpetrated by paramilitary organizations against members of their own religious communities follow a rhythm different from that of deaths perpetrated by the paramilitary organizations and resulting from the political conflict.

Deaths attributed to paramilitaries peaked in 1977, and the trend has been downward since then. On the other hand, the number of PPAs increased dramatically in the 1990s, peaking in 1997 and again in 2002. Explanations for these trends will be discussed throughout this book.

Local informal responses to crime have been in operation in many areas in Northern Ireland, but the number of initiatives and the frequency of more violent approaches have been the greatest in Catholic West Bel-

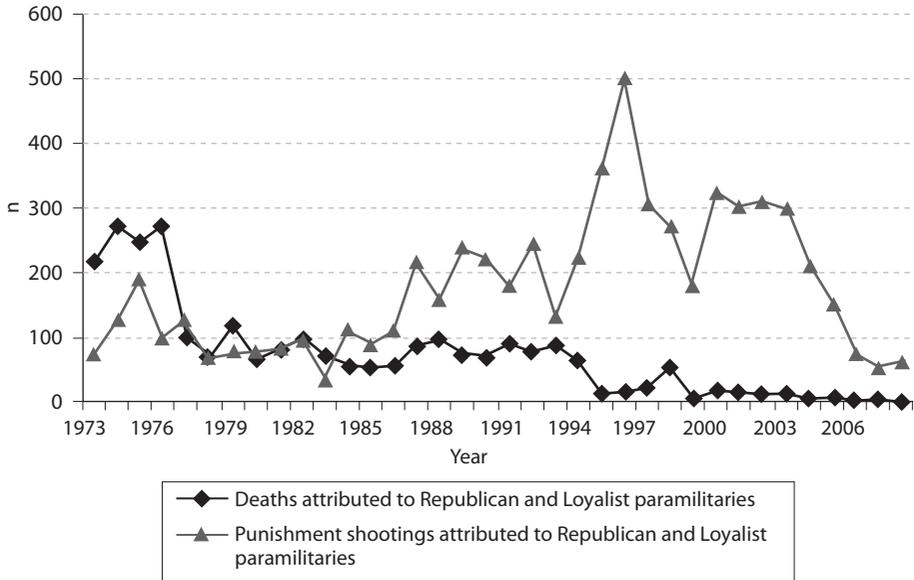


Figure 1 Deaths and punishment shootings and assaults attributed to Republican and Loyalist groups 1973–2008. *Source:* Author's compilation from Sutton 2010; PSNI 2003, 2009. Punishment beatings were recorded officially from 1982 onward.

fast, and consequently this area was chosen as the primary research setting. The initial aim of this research was to carry out a systematic study of the structure and process of informal community punishment in West Belfast, and to examine the interface between the informal community system and the statutory criminal justice system. Two primary research questions were formulated:

1. Why do residents in West Belfast choose to report crime to the IRA and support the often brutal system of informal justice?
2. Why do Sinn Féin and the IRA continue to be involved in policing and punishing offenders in West Belfast despite the negative political consequences of these actions?

While these questions remained central to the research, after embarking on fieldwork I realized that it was going to be possible to access the young

6 INTRODUCTION

people who are most at risk of becoming victims of PPAs, and so two further questions became part of this research:

3. Why do the hoods act in the way they do, for no apparent material reward? Are their actions purely the expression of irrationality?

4. Furthermore, why do harsh physical paramilitary punishments not have a *specific deterrent* effect on a small minority of offenders in West Belfast but rather seem to encourage them?

These four questions guided the data collection for the study and the structure of this book.

Method and Data

RESEARCH STRATEGY

Given the sensitive nature of the research topics and the difficulties of accessing hidden or reticent populations, I felt that qualitative methods would provide the most appropriate research approach. Various authors have argued that topics of a sensitive kind remain unsuited to study by means of large impersonal studies.¹⁵ Indeed, toward the end of the fieldwork period an article appeared in the *Andersonstown News*, a local West Belfast newspaper, warning residents not to respond to a questionnaire from the University of Luton containing questions relating to residents' religious beliefs and support for the Republican Movement. The article noted that these were "not the sort of queries you'd be inclined to post to a stranger in England."¹⁶ I decided that the research questions could best be explored by conducting an ethnographic study in West Belfast. In line with ethnographic tradition, this study involved extended time engaged in fieldwork; the generation of descriptive and multiple sources of data; the development of close relationships with respondents; and detailed understandings of the research site.¹⁷

