Feeding Fear? : An Examination of the Representation of Crime News in Contemporary Irish Print Media

Eimear Rabbitte

Dublin Institute of Technology, eimear.rabbitte@dit.ie

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Feeding Fear?

An Examination of the Representation of Crime News in Contemporary Irish Print Media

A thesis submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology in part fulfilment of the requirements for award of Masters (M.A.) in Criminology

By

Eimear Rabbitt

September 2012

Supervisor: Mairead Seymour

Department of Social Sciences, Dublin Institute of Technology
Declaration

I hereby certify that the material submitted in this thesis towards the award of the Masters (M.A.) in Criminology is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part-fulfilment of the award named above.

Signature of candidate…………………………………………………………………………………

Date…………………………………………………………………………………...
Abstract

Crime is a timeless phenomenon. Its inherent ability to both fascinate and appal has made reporting of crime an intrinsic part of newspapers since the dawn of the printing press. The interest surrounding crime validates the need for accurate and consistent reporting. This renders it a regular feature of the daily news cycle and thus a fixture in our everyday lives. Reading or hearing about it through the news media is the only contact that many people will have with crime throughout their lives. Therefore, the manner in which crime news is both presented and portrayed to the general public is of crucial importance. Academic research has described how the media have a propensity to over-report news of violent crime, which can lead to a negative external perception of crime. In order to re-assess the matter in a contemporary Irish context, this research study set out to examine crime reporting in modern-day Ireland. Through the use of newspaper analysis and in-depth interviews, the study finds that although crime is a daily feature of the news coverage, its position within the newspaper is not as prominent as one may expect. Moreover, a lack of in-depth crime reporting and a need for more detailed analysis of the crime issue also emerged. Distinct differences between the styles of reportage given to crime news in tabloid and in broadsheet newspapers have been examined and noted. Moreover, external factors, such as public demand and the news cycle, were found to have impacted upon whether or not the crime news in question dominated.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Context - Issues in Contemporary Crime Journalism

Everyday people consume news from a variety of sources including television, radio, newspaper and the internet, but few are aware of the potential biases in the construction and reporting of news stories. All news, no matter the source, has a constructed newsworthy quality; an inherent news value which determines why and to what extent a particular story will gain significance in the public domain and remain there (Pollak & Kurbin, 2007). This has particular resonance in the realm of the modern-day print-media, which favours the shocking over the banal and, therefore may lend itself to exaggeration and speculation as opposed to being the bearer of the unadulterated truth. The fast paced and cutthroat nature of journalism has always attracted criticism regarding the ethical conduct of its practitioners. This criticism is particularly relevant in contemporary media with the emergence of a celebrity culture and questions regarding a ‘tabloidization’ of the mainstream media (Harcup, 2007). This style of journalism has led to a preoccupation with crime, a phenomenon that shocks and dismays but also entices an audience with its emotive narratives. As a result, the media are often the source of blame for their role in presenting a distorted picture of crime to the public. This can arguably result in the creation of a complex relationship between the true nature of crime and how it is perceived by the public. According to Kidd-Hewit (1995) the media’s representation of crime is part of an irresponsible process, which leads to a disproportionate emphasis on the spectacular and the violent, engaging in sensationalism as a result.

1.2 Research Rationale and Aim

This dissertation is based on a study of the representation of crime news in contemporary Irish print media. The motivation for the study was born out of a desire to provide a more balanced analysis of contemporary crime reporting and to examine the issues at the heart of criticism regarding modern-day crime journalism. Whilst academic research has identified a propensity for Irish newspapers to exaggerate the issue of crime (O’ Connell, 1999), the aim of this research is to provide an updated overview of how crime is currently reported in the Irish print media and to examine whether crime coverage remains a prominent feature of media reporting in Ireland. Moreover, the study is conducted at an interesting time given the country’s current economic and political situation, which has challenged crime’s position as a leading social issue and a dominant source of national news coverage.
1.3 Main Research Questions

- How central is crime reporting to the Irish print media in the present day?
- Is the standard of contemporary crime journalism reflective of the current crime situation in Ireland or do issues of sensationalism persist?
- Are there alternative reporting styles between the Irish tabloid and Irish broadsheet newspapers regarding the representation of crime in contemporary Irish print media?

1.4 Dissertation Layout

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. The introductory chapter describes the context of the research study, outlines the rationale behind the research and sets out the main research questions.

Chapter two provides an examination of the literature pertaining to media approaches to crime news in both an Irish context and further afield. The development of Irish crime journalism over the decades is documented. Moreover, key issues such as news values, sensationalism and media-audience relations are discussed in the review.

Chapter three outlines the methodology used in the research study. This includes a description of quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, the data collection methods chosen, an outline of the sample used in the study and rationale for the mixed method approach. The limitations and ethical considerations of the study are also included, as is a section outlining the author’s reflections on the research process.

Chapter four outlines the findings of content and discourse analysis arising from an examination of four Irish newspapers. Discussion of the findings is also included in the chapter.

Chapter five consists of an overview of the interviews carried out for the purpose of the dissertation. The findings of the interviews are presented and discussed accordingly.

Chapter six brings the research study to a conclusion with a summary of the findings. Finally, the concluding thoughts and recommendation of the author are presented.
2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an outline of the available literature pertinent to the research topic. Ireland’s transition from a nation with a low-rate of reported crime and little fear of crime to one which indicated palpable levels of fear of crime is summarised. Given the dissertation’s broad remit, issues relevant to journalism, such as news values and sensationalism are outlined. A theoretical basis is also provided with reference to moral panic theory, cultural criminology and arguments chronicling the culture of fear phenomenon. As a result of broad reading on the topic, research from both an Irish and international context is referenced. In particular, the most recent research relating to the media’s influence on the perceptions of crime is examined.

2.2 Crime in Ireland

Ireland is traditionally associated with one of the lowest crime rates in Europe. In recent decades it has been labelled as a nation not obsessed with crime (Adler, 1993) and a ‘policeman’s paradise’ (Brady, 1974:240). However as O’Brien (2007) has argued, two facts should be taken into consideration when assessing crime statistics. Firstly, they record only crime that has been reported, and secondly, they represent a count of the offences that have been reported and do not take other variables such as population change into consideration. Moreover, Daly (2004) advocated the need to approach officially recorded police crime figures with caution as they are generally labelled as a most unreliable source of information. There are various explanations for this, for example, the fact that people are often slow to report crime or that Gardaí may record offences in various ways, or not record them at all.

According to McCullagh, the 1960’s represented the end of the era of low levels of crime in Ireland and by 1981 the level of crime was five times higher than what it had been in 1961. This coincided with the economic boom that swept through Ireland from the 1960s onwards. Between 1966 and 1971 alone the number of reported indictable crimes almost doubled going from 19,029 to 37,781 (McCullagh, 1996: 3). Quantitative analysis conducted by Brewer, Lockhart and Rogers (1996) suggested that a steep incline in recorded crime rates in Ireland did not occur until approximately 1965. This supported McCullagh’s findings and suggested that the increase was an indication of Ireland’s late social and economic
development, thereby establishing a link between changes in the economic structure and a rise in crime.

Despite this increase in crime levels, Ireland continues to exhibit one of the lowest rates of recorded crime in Europe (Kilcommins et al, 2004). To take a comparative international approach, a European Union study revealed that Ireland had half of the amount of recorded crime as the United States and one quarter as much England and Wales (O’Donnell, 2004). Furthermore, Ireland has been reported to exhibit only one-fifth of the crime rate in comparable countries such as Denmark and New Zealand (An Garda Síochána, 2001). Public perception does not mirror the official statistics however, and research conducted in Ireland in the late twentieth and early 21st centuries presents a narrative of a nation living in fear of crime, one that is disproportionate to the statistics compiled by researchers in the field. McCullagh has claimed that levels of concern about crime in Ireland are as high ‘as comparable figures for major American cities’ (McCullagh, 1996: 11).

O’Donnell (2005) described how the media-political landscape in the late 20th century in Ireland effected rising levels of concern among the public regarding crime. In newspaper surveys carried out in the 1980’s and early 1990’s, crime was not a serious problem. For example in 1994, the Sunday Press revealed that only 3% of the public believed that crime was the most important issue facing the country. According to O’Donnell (ibid: 105) ‘Ireland remained a nation not obsessed by crime’, even in the early 1990’s. However, just two years later in 1996 when asked what was the most crucial issue facing the government, 50% of newspaper readers identified crime and law and order, placing it far ahead of other issues (O’Donnell, 2005). The prevalence of crime did not appear to maintain the same level of public interest as Ireland entered into the 21st century. Surveys carried out in January 2001 and May 2003 conveyed the extent to which concerns regarding health and the cost of living had over taken crime as the most prominent sources of public concern at the time (O’Donnell, 2005).

2.3 A Restricted Media: Crime Reporting Pre-1960’s

Whilst research shows that a preoccupation with crime did not begin until the end of the twentieth century, the role of a conservative Irish society in curtailing media freedom must be considered. In particular, the over-bearing influence of the Catholic Church in pre 1960’s Ireland is identified by O’Brien (2007) as being responsible for the inability of the media to provide adequate coverage of crimes that were reported to the Gardaí, particularly in relation
to sexual crimes. O’Connell’s study (1999) on media coverage of crime in the early 1990’s, recorded a propensity for newspapers to over-report violent crimes. In contrast Keating’s study on how the print media reported on sexual offence cases between 1923 and 1974, found a disparity between the number of sexual offences reported to the Gardaí and the low level of reporting of this issue by local and national newspapers. Keating identified a clear link between the statistics and a belief among clergy and politicians of the time that the public needed to be protected from discussions about crime, particularly sexual crime (Keating, 2002). The debate among members of the Catholic Church emerged from criticism of UK-based newspapers for their lurid crime reporting and led to the establishment of the Committee on Evil Literature. The committee’s final report recommended the establishment of legislation on the issue and the Censorship of Publications Act came into being in 1929 (Horgan, 1995). The act included severe regulations in relation to crime coverage and it became common practice for newspapers to incur sanction for their coverage of reported crime and trials. The sanction is still in existence today and conveys the irony that exists between past efforts, which endeavoured to shield the public from the true reality of crime and current practices, which often see every lurid detail laid bare in the full glare of the media.

2.4 Transition from Under-Reporting to Over-Reporting

The role and persona of a journalist in pre-1960’s Ireland was also significantly different to that with which the public have become accustomed today. By-lines and photographs of reporters were not attributed to their stories, thereby ensuring anonymity and preventing the journalist from developing a public profile. The journalism profession had not yet developed the system of specialist correspondent, with the exception of political correspondent, and so the role of crime reporting was essentially shared out among the newsroom. As Ireland began to open up economically and culturally at the beginning of the 1960’s, so too did views regarding political and social structures. A pervasive liberalism slowly began to creep into media practices and the arrival of Telefís Éireann in 1961, brought with it a change in the media landscape. The arrival of television threatened the dominance of the newspaper culture with its ability to report news much more quickly and it instigated a gradual change in the operation of newspapers (O’Brien 2007). However, crime reporting remained a sensitive subject and many newspapers found their freedom to report once again impeded by the state throughout the 1970’s with the worsening of the troubles in Northern Ireland and in particular the restrictions imposed by section 31 of the Broadcasting Authority Act (1960).
decades 1965-1975 and 1975-1985 accounted for by far the largest increases in recorded crime over the period 1945-93 (Brewer, Lockhart & Rogers, 1996). Despite this, the significant increase in crime levels went largely unreported as a result of government sanctions which saw many publications being brought before the Supreme Court on charges for contempt of court. Media coverage of crime in the 1970’s was largely characterised by a variety of incidents which saw many of the country’s leading publications clash with the authorities (Horgan, 1995).