RESEARCH GROUPS

Three primary research groups were targeted and interviewed using semistructured and unstructured interview techniques throughout an eighteen-

month fieldwork period between 1997 and 1999. The first group was a cross-section of residents in West Belfast. Unstructured discussions and semistructured interviews were carried out with fifty respondents who all lived or worked in West Belfast. The first respondents were a snowball sample generated from two local community groups where I became a volunteer and from contacts given to me by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland. In an attempt to bring more variation into this sample, I selected respondents on the basis of their knowledge and experience of living in West Belfast and their expressed views on the informal system of policing and punishment. The sample included those who supported the system, those who actively opposed it, and others who were relatively indifferent to it. Many of the respondents were active in local initiatives, such as community and youth projects, and to some degree these individuals can be seen as opinion formers within West Belfast.

The second research group comprised members of Sinn Féin and the IRA. Generally in West Belfast, PPAs are discussed among residents in hushed tones. When someone is punished, local people often refer to the attack as "being done," and are unwilling to discuss the issues or the processes in any detail. Furthermore, membership in the IRA is illegal, and physically assaulting or shooting people are criminal offenses. Those individuals in West Belfast who have been involved in perpetrating these sorts of paramilitary activities are reluctant to identify themselves and to talk in-depth about their experiences. I was able to overcome the combined problems of restricted access to informed respondents, issue sensitivity, and informant reticence in a number of ways during the fieldwork period. The ten respondents who were members of the IRA were accessed not as members of the IRA but via their other roles within West Belfast as youth and community workers, taxi drivers, parents and grandparents. The issues were discussed either as a specific topic of an interview or as a point of interest that came about during impromptu conversations and discussions. These conversations were often the most informative and arose gradually after I had spent a lengthy period of time in the community building up trust and associating with informants' friends and acquaintances. Among these informants were a former senior figure in the IRA's policing activities and those who had carried out PPAs. All of these respondents had served prison sentences for their involvement in the IRA

8 INTRODUCTION

and are identified in the book as “ex-prisoners.” Other data were gathered from discussions with politically nonaligned residents in West Belfast.

The third research group was made up of seventy-two young people involved in criminal and antisocial behavior and known locally as hoods. Contact with the hoods was made with the help of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the West Belfast Youth at Risk Project. Each young person was interviewed at least once and ten ex-hoods were also interviewed at length. The identities of all respondents remain anonymous, and the names assigned to individual hoods are fictitious.

Interviews were also conducted with members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (hereafter PSNI), which was formally the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC); the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (hereafter PBNI); the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (hereafter NIACRO); the Simon Community; and Community Restorative Justice Ireland (hereafter CRJI).

Additional follow-up interviews were carried on in 2002 with members of each of the three research groups, including young people who grew up in the same circumstances as the hoods but did not get involved in crime and antisocial behavior. Further interviews were conducted between 2002 and 2005 with members of the UVF and the UDA.

DATA COLLECTION

Four different types of data were collected pertaining to the four research questions and the three research groups: academic literature, interview data, observational data, and data drawn from the analysis of documents, primarily articles from newspapers published in Northern Ireland: the *Andersonstown News*, *Irish News*, *Belfast Telegraph*, *Newsletter* and the *Irish Times*. Other documents analyzed included police and government reports dating from 1995 to 2006. In addition to the range of data collected and in order to combine the elements of what is considered to be “good” ethnography, a number of qualitative research methods were employed.¹⁸ During participant observation in West Belfast, primary data were collected during interviews. While fifty semistructured interviews were carried out with local residents, the bulk of the interview data were collected during unstructured interviews. Hundreds of spontaneous, informal con-

versations took place ranging from short chats on a street corner at night with two or three hoods to more lengthy and involved discussions over cups of tea, cartons of chips, pints of beer, and cigarettes. Giving or receiving a lift in a car from a respondent would often result in a lengthy discussion. During these interviews and conversations I constantly kept the research questions in mind, sometimes initiating the topics of discussion, but more often allowing the conversation to flow naturally as issues specific to the research were raised and dropped a number of times in the course of a discussion.¹⁹ From the outset of the fieldwork it became apparent that it was a mistake to ask respondents too many questions. Local people gave monosyllabic “yes” or “no” answers to direct questions about the research topics or evasively denied knowledge with comments such as “I keep out of all of that, you’d need to ask somebody else.” In cases with all three research groups, direct questions were perceived as threatening and the answers provided were of little value. This resistance to direct questioning, particularly with members of the IRA and the hoods, proved to be very similar to Michael Agar’s account of doing street research on drug addiction:

In the streets, though I learned that you don’t ask questions. There are at least two reasons for that rule. One is because a person is vulnerable to arrest by the police, or to being cheated or robbed by other street people. Questions about behavior may be asked to find out when you are vulnerable to arrest. Or they may be asked to find out when or in what way you can be parted from some money or heroin. Even if one sees no direct connection between the question and those outcomes, it might just be because one has not figured out the questioner’s “game” yet.

The second reason for not asking questions is that you should not have to ask. To be accepted in the streets is to be hip; to be hip is to be knowledgeable; to be knowledgeable is to be capable of understanding what is going on on the basis of minimal cues. So to ask a question is to show that you are not acceptable and this creates problems in a relationship when you have just been introduced to somebody.²⁰

The lack of formality and explicitness of the interviews and conversations from which much of the data for this book has been gathered does

raise the issue of the subject's consent. Obtaining consent in this context can be seen as the outcome of a developmental process.²¹ The disclosure of sensitive, confidential, or controversial information or opinions is only possible in "these situations once trust has been established between the fieldworker and the people being studied. Where this has been done consent becomes implicit."²² Thus in this study, five months of participant observation and general hanging around passed before interview data of any depth or richness was gathered.

The research topics, the characteristics of the respondents, and the unplanned nature of many of the interviews meant that I was often faced with the problem of discussing violent and criminal behavior. I was given details of crimes that had been committed, and also became privy to knowledge of crimes about to be perpetrated. In these instances I followed Federico Varese, who had taken guidance during his fieldwork on the Russian mafia from the advice given to priests and confessors in the sixteenth-century manuals created by the Roman Catholic Church at the time when a new doctrine of sin began to emerge in the Western Church: "Do not show amazement; or a contorted face; do not show revulsion (no matter what enormities are confessed); do not rebuke the penitent; or exclaim 'Oh, what vile sins!'"²³

In the social sciences, the method of recording data affects the data itself.²⁴ Field notes were used for recording observational data. I constantly carried a notebook in which to jot down observations and on occasion used a voice recorder. There are a number of ways in which to record answers to questions during an unstructured interview: filming, tape-recording, note-taking, or memorizing and writing up afterward. Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson consider tape-recording, supplemented by jotting notes on the nonverbal aspects and features of the physical setting, to provide the most "complete, concrete and detailed" data.²⁵ However, because of the ongoing political unrest and covert activities in West Belfast, residents have endured almost forty years of surveillance from the British security forces and are very wary of being recorded.

I was also acutely aware of my Northern Irish Protestant background and the fact that I was coming from an "establishment" English university (a fact that I did not advertise), and I did not want to be mistaken as

a member of the British security forces. I did not want to be “caught” with an unexplained tape-recorder. I was concerned that, at best, the presence of a tape-recorder would label me from the outset as someone to be wary of, and hamper access to the research groups. I also suspected that taping interviews would inhibit the building up of trust between the interviewees and myself, and dissuade frankness. Many of the interviews were ad hoc, and I did not want to stop a free-flowing conversation in order to get a tape-recorder out of my bag. In addition, the topics discussed were often sensitive and involved details of criminal activities (tapes can be used in evidence in a manner that notes cannot). Varese records how at the beginning of his fieldwork he used a tape-recorder during interviews but found that it made his interview subjects feel very uncomfortable and they gave vague and evasive answers: “One interviewee, in particular was extremely vague and, at the end of the interview, he invited me to his house to have a ‘proper’ conversation.”²⁶ From the outset, therefore, I decided not to tape-record interviews but to take notes whenever possible and rely upon memory at other times, writing up an account of the interview as soon as possible after the event. While this method is arguably the least reliable—as memory may easily fail, be selective, and leave out details—I judged that it was the only method that facilitated trust and flexibility in this particular research setting, and I made every attempt to record the essence of what was said.