2.5 Crime News as a Commodity - Reporting Post 1980

According to O’Brien, it was in the 1980’s that ‘crime reporting came into its own’ (O’Brien, 2007; 121). With the emergence of current affairs programmes and media coverage depicting the drug problems affecting Dublin’s inner-city as well as the rising gang-culture, crime reporting in Ireland developed a harder edge. This style of crime journalism was very much centred on the interaction between journalist and criminal as the reporter became a participant in, rather than a mere observer of an event. It brought with it a new type of reporter as door stepping and profiling of criminals became a familiar feature of crime journalism.

This new departure in crime writing introduced many hallmarks into Irish journalism that can still be seen today. One such example is the use of codenames to write about criminals. This method was seen to be beneficial in protecting newspapers from libel proceedings and from prejudicing trials. However, the use of aliases such as the General, the Viper and the Penguin effectively made house-hold names out of those who willingly engaged in criminal activity and many of whom held criminal convictions. As O’Brien (2007; 124) argued, ‘it also tended to debase crime reporting by turning it into something akin to an oddly cast journalistic soap opera’. Irish crime journalism had crossed the divide from a restricted media which could not reflect the true reality of the damage caused by crime to one where the intimate and personal details of the lives of criminals frequently covered the front pages of national newspapers, sometimes at the expense of the real crime issue. While this form of journalism was engaging and romantic, the efficacy of this style of reporting remains ambiguous as the line between what is in the public interest and what the public is interested in began to blur.
2.6 Crime Reporting in Contemporary Ireland

In a modern Irish context, media analysis conducted on the coverage of Moyross, the largest housing estate in Limerick City, found that media representation of the area was highly problematic to the extent that it could be seen as contributing to the stigmatisation of the people and the area. Analysis of a sample of 420 newspaper articles from both the national and local media was conducted and found that 70% of the articles had crime as a primary theme. A largely negative image of the area was also pinpointed as a concurrent theme of much of the media reporting. In their sample of 420 articles, the researchers (Devereux, Hayes and Power; in Hourigan, 2011) only identified ten articles that were primarily focused on community spirit in Moyross. The fixation on crime news by the media in the city is challenged by Mc Cullagh’s assertion that most forms of crime are relatively infrequent occurrences in the city and that ‘the criminal image of Limerick comes from a small but socially significant amount of criminal activity that emanates from the illegal drugs economy that has taken root in the city’ (Mc Cullagh, 23; Hourigan, 2011). This therefore questions whether the expansive coverage of crime in the city can be held responsible for a distorted public perception of the area and the attribution of titles such as ‘stab city’. It also demonstrates the damaging role that the media can play in shaping external perceptions of the area and the self-image of local people (Devereux, et al; Hourigan, 2011).

Devereux et al (2011) also found that mainstream, national newspapers were more prone to reporting of this nature and found local newspapers to be less unrepresentative and sensationalist in their reporting. According to Healy and O’Donnell (2010), local newspapers adopt a different writing style than that of the national press. In a study carried out on seven local newspapers who reported in low crime regions in the West and North of the country, it was explained that instead of concentrating on sporadic and atrocious crimes as appears to be the case with larger, national newspapers, local press showed a greater propensity to report on minor issues. In a study of 571 newspaper articles dealing with 538 separate cases, Healy and O’Donnell (2010) also found that local newspapers reported predominantly on minor offences, focusing on the ordinary, amusing and occasionally ludicrous stories. The enormous disparity between a local and national newspaper in terms of variables, such as readership and profit margin renders a direct comparison between the two difficult to achieve. However, there exists a clear dissonance between the news values which drive a local newspaper’s coverage and those which are present in the contemporary national press. Moreover, Healy and O’Donnell’s study (2010) conveys the reality of the mundane nature of
the majority of crime events that occur on a day-to-day basis as opposed to the excessively violent world of crime as presented by national papers.

2.7 Over Reporting of Violent Crime

A comprehensive study of the relationship between the media and the public’s perception of crime was carried out by O’Connell (1999) who found a distinct tendency for national newspapers to over report violent offences. O’Connell claimed that the public perception of crime was disproportionate to the actual levels of serious crime committed. He further argued that a plausible explanation for this public misperception is the distorted image of crime in the media. O’Connell conducted analysis of a sample of over 2000 articles across four Irish newspapers in a two month period and he found that there are four ways in which the press skews the representation of crime: bias towards extreme and atypical offences in terms of frequency; newspaper space occupied by stories; stories involving vulnerable victims and invulnerable offenders; and lastly, a bias towards pessimistic accounts of the Criminal Justice System generally. According to O’Connell, the pattern of reporting of violent criminal offences in the Irish press was so strong that the following claim can be made: ‘typical crimes in the Irish press appear rarely in the official crime statistics and typical crimes in the official figures appear rarely in the Irish press account of crime’ (O’Connell, 1999; 197).

This inverted relationship between real crime figures and reported crime is not unique in an Irish context. Analysis of the situation in Germany found that while statistics of police-recorded crime showed a decline in total offences in the ten year period up to 2003, survey-based evidence found that the German public believed or assumed that crime had increased (Pfeiffer et al, 2005). Mason (2006) claims that the prison population is not determined by crime rates, but by political decisions informed, in part, by inaccurate representations of crime. Ditton and Duffy (1983) highlighted a distortion in crime coverage with crimes involving violence being reported with 22 times the frequency justified by officially recorded incidences, and crimes involving sex being reported with 14 times the frequency justified by officially recorded incidences.
2.8 Sensationalism in Contemporary Crime Journalism

Whilst Irish crime reporting is characterized by a restrictive past, O’Mahony (1996) suggested that the Irish media have always exploited the excitement and interest aroused by crime news. However, O’Mahony (1996) argued that it is a phenomenon which has been taken to the extreme in recent times as some sectors of the media have developed a reprehensible approach:

The media do not directly set out to distort public opinion but by entertaining people with crime, rather than informing the public about it, certain consequences follow … a steady stream of salacious and lurid crime stories sells newspapers but ultimately distorts the public understanding of crime as a serious social problem.

(O’Connell, 2002; 245)

Carl Bernstein described how journalism is regularly failing its audience by ‘...the reduction of news to gossip, which is the lowest form of news; by sensationalism, which is always turning away from society’s real condition’ (Berry, 2000; 134). According to journalism professors, Jerry Lasos and Barbara Croll (1999) crime reporters everyday face this same challenging question, that is, to inform the audiences of actual crime facts without sensationalising them in a way that the public’s perception of the reality of the crime problem is distorted (Brown, 2003).

However, although it is accepted that the media play an enormous role in the spreading of anxiety, and indeed inflame fears, it cannot be said that they ‘necessarily’ create these fears in the first place (Lea and Young, 1993; 37) Following interviews with a series of journalists in the Irish national media, O’Connell, Invernizzi & Fuller (1998) reported the collective view that journalists cannot simply reflect the banal reality of crime news as it simply would not interest readers. This research suggested that sensationalist news is the chosen method of delivery for purely commercial reasons. This does not necessarily, however, make the media any less complicit in how they report. A bias in the reporting of crime can prove particularly significant, as for many, newspapers and other sources of media are the only access to crime information available (O’Connell et al, 1998).
2.9 Media Influence versus Public Perception

In the late 1990’s, a survey carried out to gauge the nature of Irish opinion about crime revealed that the public had a negative view of the crime situation and believed all offences to be on the increase with the most serious ones increasing most quickly (O’Connell & Whelan, 1996). This tendency to overestimate the seriousness of the crime rate was also highly applicable in an international context. The 1984 British Crime Survey (BCS) found that ‘respondents made alarmingly high estimates of crime rates – far in excess of actual crime risks’ (Williams and Dickinson 1993; 34) Moreover, a review of the studies in this area led Roberts (1992; 109) to conclude that ‘the public has inaccurate, overly negative views of crime statistics’.

In a study published by O’Connell et al., (1998), crime reporters from three leading Irish national newspapers were interviewed regarding the selection and reporting of crime news in their respective newspapers. Each journalist was united in the belief that one cannot simply reflect the mundane reality of crime to public. It was also expressed that although the media do not paint a representative picture of crime, the public is relatively sophisticated and so their ability to consider and reflect upon the news they are receiving should not be underestimated (O’Connell; O’Mahony, 2002) Mc Cullagh has argued that, ‘Media coverage gives a higher level of coverage of crime than it warrants and tends to emphasise crimes of violence rather than the more common crimes against property. As a result, levels of fear of crime are higher than they should be’ (McCullagh, 1996; 10) Although previous research has qualified these views to a certain extent, they adhere to what Katz (1980) has described as a “top-down” model of the relationship between media representation and public perception of crime. In other words, the relationship is “top-down” in direction, i.e. from media to audience as opposed to a bottom-up direction where the media responds to public demand for certain types of stories (Carey, 1999). In their study O’Connell et al (1998) concluded that there was a causal relationship between the media and public fear of crime, however, it was not possible to determine whether the relationship is “top-down” or “bottom-up”. On the basis of this empirical research, Carey (1999) has suggested that both relationships are inter-related and it is merely a question of the degree to which one dominates the other.
2.10 News Values and the Production of Crime News

As well as public influence, research has identified other factors which provide explanation as to why crime news remains infinitely newsworthy. Terms such as newsworthiness, news values and agenda setting are commonplace in journalistic circles and lead to suggestions that news and what comes to be defined as news does not create itself; it is in fact, an artificial construct. To the casual observer, the construction of a news story may appear simple; an event occurs and the journalist subsequently records this event in an objective and fair manner. However, as Hall et al (1978) identified, events do not become naturally newsworthy in themselves and news is the end-product of a complex process, one that is created by the application of news values.

The foundation study of news values was undertaken by Norwegian theorists Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge in 1965. Research shows that potential news stories must satisfy certain criteria before an event is considered newsworthy (Harcup and O’Neil, 2001). Among the criteria were: amplitude – the dramatic effect of an event; clarity – the unambiguous nature of the event; meaningfulness – the emotional impact of the event; unexpectedness – the unanticipated occurrence of the event; negativity – the harmfulness of the event; continuity - whereby the event becomes a running story; and personification – whereby an event is held up as personifying the moral state of society (Galtung and Ruge; Cohen and Young, 1973). According to Galtung and Ruge (1973), the more that an event satisfies these criteria, the more likely it is that the event will become news. As O’Brien (2007) argued, crime satisfies all of these news values and the ever-present nature of crime is another feature of its constant appeal. In an effort to explain how crime can become over-reported by the media, Galtung and Ruge (1973) argued that once an event became news, what made it newsworthy – its unexpectedness, its negativity – becomes accentuated. The cumulative effect of this on selection and prominence, they claimed, was to cultivate an image of society that was inconsistent with social reality. With regard to crime coverage, this would mean that more serious crimes, those that attracted the most news values, were over-reported in terms of statistics, while the less serious crimes, those that were more common in society, but less compatible with news values, were barely mentioned. Thus, this had the cumulative effect of creating a picture of society being engulfed by crime.
2.11 Media and culture

According to Hayward and Young (2007), there is nothing new about both the media and the public’s obsession with crime. ‘The compelling and sometimes salacious nature of certain crime acts ensures a ready audience for crime and it has remained an enduring theme in popular culture throughout the twentieth century’ (ibid, 109). However, what has changed is the force and range of the message as well as the speed at which it circulates, thereby making the role of the media ever more significant, yet at the same time more dangerous. The emergence of cultural criminology was characterised by efforts to make sense of the increasingly blurred lines between the real and the virtual (Hayward & Young, 2007). Cultural criminology offers a powerful theoretical basis for examining the relationship between social conditions and crime. Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (1973), among others, have conducted research on how deviant subcultures were both created by the actors involved and also by the impact of the mass media and the interventions of the powerful. A key component of Cohen’s research was the influence of the media in either creating or cultivating a moral panic. The concept of moral panic was first articulated by Stanley Cohen in his sociological study of the “Mods and Rockers” phenomenon more than thirty years ago and it is largely defined as a disproportionate social reaction to a perceived risk or behaviour (Cohen, 2002).

2.12 A Culture of Fear

Today moral panics unfold in a far more complex series of twists. The use of the term has become increasingly more frequent since the 1990’s, meaning that the term moral panic has been dogged by ambiguity (Hamilton, 2005). The search for further insight into the root causes of this phenomenon and those truly responsible for its cultivation has also gained momentum. According to Glassner (cited in Critcher, 2011), a conspicuous effect of fear is that it causes society to misrecognise real problems in order to support symbolic solutions which often worsen the problem they are supposed to tackle. The population endorses fear because it is an emotional outlet. This theory is afforded significance in an Irish context with reference to the outpouring of emotion and anger from both political and media outlets in the wake of the murders of Detective Garda Gerry McCabe and journalist Veronica Guerin

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1 In June 1996, Detective Garda Gerry McCabe was murdered during an armed bank raid in Adare, Co. Limerick by members of the Provisional IRA. Three weeks later, journalist Veronica Guerin was shot dead in her car as she waited in traffic in Naas, Co. Kildare. Irish criminologists, for example O’Donnell (2005), Meade (2000),
the extensive legislative action taken as a result. Glassner has further argued that certain fears are constructed to provide protection against other more unmanageable or inconvenient fears. This, Glassner (1999:302) believes, is why some people are more likely to accept ‘large scale constructed fears - what some sociologists call moral panics’.

While Altheide (2002) identified political and economic factors as contributing to the emergence of fear as a perception that permeates everyday life, he pinpointed the mass media and popular culture as being the principal cause behind this rise in the culture of fear. Altheide (2002) identified the use of the ‘problem frame’ by the American media to frame how fear is conveyed and how this resonates with the audience in order to ensure entertainment and audience satisfaction. ‘The problem frame characteristics are part of a format organized around a narrative that begins with a general conclusion that something is wrong, and the media know what it is’ (ibid; 49) According to Athleide, fear is communicated with greater ease in modern society, which boasts a more inclusive and integrated communication system and that is more conducive to fear as a source of entertainment. ‘The problem frame’ is a product of the American media system which became highly competitive in the 1980s as a result of a growth in news outlets and it brought with it a collective drive to make news more exciting and entertaining. Altheide (2002) argued that the discourse of fear is self-perpetuating with producers, sources and audiences alike colluding to endorse the problem frame to the point that fear becomes a predictable and even welcome experience of encountering the mass media. While Furedi acknowledged that the culture of fear is played out in the media and related organisations, he did not directly blame media practices for the creation of this culture. Instead Furedi (2006: 60) argued, that they ‘amplify or attenuate but do not cause society’s sense of risk’. The media reflect rather than construct the culture:

The media’s preoccupation with risk is a symptom of the problem not its cause. It is unlikely that an otherwise placid and content public is influenced into a permanent state of panic through media manipulation.

(Furedi, 2006: 6)

Carey (1999) & Kilcommins et al (2004), have described the media, political and societal reaction in the wake of the murders as being symptomatic of moral panic.
3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodologies used throughout the course of the research study. It begins with a synopsis of qualitative and quantitative research and will subsequently provide rationale for the use of the research methods availed of in this dissertation.

3.2 Quantitative or Qualitative?

Qualitative research can be described as a research strategy that emphasises words in the analysis and collection of data. Qualitative research contrasts with the practices and norms of the natural scientific methods as emphasised in the quantitative model and focuses instead on the generation of theories based on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world (Bryman, 2004). A fundamental aim of qualitative research is to capture the depth of the phenomenon in question rather than to merely facilitate statistical generalization (Ben-Ari & Dayan, 2008). Kvale (1996) describes the qualitative approach as attempts to understand the world from the subject’s points of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanation.

Qualitative research was considered to be a vital component of this research study as vital importance was attributed to the views of professionals working in the area as well as the manner in which crime news was portrayed in each of the participant newspapers. Qualitative research focuses more intently on individual perspectives while also developing patterns and commonalities in research. However, it is more time-consuming than quantitative research and some would argue that it employs too much subjectivity (Bryman, 2004). Quantitative research on the other hand, often rejects subjectivity in favour of more systematic, scientific methods. According to Creswell (2004) the purpose of a quantitative study is to develop generalisations that contribute to the hypothesis or theory and that enable the researcher to better predict, explain and understand phenomena. Quantitative research is therefore seen as more statistically reliable and less time consuming, however, there are disadvantages to be found with regard to both methods of research. Critics of quantitative research would argue that the method explains the way things are but does not provide the reasons for this. According to Benz and Newman (1998) it can be argued that it is impossible to understand the world in scientific terms. In light of this, it was felt that both quantitative and qualitative methods would be valuable to this research study. While quantitative content
analysis provided statistical explanation of the volume of crime news in each newspaper, qualitative interviews were also conducted to add greater depth to the study.

3.3 Newspaper Sample

Newspaper analysis was one of the chosen data analysis methods used in this research study. In order to allow for diversity, four leading Irish newspapers were chosen for inclusion. They are as follows: the Irish Times, the Irish Independent, the Evening Herald and the Irish Daily Star. In order to ensure diversity of the study, both broadsheet and tabloid newspapers were chosen for analysis.

The Irish Times, Ireland’s broadsheet newspaper, experienced circulation figures of 100,951 between the periods January – June 2011, which decreased to 96,150 between July – December 2011 (National newspapers of Ireland, 2012). One of Ireland’s leading national tabloid newspapers, the Irish Daily Star, founded in 1988, began with circulation figures of 85,979 (Kelly and Truetzschler, 1997). This had risen to 105,000 by 2008 (Noonan, 2009), however, it has endured a fall in circulation in recent times with circulation figures of 81,105 between July – December 2011 (NN1, 2012). The Evening Herald, another one of Ireland’s leading tabloids experienced a fall in circulation levels from 113,024 in 1996 (Kelly and Truetzschler, 1997), to 74,927 in 2008 (ABC Electronic, 2009). This had declined further to 62,411 between July – December 2011 (NN1, 2012). The Irish Independent has been recognised as Ireland’s most popular newspaper and an important national daily (Black, 2009). In 2008 it had a circulation of 154,610 (ABC Electronic, 2009) and it experienced the greatest circulation of the period between July – December with figures of 131,161 (NN1, 2012).

Each newspaper was first analysed in order to gather a general understanding of the volume of articles and priority given to crime news in each newspaper. This was then contextualised with reference to the Irish Crime Classification System (Central Statistics Office, 2008) in order to ensure that legitimate categories of crime were included and to avoid potential bias in relation to the researcher’s own interpretation of criminal offences. Moreover, this system has been used in other criminological research (Black, 2009) to good effect. As the dissertation conducted an examination of the nature of crime journalism in contemporary Ireland, only domestic crime news which occurred at home was included in the sample. Thus, crime news which occurred abroad was not recorded.
3.4 Content Analysis

Quantitative content analysis was conducted in order to examine the volume of crime news in each of the four newspapers used in the study. This involved counting the number of crime-related articles in each newspaper, categorising them in terms of offence and determining the percentage difference in the volume of crime news produced by each newspaper during the research period. Story placement was also taken into account. According to Krippendorf (1980: 21), ‘content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context’. The method facilitates the drawing of inferences from text and is therefore seen to be applicable to analysis of the press which is often rooted in varying ideologies. As Finnegan (1998) points out, newspapers are not written purely to inform the audience of facts; sources do not spring into being naturally, but are a product of their origins and shaped by the anticipated audience. Both advantages and disadvantages of content analysis have been identified with Berg (1998) pinpointing its unobtrusive manner as a strength, while it is argued that inferences drawn from the frequency of words can be misleading (Krippendorff, 1980).

Content analysis was carried out on four newspapers over a three week period in June 2012, commencing with the week beginning Monday 11th June and finishing with the week beginning Monday 25th June. The month of June was chosen for no other reason than it coincided with a typical month to commence data collection with reference to the research study guidelines. The data was collected from Monday-Saturday with Sundays being excluded in order to ensure an equal number of editions of each title. Hard copy newspapers were also the preferred method of analysis given the ease of use and the ability to get a better understanding of the physical layout of each newspaper.

3.5 Discourse Analysis

Content analysis was applied in this research study in order to gain a better understanding of the representation of crime in contemporary Irish print media. However, as one cannot provide conclusive answers about news coverage on the basis of numbers, it was felt that discourse analysis should also be carried out in order to thoroughly analyse the articles printed by the newspaper and gauge any differences in the ways that the stories were approached by each newspaper. Discourse analysis was also applied within the same time period and in the same newspaper sample in order to ensure consistency.
Discourse analysis was predominantly used in this research as a method of exploring the use and application of language within the context of an article and headline and the meaning with which it is imbued as a result. Discourse in relation to news media “can be explained as how systems of knowledge and power are expressed through language” (Conboy, 2007; 117). It is regarded as a fundamental study of language and the way in which it is presented in a text and includes an examination of the underlying meanings and functions of words and sentences. It analyses how meaning is made differently in different media texts, and therefore what different ways of seeing and thinking tend to be found there (Mattheson, 2005).

3.6 The Qualitative Interview

According to Jones, an interview is a ‘complicated, shifting, social process occurring between two people, which can never be exactly replicated’ (Jones, 2004: 259)

It was felt that this method of research would support the newspaper analysis as it allowed those with personal experience of working in each newspaper to give their valued judgements, therefore providing the study with credibility and avoiding generalization of the issue. It was the objective of the researcher to conduct interviews with journalists who had experience reporting crime from one of the four newspapers chosen for analysis.

Unlike a quantitative method where the researcher has a clearly specified set of research questions, in qualitative research there is greater emphasis on generality and questions tend to be of a less structured nature. A qualitative interview tends to have greater interest in the interviewee’s point of view and was therefore considered to be a suitable method for data collection in relation to this research study (Bryman, 2004). However, issues can also arise in relation to the use of the qualitative interview and Gillham (2005) has argued that interpretative bias on the part of the researcher may occur when analysing the data, usually because qualitative research may have no preceding theoretical basis and is simply concerned with changes in the social world.