The data collection method clearly raises questions of the validity and reliability of the findings.²⁷ As Hammersley suggests, “An account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise. Assumed here, then, is a correspondence theory of truth, but the correspondence involves selective representation rather than reproduction of reality.”²⁸ Given that it is impossible to know for certain whether an account is true, or the extent to which it is accurate, the validity of claims must be judged on the basis of the evidence offered in support of them.²⁹ For this book the task was to recognize the limits to establishing validity but, nevertheless, to strive toward it.³⁰ The ethnography, therefore, involved a combination of research procedures and data sources, and the technique of triangulation was used to assess the validity of inferences by examining data relating to

the same concept from participant observation, interviewing, and documents.³¹ Thus, in writing this account of crime and justice in West Belfast, I have attempted to weave the different forms of data together to tell a story that is both descriptive and analytical.

Theoretical Framework and Chapter Outline

This book examines extralegal policing and punishment in Belfast from the perspective of those who punish crime, perpetrate crime, and are victims of crime. Central to this study is the notion of deterrence, which is the extent to which PPAs prevent people from committing crime. The standard economic conception of deterrence is based on the assumption that individuals weigh up the gains to be made from committing crime versus the probability of being caught and the costs of punishment. Therefore increasing the likelihood of being caught and the severity of the penalties reduces the incentives to commit crime. A distinction is also made between general and specific deterrence. General deterrence refers to the effect of punishment on the general public (i.e., potential offenders). It is the indirect experience of punishment, such as observing or having knowledge of the punishment of others, that might deter individuals from committing crime. Specific deterrence refers to the effects of punishment on those who have experienced it (i.e., punished offenders). In this case, the pain of the direct experience of punishment is such that it deters future offending. Residents in West Belfast hold the belief that PPAs have a general deterrent effect on criminal behavior, that is, if PPAs did not exist more individuals would commit crime, and the crimes would be more serious. As evidence of this, they point to the relative absence of hard drugs, principally heroin and cocaine, in areas controlled by Republicans who have taken a strong stance against drugs and executed drug dealers. This is contrasted with Loyalist neighborhoods, where both these drugs are much more available. It is impossible to test the validity of PPAs having a general deterrent effect, but noting the existence of the belief is crucial to understanding why so many residents report incidents and individuals to the IRA in the full knowledge that these individuals may be violently attacked. Rather, this book focuses more closely on the

puzzle as to why PPAs appear to have had a limited specific deterrent effect on the group of young people who have experienced them directly. That is, being beaten or shot has not prevented them from repeating the same type of offenses for which they had been punished.

The structure of the book is as follows. In chapter 1, I argue that from the early days of the political conflict in the 1970s the conditions were such that the IRA adopted some of the functions of the state, namely the provision of policing and punishment of ordinary crime. The hostility of the statutory criminal justice system, particularly the police, toward the working-class Catholic community dramatically increased the costs of using state services. The high levels of disaffection and aggression among working-class Catholics toward the police meant that the state could no longer fulfill its function and police the community in any "normal" way. A demand for policing therefore existed. Simultaneously, this demand was met and fostered by the IRA, which had the motivation, the manpower, and the monopoly on the use of violence necessary to carry out this role. As such, the somewhat systemic perpetration of PPAs by the IRA can be seen as a form of "extralegal governance" whereby the IRA provides the public good of policing and protection to the local population outside of the law.

Chapter 2 begins to address the core issue of the book, namely trying to understand the behavior of the hoods by examining their specific offense patterns. This chapter, which is based on the ethnographic data, shows that although the hoods' offending generally involves heightened physical risks, there is little financial reward for their endeavors, as, for example, in the case of joyriding, whereby most stolen cars are abandoned rather than sold on for profit. This book does not attempt to explain why some young people get involved in criminal behavior and others do not, but rather why delinquent young people in West Belfast engage in particular antisocial behaviors. This work, however, is based upon certain theoretical assumptions about the nature of delinquency.

Drawing upon the early traditions of Albert Cohen (1955) and Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin (1960), the ethnographic data described in chapter 2 provides evidence that the hoods operate in a subculture of delinquency described by Cohen in his study "Delinquent Boys" as "a way of life that has somehow become traditional."³² These

sociologists studying offending among young people have provided two basic insights about juvenile delinquency: first, that it typically is not a solitary enterprise, but a group activity; and second, that delinquent activities, rather than being engaged in by biologically and psychologically abnormal individuals, typically develop in the sociological context of particular territorial locales and cultural traditions. In addition, it was recognized that delinquency took a number of forms and was engaged in for a variety of reasons.