It was considered that semi structured interviews would provide the best scope for analysis. This provides a list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered but is flexible in relation to the order and to the precise wording of the questions (Nicsols, 1991). Prior to the commencement of the interview analysis, the researcher compiled an interview schedule, using the research questions and incorporated the issues that the researcher planned to
explore in the course of the study (Appendix A). It was intended that this would add clarity and a sense of direction to the interviews, but the questions were also open-ended to allow respondents the opportunity to expand and develop on points where relevant. It was the objective of the researcher to conduct the interviews on a face-to-face basis as it was felt that this would allow for greater inter-relations between interviewer and respondent. However, phone interviews were used in cases where face-to-face interviews were not feasible and the interview process was arranged at a time and place of convenience for the respondent. With the permission of the participants, each interview was audio recorded and fully transcribed. Once the collection of the data began, a system of coding was applied, which involved the breakdown of the collected data into specific categories. This provides the researcher with a fluid, coherent system from which to constantly revise and decipher the data before deciding on the final draft (Strauss and Corbin; Bryman, 2004).

3.7 Sampling methods

Purposive sampling was applied as the feasibility and effectiveness of the research study was reliant upon the participation of a specific sampling group. Purposive sampling is described as the selection of respondents based on preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question (Bryman, 2004). According to Patton (2002), purposive sampling is used to obtain a sample that typifies the phenomenon under investigation and achieves maximum variance. Due to the frenzied nature of journalism and the busy schedule of each of the desired participants, there were some difficulties in recruiting respondents for this study. Candidates were selected based on their position with each of the relevant newspapers and were subsequently contacted using email or existing contacts from a previous research study. In some instances, snowball sampling was considered to be a useful technique as it was sometimes necessary to use an existing journalism contact in order to contact a possible respondent. Snowball sampling is a form of sampling which can be employed in order to contact groups of people for whom there is no sampling frame (Bryman, 2004).

3.8 Bias and Ethical Issues

Given the subjective nature of much of the research, concerns regarding bias were present throughout the dissertation, particularly considering the researcher’s central role in the data
collection. In order to alleviate any concerns regarding bias, the researcher aimed to approach each method of data collection with the same critical outlook as far as was possible.

In relation to the newspaper analysis, no serious ethical considerations arose given the detached nature of the research, however, in relation to the interview analysis, some ethical issues needed to be addressed. In order to ensure that the research study was of a highly ethical standard, it was the aim of this dissertation to conduct the study in a completely open and honest manner. This involved full disclosure to each participant regarding the nature of the study and the issues to be discussed. Informed consent was required from each participant and the respondents were ensured of confidentiality in relation to the interviews and that identities would not be revealed in the final draft of the research study. In regard to the interview process itself, respondents were asked for permission to record the interview prior to its commencement.

3.9 Limitations and Future Study

The findings of the study must be considered in the context of the research limitations which did not allow for long-term analysis. Moreover, as a result of the volume of crime articles analysed during the research period, it was only possible to conduct detailed discourse analysis of three of the crime news stories which featured prominently in the four newspapers. Furthermore, the respondents interviewed for the dissertation, expressed both individual and professional opinions on crime journalism from their own experiences of reporting on crime. Thus, the findings of the interview chapter must not be construed as being representative of the views of all crime journalists in Ireland.

In relation to future study, although the relationship between media influence and public perception of crime was discussed, further analysis of public views on contemporary crime journalism in an Irish context, could add greater depth to the research area. This would require the use of a public survey, which presents many potential difficulties however, it has been used by previous researchers in an Irish context (O’ Connell & Whelan, 1996). Moreover, it would shed more light on the depth of public opinion regarding the current standard of crime journalism in Ireland.
3.10 Reflection

According to Robson (1993) insider research is where the researcher has a pre-existing level of knowledge and insight into the area of research that an outsider may only obtain after extensive research. The author is a journalism graduate who developed an acute interest in and passion for crime-reporting during the four year degree course. Thus, it was important for the author to combine both journalistic and criminological interests in order to produce an insightful and investigative research study. This would allow the author to merge the practical outlook of a journalist with the theoretical mind of a criminologist in the hope that the study would prove to be an educational tool for those in both fields. Whilst the process was a thoroughly enjoyable one, it also presented some challenges along the way. Analysis of the newspaper sample proved to be a long and arduous one as it was prudent to examine each newspaper on more than one occasion in order to ensure that no crime article had been overlooked. The process of deciding to which category a particular offence belonged and whether an article had crime as its primary theme, also proved to be difficult at times.

In relation to the interview process, the recruitment of respondents presented its own challenges, particularly as the research period was conducted over the summer months. The candidates were contacted before the summer in order to allow the respondents adequate time to respond. Whilst most of the selected candidates were swift in their replies, some respondents were unavailable for periods of the summer and thus it was necessary to conduct the interviews at a later stage in some cases. Disappointments are often an unfortunate feature of research and this was evident during the interview process as one candidate later withdrew their consent to the pre-arranged interview without making the author aware of this decision. However, an experienced journalist was subsequently recruited and the process afforded the author a valuable lesson in terms of the realities of academic research. Overall, the candidates who did take part in the study were generous with their time and insightful in their responses. As a result of their input as well as in-depth newspaper analysis, the research process ultimately proved to be well worthwhile and produced interesting findings.
4. Newspaper Analysis: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings in relation to both the content and discourse analysis undertaken for the purpose of shedding light on how crime news is represented in contemporary Irish print media. Combining both the content and discourse analysis was deemed appropriate as the methods complimented each other. While the content analysis provides the statistical evidence to support the findings of this research, discourse analysis develops these findings and provides advanced discussion on the substantive themes of the study.

4.2 Content Analysis

Altogether, 640 articles were analysed across 18 editions of the Irish Daily Star, the Evening Herald, the Irish Times and the Irish Independent, totalling 72 newspaper editions in the overall sample. The analysis took place over a three-week period between Monday and Saturday, 11th – 30th June, 2012. Given the expansive periphery of criminal offences, the categories of crime were correlated in accordance with the Irish Crime Classification System (Central Statistics Office, 2008). This system was employed in order to apply clarity when conducting the research and to ensure that legitimate categories of crime were not overlooked when analysing each publication. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the number of crime articles uncovered in the course of the research. This was analysed with more detail in relation to the types of articles that were used, whether the articles appeared as main news or brief news stories and it also looked at the categories of crime which featured as crime news stories.
4.2.1 Volume of Crime News

Figure 4.1 demonstrates that of crime articles analysed over the research period, the *Evening Herald* produced the greatest volume of crime coverage at 36.4% followed closely by the *Irish Daily Star* at 35.7%. The *Irish Times* (14.4%) and the *Irish Independent* (13.6%) produced a significantly lower volume of crime articles over the same period.

This suggests that a clear distinction exists between the volume of crime news found in the tabloid and broadsheet press. This is not unexpected especially if evaluated in the context of previous research, which has argued that the tabloid press consistently report a higher volume of crime news (Dahlgren, 1992) and that their readers experience a greater fear of crime (Williams and Dickenson, 1993). An interesting statistic which emerged from the data was that the *Irish Time’s*, Ireland’s most recognised broadsheet newspaper, recorded a higher level of crime coverage in the research period than the *Irish Independent*. However, the above statistics must be examined in the context of a more in-depth analysis and must be qualified with other factors which emerged from the research data and will be discussed in the following sections.
4.2.2 Format of Crime stories

It became clear following in-depth analysis of all four newspaper publications that approximately one half (46%) of all crime coverage consisted of general reporting of crime rather than detailed analysis and discussion of such incidences. A considerable portion of crime news was concerned with reports from on-going trials (30%) or reports of the sentencing process (19%). In contrast, analysis (1%), commentary (2%) and investigation (1%) articles made up just 4% of the overall crime coverage. The findings must be considered in light of market competition and the current economic climate, which create difficulties in relation to the time and resources required to provide adequate analysis. However, the research suggests that contemporary crime reporting in Ireland is determined by basic reporting as opposed to comprehensive discourse of issues pertaining to crime.

4.2.3 Priority of Crime News

In this research, brief news articles were adjudged to be those that were specifically found in the “news in brief” section of each newspaper. They were considered to be such as they provided limited discussion beyond the basic details of an individual case. Additionally, any article consisting of 150 words or less was also considered to be a brief news story. Of the total number of crime stories analysed, 46% consisted of brief news articles, highlighting the lack of detailed discussion of half of the crimes news featured in the research sample. As identified in figure 4.1, the Irish Daily Star provided a significant amount of crime coverage relative to the broadsheet press over the research period. However, closer analysis reveals that it also produced the highest number of brief news stories (50%), followed by the Evening Herald (32%). These findings highlight that while the tabloid press produce a high volume of crime coverage, it tends to be of a superficial nature.

Just 14% of brief crime stories were attributed to the Irish Times, although this finding must be considered in the context of the newspaper’s comparatively low generation of crime coverage in the first instance. While the Irish Independent contained only 4% of brief crime news stories, the analysis indicates that when the publication covered crime news, it placed greater emphasis on providing a more detailed discussion than its contemporaries. These

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2 For the purpose of the research study, general reporting was considered to be articles that consisted of reports of incidences, the subsequent investigation, as well as reports from the court, which were not conducted at the trial or sentencing stage, for example hearings in the District Court.
findings also support Reiner’s (2007) assertion that there is more likelihood of finding a broader discussion of crime and its underlying causes in the ‘quality’ or broadsheet press.

4.2.4 Front-Page News

Only 3% of the overall crime coverage consisted of front page news stories. This finding was consistent across both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers in the sample. It further suggests that while crime news is a crucial component of tabloid news coverage, this does not guarantee automatic front-page coverage.

Crime stories fulfil a similar role to royal weddings and ‘must see’ television events, mobilizing common responses (Jewkes, 2004). However, even the most extreme crimes are subject to fluctuating levels of interest with only some stories containing enough human interest to touch everyone with the emotional intensity necessary to create an air of public mourning (Greer, 2003). As was identified in the methodology chapter, articles related to crime which occurred outside of Ireland were not included in the research sample. However, it is worth noting that three stories that made front page news over the research period related to the deaths of three young women in separate incidences while abroad. Thus, although Irish-based crime stories did not feature frequently on the front page of the newspapers in the research sample, these stories in particular, attracted substantive media attention. For example, on Tuesday 12th June 2012, the trial of a man accused of murdering his Irish ex-girlfriend, Avril Flanagan\(^3\), in Spain appeared on the Evening Herald’s front page. Media frenzy also surrounded the murders of Michaela McAreavey\(^4\) in Mauritius and Nicola Furlong\(^5\) in Tokyo. What each of these stories had in common was that they involved three young, attractive Irish women who had their lives tragically and suddenly taken from them.

\(^3\) On 15 June 2012, an Englishman was found guilty of the murder of Avril Flanagan, a native of Co. Dublin, in Spain on 29 May 2009. As a result of the trial and subsequent verdict, the case received significant coverage in Irish newspapers, particularly the Irish Daily Star and the Evening Herald during the research period. The coverage included details of the macabre elements of the case, describing how the woman was stabbed up to 50 times by her former partner (Evening Herald, 12/06/12).

\(^4\) The Michaela McAreavey trial also received prominent newspaper coverage and appeared on the front page of each of the newspapers on several occasion throughout the research period. This was a highly publicised case that was accentuated by the public profile of her father Mickey Harte, manager of the Tyrone inter-county Gaelic football team, as well as the dramatic circumstances of her death, while on honeymoon with her husband in Mauritius.

\(^5\) Irish student Nicola Furlong died while on an exchange programme in Japan in May 2012. The story featured in newspaper coverage during the research period following the announcement that a suspect had been charged with her murder. She was also mentioned in newspaper coverage of her uncle’s death after an inquest ruled that he had been unlawfully killed in 2009 (Irish Times; Evening Herald, 14/06/12).
While the stories were not coded for the reasons outlined above, the use of explosive headlines such as ‘BUTCHERED’, on the front page of the *Evening Herald*, provides an interesting insight into the criteria necessary to transform crime news into a front page story in contemporary society. The research suggests therefore that only violent crime, which as a result of certain factors both appal and fascinate the public, may be sufficient to warrant front page coverage today.

4.2.5 *Individual Criminal Offences*

Across the 640 articles analysed for the study, 759 criminal offences were recorded overall. On occasion, an article contained more than one offence and thus the number of criminal offences recorded was greater than the number of crime articles in the research sample. Of the 759 criminal offences, 24 categories of crime emerged from the data and were placed into the specific categories in accordance with the nature of the offence. Figure 4.2 provides a list of each of the coded offences and the percentage total that each offence recorded in relation to the overall number of offences analysed.
Figure 4.2 *Percentage Total Recorded by Each Criminal Offence in the Research Period:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>Percentage of Overall Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape/Sexual Offences</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery/Burglary</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manslaughter</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs offence</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearm/explosive/weapon offences</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous Driving</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempts/threats to murder</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public disorderly</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal damage</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False imprisonment/abduction</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous/general</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraud</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perverting the cause of justice</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal organisation offence</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incest/child pornography</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling stolen property</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child neglect + Cruelty</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution/human trafficking offences</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trespass offences</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As illustrated in Figure 4.2 assault\(^6\) was the most common offence reported during the research period followed by theft\(^7\) (12%) and Sexual offences\(^8\) (9%). It is noteworthy that unlawful killings were the joint most commonly featured offence; the crimes of murder and manslaughter produced a combined total of 17%. According to Osborne (1995: 39), ‘Murder preoccupies the media. It is the single most newsworthy kind of crime, simple to understand endlessly different in its permutations and often ordinary in its gruesomeness’. Murder featured in just 8% of the total of crime-related articles, making it the seventh most recorded offence throughout the research period. It must be noted that in terms of officially recorded crime, the above findings correlate with annual statistics which depict assault and related offences as being extremely more prevalent than the crime of murder (Central Statistics Office, 2012). However in terms of news coverage of crime, the findings differ from previous research studies conducted in an Irish context where murder proved to be by far the most common offence represented in the articles (Black, 2009).

The findings also suggest that there is commonality in reporting of criminal offences in contemporary national media. For example, of the 24 categories of crime recorded in the sample, only 8 of these offences accounted for more than 5% of crime news. Moreover, of the 24 categories of crime used in the sample, 8 offences respectively accounted for less than 1% of crime news during the research period. The findings suggest that personal violent crime, for example assault, robbery, sexual crime, murder and manslaughter dominate crime coverage. Offences of a more minor nature do not feature as regularly in mainstream national media. The findings resonate in previous research, which has shown that newspaper coverage concentrates heavily on infrequently occurring crime involving sex and/or violence (Chadee and Ditton, 2005). Furthermore, Williams and Dickenson (1993) argue that even within the category of crime, disproportionately more space is devoted to personal violent crimes than other forms of crime.

\(^{6}\) For the purpose of the research study the offence of assault was deemed to include those of a minor nature, assault causing harm and assault causing serious harm.

\(^{7}\) This included motor theft offences.

\(^{8}\) Sexual offences included crimes of rape, sexual assault, indecent assault and defilement of a child.
4.3 Discourse Analysis

4.3.1 Introduction

Researchers such as O’Mahony (1996: 170) have been particularly critical of the increasingly salient nature of crime reporting in recent decades describing how, ‘some sectors of the media have developed a reprehensible approach which is sensational and voyeuristic’. This criticism bears significance in relation to contemporary crime reporting, particularly the use of language and the criteria for story selection. In order to maximise time constraints, three separate news stories were chosen from the research sample for discourse analysis. Each story was chosen as a result of its position as a prominent source of crime coverage during the research period. To conclude, a summary of each publication’s style of crime reporting is provided at the end of the chapter.

4.3.2 Discourse Analysis 1

Offence: Theft

Story: The trial of Carol Hawkins, the former personal assistant of Adam Clayton accused of embezzling €2.8 million euro from the U2 band member.

The story featured frequently in each of the four newspapers over the research period and it generated significant media interest throughout the extensive trial and sentencing process. Given the length of the trial, the case appeared consistently in the research from the beginning of the first week until the end of the third week. As the trial ended just at the conclusion of the research period only court reporting on the progress of the trial and the subsequent verdict was recorded. However, the headlines documented some of the dramatic details of the case, describing how ‘Clayton’s PA owned string of race horses’ (Evening Herald, 15/06/12) and ‘ADAM’S PA HAD CARD LIMIT HALF THE SIZE OF SALARY’ (Irish Daily Star, 19/06/12). Its news worthiness can be pinpointed in the celebrity and public persona of one of the principal characters of the case, U2 member Adam Clayton. In one edition of the Irish Independent for example, the article, consisting of one long column, was overshadowed by a full-length, photograph of the ‘U2 star’ indicating his position as the

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9 Following the conclusion of the trial, the accused, Carol Hawkins was convicted on 181 counts of theft from the U2 bassist’s bank accounts over a four-year period between 2004 and 2008. The former employee of Mr. Clayton has since been sentenced to seven years imprisonment.
central protagonist in the case (Irish Independent, 16/06/12). In recent times, the qualities which render stories newsworthy have been reassessed and refined to more adequately reflect today’s culture and the ‘tabloidization’ of the western media (Harcup, 2009). Therefore, it has been deduced that stories pertaining to the power elite (powerful individual, organisations or institutions), celebrity and entertainment figures, are those which are generally high up on the contemporary media agenda (Harcup & O’Neil, 2001). The newspapers’ use of Adam Clayton’s public profile in order to elevate the story was clearly evident in this case.

4.3.3 Discourse Analysis 2

Offence: Arson, Manslaughter

Story: The sentencing of John Lynch, who set fire to a house which claimed the life of five-year-old Mari Keane Connolly in Roscommon in October 2011.10

Of the crime coverage recorded throughout the research period, the coverage of this case is arguably the most emotionally charged given the young age and innocence of the victim as well as the tragic circumstances in which her life was ended. The dramatic effect of the event, the emotional impact and its unanticipated occurrence are some of the values presented which render a crime story to be newsworthy and ensure its continuity (Galtung and Ruge, 1973). Moreover, media coverage of the mother’s victim impact statement, dramatic headlines as well as photographs of the child’s relatives resulted in the personalisation of the story by the newspapers. This had the result of sentimentalising the story and highlighting the suffering of the victim’s family. The findings demonstrate that it is not only the victims of serious crimes that receive preferential treatment by the media but sometimes their families too (Jewkes, 2004). To highlight this point, it is worth noting that the loss experienced by the deaths of those involved in the criminal justice system, or to use the colloquial term –known to Gardaí- is rarely reported. The findings correlate with Jewke’s (2004) argument pertaining to ‘cultural proximity’ and how the level of coverage given by the national media to a case depends on several inter-related factors. For example, if the victim is male, working class, or has drug problems, news media perceive that their audience is less likely to relate to, or empathize with the victim, and the case gets commensurately lower publicity.

10 The accused had pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of Mari and to causing serious harm to her father, Richard Connolly, and arson with intent to endanger life. Whilst Mari’s father and two sisters managed to escape the burning house, Richard Connolly suffered spinal injuries as he jumped from the house and was unable to save Mari, who perished in the fire.
The sentencing of the accused, John Lynch, was one of only three Irish-based crime stories to make the front page of the *Irish Daily Star* throughout the research period with the headline in bold, capital letters highlighting the words, ‘ROT IN HELL YOU BASTARD’ (*Irish Daily Star*, 20/06/12). The article described how ‘the heartbroken mum of a five-year-old girl killed in an arson attack has said she hopes her killer “rots in hell” and all that she has left of her little girl is her pony tail’. A series of photographs were also published alongside the article, which pictured the victim’s parents, her father crying and her relatives also in tears. The images were accompanied by a large photograph of the guilty man. The *Evening Herald* covered the case in a similar manner, albeit not containing the same level of explosive language. Heartbreak, tragedy and the waste of a young life were conveyed in the headline: Little Mari Was So Badly Burnt I Couldn’t See Her’, while the sub headline describes the ‘Death Trial: Mum Recalls Horrific Attack’ (*Evening Herald*, 13/06/12).

In a similar fashion to the *Evening Herald* and *Irish Daily Star*, the *Irish Independent* dedicated full page coverage to the case with an array of colour photographs and an emotive headline. The headline: ‘I never got to give my little girl a final kiss, says mother of arson victim (5)’, was accompanied by a substantial article (approximately 560 words) as well as more photographs (*Irish Independent*, 13/06/12). Slight differences were noted in the reporting of the story by the *Irish Times*. The explosive headline outlined above, chosen by the *Irish Daily Star*, contrasted sharply with the more restrained and formalised headline chosen by the *Irish Times* on the same day – ‘13 year sentence for setting fire in which girl died’ (*Irish Times*, 20/06/12). Whilst the *Irish Times*’s coverage of the case was also accompanied by large photographs, headlines were of a more formal nature than those outlined above and described how: ‘Girl (5) died after man set house on fire, court told’ (*Irish Times*, 13/06/12). However, despite variances in tone and outlook, the overall content published by the *Irish Times* regarding the case did not differ substantially from the other newspapers in the sample.
4.3.4 Discourse Analysis 3

Offence: Assault

Story: The trial of the son of former MEP Prionsias De Rossa accused of assaulting his father following a sustained attack in the family home, which left the former government minister hospitalised for six days.\(^{11}\)

The De Rossa case was featured in the first week of the analysis period. Each newspaper carried coverage of the story on the same days and subsequently reported the outcome of the trial. However, unlike the case of the five-year-old girl killed in an arson attack, each newspaper did not report extensively beyond the facts of the case even after the verdict had been handed down. Therefore while the story was deemed to be newsworthy, it was not afforded particular prominence within the newspapers and the standardised court reporting, while thorough, provided the bulk of detailed discussion of the case. Each publication, although differing in layout and headlines, shared major similarities in terms of the main text, which consisted of direct reporting from the trial. The articles were uniform yet detailed and described statements from Mr. De Rossa, a taxi man who witnessed the attack, as well as testimony from a member of the Gardaí.