The socially deterministic approach of Cohen and of Cloward and Ohlin was challenged by David Matza (1964), who began with the premise that analysis should start from the meanings that actors attribute to their actions in the world. He argued that the understandings people hold about their behavior are crucial to their behavior (whatever the accuracy of those understandings may be). Therefore, instead of viewing delinquents as compelled to misbehavior by social forces beyond their control, a better understanding of delinquency could come about once we begin to appreciate the purposes, motives, and fears that shape the delinquent action. Furthermore, delinquent and nondelinquent actions are understood in terms of the same general processes. Matza therefore "shifted the attention away from the creation of general behavioural predispositions to the microsocial contexts in which specific acts occur."³³

Matza also challenged the view that there exists a delinquent subculture, suggesting instead a subculture of delinquency. He suggests that two general concepts regarding delinquency must be kept in mind: first, that there exists in society a frame of mind that encourages and allows its members to behave illegally and gain prestige from doing so; and second, that the subculture of delinquency remains basically committed to the important values of conventional culture. Matza argued that conventional culture is often complex and many-sided, featuring not just law-abiding morality but also hedonism, frivolity, and excitement. The delinquent is committed neither to the subculture of delinquency nor to the conventional culture. Instead, the delinquent chooses more-or-less consciously to "drift" between the one and the other, often many times during the course of a day.³⁴

The dominant features of working-class culture are examined in chapter 3. In particular, the ways in which status and prestige can be gained

among the adult male population, and the fact that the hoods are excluded from these paths to power, are explored. Chapter 3 also examines the relationships between the hoods and the influence of their friends and associates on their offending. Following Matza's assumptions, the analysis in this book is framed in terms of the understandings that both the hoods and ex-hoods either have or had of their antisocial behavior. Thus studying the world of the hoods in their own terms opened the way to an increased understanding of their behavior. In the process, the data revealed that rather than being anomic the hoods do adhere to a set of norms. The challenge remains to understand the hoods' subculture and make sense of their behaviors.

Chapter 4 attempts to get to the heart of the matter and tackles this puzzle: why doesn't the punishment administered by the paramilitaries and/or the state deter these young people from further recidivism? This lack of a specific deterrent effect violates the rational norm on which deterrence is founded, that certainty and severity of punishment will prevent reoffending, and has bewildered many local people, paramilitaries, criminal justice practitioners, and politicians for some time. The explanatory model proposed in chapter 4 is that of a signaling game whereby hoods engage in specific behaviors to prove their toughness and status to other hoods. The model, developed from economics, game theory, and biology,³⁵ explains why people engage in self-destructive behaviors in order to gain group acceptance: often the qualities they wish to display are hard to observe by others who are interested in them and can be easily mimicked by purely verbal claims.³⁶ In this instance, the hoods' participation in seemingly irrational antisocial behavior and their response to punishment amount to a set of signals that only the toughest among them can afford to display. I argue that the hoods attempt to distinguish the "really tough" from the "not so tough," the authentic from the inauthentic, through the process of being punished. The certainty and severity of repeated physical punishment will not deter the person who is really tough and therefore acts as a sorting signal.

Chapter 5 turns to the Protestant community and examines PPAs perpetrated by Loyalist paramilitaries. Although the violent methods used by Republican and Loyalist armed groups are similar, their motivation is somewhat different. In particular, the supply of PPAs carried out by

Loyalist paramilitaries outweighs the demand from the local population. In this case, PPAs are used against delinquent young people, but they are also used to discipline members and settle scores within and between groups to a greater extent than in the Republican case. Chapter 5 also examines antisocial behavior among young people in Protestant areas and finds differences between Protestants and Catholics in the specific types of offending. The explanation for this variation lies in the structure and number of Loyalist armed groups and the different types of opportunities for community recognition, which the respective political and paramilitary organizations offer to them.

The book concludes with a commentary on the changing political scene in Northern Ireland and reflects on the effect that these changes will have on the roles and functions of the various Republican and Loyalist paramilitary groups. As the number of PPAs diminishes, and the phenomenon perhaps ceases altogether, what effect will this have on the behavior of young people who, for so many years, have been victims of this violence?