Examples of dramatic headlines were noted in the coverage of the case in each newspaper on 15/06/12 with for example, ‘DE ROSSA BEGGED SON: DON’T DO THIS’, by the *Irish Daily Star*. In the *Evening Herald*, above the headline ‘Son told me I’m going to kill you’, was the sentence ‘Fear: Former MEP beaten with shovel in attack, court hears’. The article went on to detail a witness account of the incident from the former MEP as he stressed that he only wanted to proceed with the trial in order to secure care and treatment for his son. On the same day, the *Irish Independent* used the words, “My son said, ‘I’m going to kill you’ – then attacked me with a shovel”. The public position formerly held by the victim is identified at the very beginning of the article. The *Irish Times* also featured standardised court reporting on the case however, the newspaper again differed from its contemporaries with the choice of a more benign headline, ‘De Rossa feared being killed’. Once again, the continuity of the story provided an example of the criteria necessary to justify a crime story in contemporary

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\(^{11}\) The attack occurred in November 2011. Mr. De Rossa’s son, Fearghal, was subsequently found not guilty of the attack by reason of insanity and the 46-year-old was detained in the Central Mental Hospital until further instruction (Irish Times, 2012).
media, one of which appears to be utilising celebrity or public persona in order to maximise news coverage.

4.3.5 Summary of Discourse Analysis:

Differences were noted in how the *Irish Daily Star* presented its crime coverage. A distinct lack of formality was evident, for example with the use of headlines such as ‘Gangster Rap Brothers Caged’ and ‘Perv Dad Jailed over Sick Porn Images’. The use of the word ‘rap’ to describe a criminal charge, ‘gangster’ to describe a criminal and the word ‘caged’ to describe a prison sentence was a recurring feature of the *Irish Daily Star*’s crime coverage. The findings resonate with Conboy’s (2006) argument that tabloid journalism is often associated with reporting of a controversial nature and a fondness for attention-grabbing headlines.

This deviated from the *Irish Times*’ coverage particularly in relation to its language, which was more official and reserved. Moreover, headlines in the *Irish Times* did not use capital letters and were not as provocative as the tabloid newspapers. Overall, it was found that the *Irish Times*’ coverage was restricted, while the more substantial crime reports were quite formal in nature. However, when a crime news story was afforded prominent position in the *Irish Times*, it was often detailed and thorough with each trial and court hearing being well documented. Overall the *Irish Independent* did not record a large volume of Irish-based crime coverage throughout the research period; however, when crime news appeared it often consisted of greater detail and discussion than its rivals. It must also be noted however, that very few articles were given the entire page and often the more prominent crime stories were laden with emotive headlines and colour photographs.

Each edition of the *Evening Herald* analysed for the purpose of this research study consisted of a page, known as ‘City Court’ which was dedicated to court reports taken from the District Courts and Circuit Criminal Courts in Dublin. This feature provided an interesting take on contemporary crime reporting and a more comprehensive analysis of the reality of most crimes. The page covered a variety of different categories from public order offences to more serious assaults and thefts. As it reported offences of a less serious nature, it was responsible for the *Evening Herald* recording a greater volume of more minor crimes than the other newspapers in the sample.
4.4 Conclusion

The content analysis carried out during this research study conveyed the important yet changeable nature of crime coverage in contemporary Irish print media. Although the tabloid newspapers in the sample produced a significantly greater volume of crime news than their broadsheet counterparts, the majority of stories did not provide detailed discussion of the crimes and crime stories were not given a prominent position within the newspaper. The broadsheet newspapers did not record a high volume of crime coverage, and the *Irish Times* in particular featured a large volume of brief crime stories. However, when a news story was given a more substantial position in the newspapers, the coverage was lengthy and detailed, especially in the *Irish Independent*. This finding supported Reiner’s (2007) argument that there is a greater chance of finding more comprehensive discussion of crime in the broadsheet press.

The findings also suggest that contemporary mainstream crime journalism remains more conducive to reporting crimes of a personal/violent nature. In particular, broadsheet newspapers demonstrated a greater propensity to report bigger crime stories, while tabloid newspapers, produced more varied coverage, with the *Evening Herald* in particular more likely to publish less serious offences.

A good continuity of crime coverage was also noted across the four newspapers with the same cases often reappearing throughout the research period. In particular, the continuity of stories pertaining to celebrity or those with a public profile was noted, even when the crime did not contain the level of violence typically necessary to demand consistent coverage. The findings support Jewke’s (2004) view that a ‘personality’ will frequently be the recipient of media attention even if involved in a fairly routine crime that would not be deemed newsworthy if it concerned an ‘ordinary’ member of the public. Thus whether they are the victims of crime or perpetrators of crime, celebrities, their lives, and their experiences of crime are deemed naturally interesting to the audience.

In relation to the discourse analysis, the emotive quality of the story was utilised through the application of sensationalist headlines, the use of colour photographs and references to the suffering of the victim or their family members. The findings resonate with McGregor’s (2002) argument that that the more an event exhibits an emotional sub-text the more likely that it will be selected as news. In stark contrast, the *Irish Times* differed slightly from the other newspapers in terms of tone by using a more formalised language, particularly in
relation to headlines. Beyond the initial layout and appearance of the stories, however, there was not much divergence between each newspaper as standardised court reporting of each case was found to be the most commonly employed style of reporting throughout the research period.
5. Interviews with Journalists: Findings and Discussion 2

5.1 Introduction

The findings of the content and discourse analysis undertaken in the previous chapter identified that crime coverage did not appear to be as prominent in contemporary news media as one might suggest. Furthermore, substantial differences were noted regarding the amount and quality of coverage between tabloids and broadsheets. The findings presented in this chapter further analyse the position of contemporary crime reporting in Irish print media from the perspectives of experienced journalists who write in the area of crime.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four journalists, two who write for the tabloid press and two who write for the broadsheet press. To protect the identity of interviewees, the newspapers are labelled Tabloid 1, Tabloid 2, Broadsheet 1 and Broadsheet 2.

5.2 Defending Sensationalism

Criticism that newspapers willingly sensationalise or embellish crime news in order to sell newspapers is especially relevant in today’s media culture. This style of reporting has been identified by researchers for example, O’Connell (2002) and O’Mahony (1996), as a volatile element of crime journalism. Respondent A, works for Tabloid 1 and has 17 years’ experience reporting on crime in Dublin. The respondent rejected the view that sensationalism is an active choice made in order to sell newspapers. It was argued instead that a story is sensational in itself because of the nature of the circumstances of that crime story. Respondent A’s view therefore was that there is a duty on newspapers to report particular stories and to place them on the front page if necessary.

Talking about the conviction of two men for the kidnap and repeated rape of a woman several years ago, Respondent A said:

Say there were three main papers at the time … the Times, the Press and the Independent. I clearly remember one paper didn’t do it and the other two gave it six paragraphs. A fella and his mate who kidnaps a woman and gang raped her all night gets six paragraphs. I know that if the ‘Tabloid 1’ had have been in existence then, we would have had that on our front page and I think we do more of a service to the victim by putting it on our front page than this cosy, consensual, middle class crap that there was in Ireland in the 1970’s that ‘oh we don’t really want to do this story’

(Interview with Respondent A, Thursday 14/06/2012)
Respondent A continued …

Crime is about bad things happening to good people. Now you can choose to minimise it, or you can choose to expose it. If we’re accused of sensationalising stuff I’m quite happy to sensationalise stuff because crime is a sensational issue.

The respondent questioned the criticism directed at certain newspapers and journalists who are accused of completely skewing the coverage of crime:

What is more important than the life of someone in this country? The life of someone who is killed in Donaghmede or the life of someone who is killed in Tallaght is much more important than the bank bailout. The state has a primary duty to protect citizens here and if people are being killed, the state is failing to protect these people so of course we should highlight that … It’s sensational because people are being murdered.

Respondent B, who works for Tabloid 2, has been in the position of crime correspondent since December 2006 and had specialised in crime news for two years previous to that. The respondent echoed the above sentiments and explained that a crime story, especially a violent crime, can be newsworthy in its own right … ‘Like, if a murder happened yesterday and you’re reporting on a murder, you’re reporting on the facts of that murder.’ (Interview with Respondent B, Friday 22/06/2012).

These findings correlate with Harcup’s (2007) argument that although journalists are accused of distorting the facts of a case, most journalists attempt to remain loyal to the truth.

In contrast, Respondent D, who has been working as a journalist for ten years and has extensive experience reporting on crime-related issues, was of the view that broadsheet newspapers are more cautious about what they produce. The respondent spoke of past experiences working with newspapers where certain details of particular cases were not revealed because it was believed that it would be abhorrent to the newspaper’s image to expose the gruesome details. Furthermore the respondent described that a desire to fully inform its audience was not an adequate excuse for a journalist to engage in explosive and sensational journalism:

I would have a very old school view of it and I don’t really go for the whole big salacious thing because I just think, I feel that if the story is powerful enough it tells and sells itself, but obviously if you’re in a particular market you need to adjust. A lot of it is just about tone and content.

(Interview with Respondent D, Monday 09/07/2012)
5.3 Language

The use of language and how crime coverage is presented was another issue which arose throughout the research study and differences were noted between tabloid and broadsheet approaches to crime news. Respondent D believed that sensationalist language can glamorise crime\(^{12}\). However, Respondent A defended against claims that sensationalist language is used unnecessarily in the tabloid press. The respondent argued that language is a subjective process and thus determining whether a word is fitting to describe a particular event or situation is essentially a matter of professional opinion. Moreover, decisions regarding headlines and sometimes the use of words within the text itself are at the discretion of the editorial team. In other cases, Respondent A argued that a particular crime story may merit the use of explosive language:

Well, for example, someone like Joseph Mc Colgan\(^{13}\), who tormented Sophia and the rest of her family; what he did was beastly. There are details which have not come out in the public domain that are absolutely horrific. So I have no problem calling that man a ‘sex beast’, I have no problem calling Larry Murphy\(^{14}\) a ‘sex beast’, he would have killed that woman were it not for those two hunters passing by so god knows what else he has been involved in.

(Respondent A Interview)

Respondent D was also of the opinion that the use of language is a subjective process and believed that language is often influenced by the hierarchy of the individual newspaper and the readership market that it is targeting:

Well look a lot of the time it’s the sub editors who decide what headline goes in and that’s a very, very difficult art form in the tabloid world of trying to communicate a lot in a very short space. ‘Sex beast’ is fantastic shorthand, it sounds better than ‘man, sexually abuses child’, you know so it is a short hand whereas we would routinely use words like ‘paedophile’ or ‘killer’.

(Respondent D Interview)

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\(^{12}\) The respondent referred to the example of young people in the children’s court who attempt to live up to the image of crime that the tabloid media generate.

\(^{13}\) In 1995, Joseph McColgan was sentenced to prison for the serial rape and abuse of his children over two decades. The man from Co. Sligo, went to England after he was released from jail in 2004 having serving nine years of the concurrent sentence given to him in Ireland. In 2010, Mc Colgan was convicted of possession of child pornography and sentenced to a further 30 months in prison (\textit{Daily Mail}, 23/06/10).

\(^{14}\) In 2001, Larry Murphy was sentenced to 15 years in prison after admitting four charges of rape and one charge each of kidnapping and attempted murder of a woman in the Wicklow Mountains in February 2001. The offence has been described as ‘one of the most horrific crimes to be committed in Ireland’ (Cummins, 2003; 9). Murphy was released from prison in 2010 after serving ten-and-a half years of his sentence (RTÉ, 13/08/10).
These findings resonate with Meadows and Ewart’s (2001) argument that journalists take their signals for reporting news from the editorial hierarchy rather than the community.

Respondent A disputed the use of formal, minimal language in the presentation of crime news and instead argued that commitment to strong reporting and providing details of the full extent of a particular crime should be seen as an attribute of tabloid reporting:

You can minimise it like some papers would or you can use the vernacular and you can say it as it is and we say it as it is and we use as hard language as we can, but that doesn’t mean that it’s sensationalizing or skewing, it’s being up front and centre or we can try and sugar coat it.

(Respondent A Interview)

Respondent D, a broadsheet journalist believed that one cannot overly ridicule the language and culture of tabloid journalism as that has the potential to insult a large percentage of the population who read tabloid newspapers. However, the respondent was of the opinion that a damaging effect of tabloid journalism is its failure to understand the complexities of crime through the use of salacious language which condemns the offender and highlights the victim’s suffering. Therefore, a balanced view of the case is not communicated to the reader, which can have the result of skewing public perceptions of crime.

5.4 Crime as a commodity

Respondent D, who has a lot of experience with court reporting, was of the view that a contributing factor to the perception of crime as being more common than it is, relates to the national media’s custom of predominantly covering news from the Central Criminal Court. These are usually violent crimes such as murder, rape and very serious assaults and according to Respondent D, ‘are covered very disproportionately to their incident levels, just because they’re the stories that are going to capture the public imagination and the imagination of newspapers much more’.

Respondent D referred to examples of very high profile criminal trials in Ireland, such as the murder trial of Catherine Nevin\(^\text{15}\) and the death of Brian Murphy\(^\text{16}\), which captured public attention.

\(^{15}\) In 2000, Catherine Nevin was sentenced to life in prison after she was found guilty of the murder of her husband Tom, at their County Wicklow pub, four years previously. She was also found guilty of three other charges of soliciting others to kill him. Nevin was the subject of significant coverage by the tabloid press and Justice Mella Carroll ordered a restriction on the press commenting on Nevin’s appearance or demeanour during the trial (O’Connor, 2000).

\(^{16}\) Intensive media coverage also surrounded the death of 18-year-old Brian Murphy, who died following an incident outside a nightclub in August 2000. During the subsequent trial of four young men accused of his
interest to such an extent that the role of media reporting in these trials was questioned by the trial judge. According to Respondent D, this resulted in criminal trials becoming almost “cinematic in quality”… ‘I mean you could write a screen play on half of the stuff because there’s usually the blonde, innocent victim, even more points if she’s a mother and if there’s adultery, you know it’s all of those things.’ It is at this stage, the respondent argued, that events can often descend into outright competition for the bigger or better headline or story and this brings with it the risk that unethical practices will follow.

Respondent C began working with Broadsheet 1 in 1995 and has considerable experience reporting on crime and security issues with two different national newspapers. The respondent was of the view that Broadsheet 1 has altered its reporting style slightly with regards to crime coverage. The respondent believed that there were pressures to conform to a more personalised style of reporting, a feature that appears to sit well with contemporary readers. Thus, there was a need to apply greater emphasis on the human side of the story, which focused on for example, the victims and the emotions experienced by them throughout the case. Respondent C argued that this move could be a knock-on-effect of the current market in which newspapers have to fight for readers. This is in stark contrast, the respondent argued, to ten or twenty years ago when maintaining its readership was never a worry for the newspaper and official reporting of court cases was the main substance of the newspaper’s crime coverage. However, this does not mean that the newspaper intends to completely overhaul its image and the production of responsible journalism remains their priority. ‘I think the sense is that it’s just updating what they’re offering in terms of online content and making it more accessible to a younger readership.’

(Interview with Respondent C, Thursday 23/08/2012)

5.5 News Agenda versus Public Agenda

The subject of public interest in crime news was a prominent discussion point throughout the research as the extent to which media influence shapes public perception of crime was questioned. Respondent B, a tabloid journalist, rejected the view that over-reporting of crime leads to a misconception of the crime issue by the public:

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killing, the backgrounds of the four accused, all of whom had attended the affluent Blackrock College, became the subject of media scrutiny (Irish Independent, 28/02/04). Three of the accused were convicted of violent disorder and one of the accused, Dermot Laide, was found guilty of manslaughter, but later had his conviction overturned (Irish Independent, 30/03/07).
You see I wouldn’t accept that crime coverage distorts how people feel about crime. Like, do papers cover crime because that’s what the readers want us to do? But bar very unique or rare examples in any newspaper; any of the crimes that are being reported on a daily basis, that’s all stuff that happened. That’s all stuff that happened the day before or the night before so from that point of view I wouldn’t accept that papers that have a lot of crime coverage are distorting how the general public feel about crime.

(Respondent B Interview)

Respondent C, a broadsheet journalist, was of the view that crime appeals to both the public agenda and the news agenda because it is a culture that people are familiar with, and it sells newspapers. Respondent C described how ‘it’s a cultural given now that an outrageous crime story placed on the front page will sell more copies’. Moreover, Respondent C explained that it can be difficult to understand whether crime news is generated by either push or pull factors and whether the dominant influence is exerted by the expectant audience: ‘It’s just a given now. Nobody questions it and nobody says “let’s put some good news on the front page”, that just doesn’t work’. This view correlates with Hall et al’s (1978) argument that the ubiquity of bad news is seldom challenged and that negativity is an elite criterion of news coverage.

Respondent D believed that crime is a valued commodity because of its indefinable newsworthiness, which endears it to the public. ‘It ticks a lot of boxes especially those big, big trials tick a lot of boxes because it’s human interest. It’s the ultimate human interest story you know, humanity in its extreme so people are very, very interested.’ However, the respondent was also of the view that there can be a voyeuristic element to this type of crime coverage particularly of high profile criminal trials with which the public can become fascinated and thereby claim ownership over them.

I always wonder who drives it more, is it the media or is it the public. Is it a little of both? You know I think it’s a bit trite just to say ‘if it bleeds it leads’, it’s more than that. There is undoubtedly a process by which, and whether its crime or any other area; every day or every week when you’re deciding, there are news values that inform what gets number one, what gets number two and so on.

(Respondent D Interview)

Respondent D argued that readers play a huge role in determining news output and they have become increasingly demanding in their appetite for crime stories:
I’ve been in journalism ten years and I’m fascinated by the role between us and the people that we report to, especially at a time when readers in this really competitive area are very demanding and very articulate about what they want and the thing about it is, crime works for them.

(Respondent D Interview)

5.6 Prioritising Crime News

Each respondent acknowledged that crime serves newspapers very well with extraordinary coverage arising out of certain cases. However, the respondents differed in their perspectives on the category of crime stories that warrant prominent coverage in contemporary media. Respondent A, for example argued that all murders and other serious crime should be featured on the front page. Respondents C and D on the other hand, suggested that in an era of extreme competition for market space and circulation, the hierarchy of murders that people are interested in have become more defined. According to Respondent C:

The most sensationalised murder would be the murder of a child and then a woman, a young woman. In it, the supposed innocence of the victim being the primary thing that puts it to the top of a news agenda and then down at the bottom is a young criminal, a young man with a criminal conviction or a series of criminal convictions. If they are killed, obviously there is interest to some degree but it’s a completely different tone that’s used to describe it because you’re not seeing them as an innocent victim.

(Respondent C, Interview)

This view also supports Jewke’s (2004) argument that if the individual in question is young, female, white, middle-class and conventionally attractive, the media are more likely to cover the case than if the victim is for example, a working-class boy or an older woman.

Respondent D was of a similar view explaining that: ‘It really is quite macabre because it means that something particularly outstanding has to happen for a front page to be cleared in order to facilitate a major crime story.’ Respondent D also described how the increase in the number of murders and serious violent crime has led to a desensitisation process whereby only certain crimes truly shock and horrify the public in contemporary society to warrant extensive coverage by the media:

When I started out ten years ago, you’d pay attention if there was, you know in a busy news room you’d pay attention to a murder; now it has to have a particularly big element or factor to it to grab your attention as a reporter let alone a member of the public, so I think that people have been sensitised to it.

(Respondent D Interview)
The findings consolidate Mc Gregor’s (2002) belief that crime news is a commodity that now demands amplified emotion. A news subject who cries, expresses anger, or is moved to display some other emotion because of the poignancy and fragility of the human condition is inherently more interesting and thus is afforded increased newsworthiness as a source.

5.7 Broadsheet versus tabloid

Respondent A and Respondent B, both tabloid journalists, rejected the view that certain newspapers are more inclined to exaggerate stories that warrant only a few paragraphs by the use of prolonged coverage which utilises for example, big headlines and photographs. Respondent B argued that it essentially comes down to individual taste: ‘All I can say is that it’s a matter of opinion for someone whether it’s three paragraphs or three pages. Yes, you have to look at things on a case by case basis; it’s just a matter of opinion really.’

Respondent A similarly rejected this criticism of tabloid newspapers and argued that decisions regarding output of crime stories are completely subjective and dictated by the style of the newspaper in question:

Who is to say that a story warrants three paragraphs? Who is to say that? The Irish Times may only give it three paragraphs … every newspaper stands and falls by what it does and the Irish Times and the Irish Examiner have terrible front pages, but that’s their choice.

(Respondent A Interview)

Respondent A held the view that it is professional opinion regarding tone and layout and that each publication must take responsibility for their individual approach to crime news:

If we do something good one day, more people will buy the newspaper the next day; if we do something bad, fewer people will buy the paper the next day so we live and die by what we do and it’s entirely subjective, of course it’s entirely subjective. But maybe we might decide that ‘in our opinion, in our professional opinion this story is worth more than three paragraphs’.

Respondent C was of the opinion that it’s always been the response of tabloids to claim that they are more in touch with what’s happening in the tougher parts of cities and towns and their readers are the ones that are really affected by it. However the respondent contended that:
It’s been about shock horror, using these stories to sell papers at the end of the day. I don’t think they actually genuinely believe they are providing any social service. It’s something that they do to make it into the papers.

(Respondent C Interview)

Although Respondent D held the view that crime reporting matters more to tabloid newspapers to a certain extent, the journalist argued that it is only because broadsheet newspapers cover a bigger range of issues:

There is a sense in the tabloid world that that’s what they do, that crime is more significant to them than broadsheets and that is true up to a point. But look ‘Broadsheet 2’ is noted for when a really big trial happens; we go to town on it.

Respondent C dismissed criticism that certain broadsheet newspapers do not subscribe to crime reporting as much as other newspapers. In relation to ‘Broadsheet 1’, Respondent C recalled reporters becoming more hungry and competitive in the area of crime reporting, particular in the 1990’s. However, the respondent was of the view that the newspaper always maintained a balance between getting to stories first and upholding credibility. The respondent believed that this was done by not crossing the line and engaging the style of journalism that exploits peoples’ fears. Respondent C described this approach to crime journalism as the ‘honourable thing to do’.

5.8 Moving Forward

In relation to the future of crime reporting, both broadsheet journalists advocated the need to introduce more analytical crime journalism, which would look beyond the superficial crime story and focus more intently on the causes and effects of crime. According to Respondent D, ‘there’s no real analysis and that’s where crime correspondents, crime reporting in general falls short I think’. The respondent blamed the lack of contemporary crime analysis on the ‘tyranny of the news cycle’ which essentially dictates what news will be afforded more in-depth analysis. In the present day, this type of analysis is more concerned with the economic and political landscape as opposed to when the respondent first joined Broadsheet 2 and was writing comment and opinion pieces on crime issues every week. Respondent C reinforced the need for a combination of ‘gritty’ reporting as well as more in-depth analysis of the crime issues really affecting society. ‘I’d like to see more stories about the kind of everyday lives that people are living in certain parts of the city or countryside, affected and completely disillusioned by criminal behaviour.’
Both tabloid representatives expressed positive views in relation to the current position of crime journalism in Ireland. Respondent B was of the view that when an incident occurs, particularly a violent crime such as murder, it’s covered in great depth, indicating a healthy appetite for crime journalism. Respondent A believed that despite the negative aspects of crime reporting, good crime journalism still exists in Ireland today and continues to shine a light on society that people might not want to know about and that ‘official Ireland’ do not want people to know about.

5.9 Conclusion

Representatives of the tabloid print media defended their respective publications’ approach to crime news, arguing that a story is sensational in its own right. The broadsheet representatives took a less forthright view and argued that although a good crime story should essentially sell itself, this does not justify the use of voyeuristic reporting in order to accentuate the newsworthiness of that particular story. This supports O’Connell’s (2002) argument that entertaining people with crime, rather than informing the public about it ultimately distorts the public understanding of crime as a serious social problem.

Each representative was of the view that crime is an important commodity for any newspaper and will remain so. The findings correlated with the argument that the more a crime conforms to conventional news values the more likely it is to demand prominent coverage. As Hall et al (1978) outlined, events which are unexpected, dramatic, negative, involve elite people from an elite nation, and are personalised, have a special status in terms of newsworthiness. However, the broadsheet representatives were more frank in their views regarding the newsworthiness of crime stories in contemporary media. They argued that as a result of certain factors, such as an increase in the level of violent crime in recent decades as well as the current competitive market, a crime story was no longer guaranteed extensive media coverage unless it exuded a particular newsworthiness.

Finally, whilst each of the respondents found the relationship between media agenda and public demand for crime news to be a complex one, the findings support the view that one cannot assume that media images and crime news are simply filtered among the wider public and accepted without hesitation (Hamilton, 2005). The research suggests that the expectant public exert a dominant influence over newspaper output, particularly in the current economic climate where a decline in both readership and circulation levels has become an unwelcome feature of contemporary Irish print media. Thus the research advocates that both
media and public attitudes towards crime require reform. As O’Brien (2007; 127) pointed out, ‘the fact that Ireland has one of the lowest crime rates in Europe is a headline that has yet to make it onto the front page’.
6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Although crime remains a staple feature of national news media, it too is subject to peaks and troughs and external factors can often dictate to what extent crime will dominate news coverage on any given day. The boundless nature of crime as a vital news product was outlined in the research study. ‘It is an all-year round phenomenon and is capable of feeding the media’s appetite for dramatic and negative events to report’ (O’Brien, 2007; 122). Respondents from the tabloid media interviewed for the research study argued that crime news was a central component of a tabloid newspaper and that every murder or violent crime should be afforded significant coverage. However, while a considerably greater volume of crime news was recorded by the tabloid newspapers in the study, minimal domestic crime news featured on the front page of the publications, while 46% of the total number of crime-related articles in the sample consisted of brief news stories. Furthermore, the research suggests that although crime-related offences, when featured, were reported thoroughly and consistently, there was not much scope for analysis or commentary beyond the initial report.

In relation to public perception of crime, the research suggests the whilst no definitive answer can be given in terms of who exerts the most dominance, the relationship between the public and media is one of a symbiotic nature, as crime is attractive to both. People are not ‘cultural dummies’; they understand that news is about the extraordinary and rare rather than the repetitive and common. The public are more interested in reading about murders, than speeding violations. Thus although researchers may be able to convey that newspaper bias exists towards violent and sexual crime, they are wrong to assume that this must inevitably skew the readers’ perceptions (Anderson and Sharrock, 1979:370)

It is apparent that crime reporting is a prevalent feature of contemporary Irish print media, particularly in relation to court reporting with many of the big cases which emerged over the research period featuring consistently in each publication. Its infinite quality means that crime news will never truly fade into the background. Instead it will remain effervescing underneath the surface ready to re-emerge and claim another front page, although the threshold by which a crime story gains and maintains prime coverage is becoming more elusive. In relation to the issue of sensationalism, it is one that will continue to shadow mainstream journalism, particularly tabloid publications. However, beyond the controversial headlines and emotive photographs is essentially the same article altered by differences in language and tone across different newspapers. Finally, a recommendation that can be
offered from this dissertation is the need to apply critical thinking and a greater level of analysis in relation to contemporary crime reporting. Minimal commentary and analysis was noted throughout the research period. However the research advocates a constant need for objective, honest reporting that continues to question and expose; not only the perpetrators but also the causes and effects of crime itself. An essential objective of cultural criminology, according to Hayward and Young (2007), is to keep ‘turning the kaleidoscope’ on the way to think about crime and significantly, the legal and social response to rule breaking (ibid, 103). Thus, the enduring message of cultural criminology could provide a valuable lesson in terms of adopting a more critical approach to both the practice and consumption of crime journalism.
7. Bibliography


8. Appendix A

Interview Schedule

1. How long have you been practising as a journalist and how long have you been working with your current publication?

2. How often do you come into contact with crime news as a part of your current role?

3. Could you briefly describe an average day in terms of your newspaper’s daily practice of crime reporting?

4. How would you describe your newspaper’s approach to crime news?

5. Do you think it makes a difference depending on the newspaper that you are coming from in terms of how crime news is reported?

6. Do you think that your newspaper needs to uphold a particular reputation in terms of its crime news and how it is reported?

7. Do you think that the newspaper’s approach to crime news is mainly influenced by editorial and management decisions or do external factors such as readership expectations have an influence?
8. Some researchers have put forward the view that crime stories sell newspapers but ultimately distort the public understanding of crime as a serious social problem. Do you agree or disagree with this argument?

9. How influential is public demand in shaping how crime is reported in contemporary society?

10. In your opinion do market competition and the current economic climate have a role in determining how crime is reported today?

11. Have you ever experienced any pressures from the newspaper’s hierarchy to report crime in a particular way?

12. Do you think that national newspapers in Ireland reflect the reality of the crime situation in daily coverage of crime news?

13. Contemporary crime reporting has been criticised as having a propensity to over report violent crime and thus distorting the reality of the crime problem. Do you think this is an accurate reflection of crime reporting in modern-day Irish print media?

14. How does this compare, in your opinion, with past restrictions on media reporting in Ireland and thus their inability to report the full extent of the crime issue?

15. I am sure that you are familiar with the word sensationalism, which is often associated with modern coverage of crime news, particularly in tabloid newspapers … Do you think that this a persistent feature of contemporary crime reporting? If so, what are the negative or positive connotations of sensationalism?
16. The use of sensationalistic language is another criticism of contemporary crime reporting. What is your view on the use of language in contemporary crime reporting and how is it utilised by your newspaper?

17. What in your opinion are the main differences between the tabloid and broadsheet approaches to crime news?

18. Previous research has shown that there is typically more crime news in tabloid newspapers. Do you agree with this finding and why do think tabloids appear more willing to go after crime stories?

19. How do you view criticism that tabloids are more likely to exaggerate a crime story that may only warrant three paragraphs for example?

20. Are broadsheet newspapers more cautious in their production of crime news than tabloids and does this have positive or negative connotations for how crime news is reported?

21. To conclude, what is your opinion on the current standard of crime journalism in contemporary Irish print media?

22. Moving forward, would you advocate a different approach to crime reporting?
9. Appendix B

Chronological list of newspaper articles analysed, referenced or quoted in the research study

Irish Daily Star

‘Cops quiz trio over assault’ DS 11/06/12
‘Firearm rap man in court’ DS 11/06/12
‘He put a knife to my throat and said today I would die’ DS 12/06/12
‘Cops quiz man over assault’ DS 12/06/12
‘Teen in court over alleged attack on DJ’ DS 12/06/12
‘€310k Clayton cheque lodged into ex-pa's account, court is told’ DS 12/06/12
‘Gangster Rap brothers caged’ DS 12/06/12
‘Pair Stand trial over 3am attack with knife’ DS 12/06/12
‘Man denies murder rap’ DS 12/06/12
‘Dad held dying son’ DS 12/06/12
‘Teary wife “can't recall anything”’ DS 12/06/12
‘Mum's pain at killer's retrial’ DS 12/06/12
‘Boxing Coach Raped Teen’ DS 12/06/12
‘Witness denies making a deal’ DS 12/06/12
‘Arrests over Don Murder’ DS 12/06/12
‘Man admits killing father’ DS 12/06/12
‘Man is jailed for raping pal’ DS 12/06/12
‘Perv Dad jailed over sick kid porn images’ DS 12/06/12
‘Gave Killer New Clothes' DS 12/06/12
‘Cop plea on “feud” terror’ DS 12/06/12
‘Robbery rap pair go on trial’ DS 12/06/12
‘Thug burned Little Mari (5) to death in a jealous rage’ DS 13/06/12
‘Man's liver has to be removed’ DS 13/06/12
‘Assault rap pair face trial’ DS 13/06/12
‘Life term for man who killed neighbour’ DS 13/06/12
‘Fatal Row “Over a Cd”’ DS 13/06/12
‘Sick dad abused five daughters’ DS 13/06/12
‘P.A BOUGHT A FLAT WITH CLAYTON CASH’ DS 13/06/12
‘Garda Accused of killing “speeding” biker in accident’ DS 13/06/12
‘Attack accused “gave first aid’” DS 13/06/12
‘No jail term for ATM scammer’ DS 13/06/12
‘Brolly attack outside school’ DS 13/06/12
’”Cops came to shot raiders' aid”’ DS 13/06/12
‘Man faces OAP burglary charge’ DS 14/06/12
‘Detective testifies in heist trial’ DS 14/06/12
‘Garda gives evidence in Clayton case’ DS 14/06/12
‘Garda Threat Rap Man “was insane”’ DS 14/06/12
‘Dad jailed over €2.8m of drugs’ DS 14/06/12
‘Teenager kicked beaten-up boy’ DS 14/06/12
‘Murder case is adjourned’ DS 14/06/12
‘Death accused 'punched man' DS 14/06/12
‘“I was forced into clean up”’ DS 14/06/12
‘“Garda car cut across motorbike”’ DS 14/06/12
‘Woman denies sex with cousin’ DS 14/06/12
‘Verdict due in trial of knife-slash rap couple’ DS 14/06/12
‘KIDS SEE MOTHERS BEATEN AND RAPED’ DS 14/06/12
‘Jailed for disturbing the peace’ DS 14/06/12
‘Clayton Housekeeper owned 22 racehorses’ DS 15/06/12
‘De Rossa begged son: Don't do this’ DS 15/06/12
‘Drug debt fear led to flat jump’ DS 15/06/12
‘Murder jury to consider verdict’ DS 15/06/12
‘Blaze Neighbour Avoids Jail Time’ DS 15/06/12
‘Murder accused “suspected affair”’ DS 15/06/12
‘Life Ruined by 150kph driver’ DS 15/06/12
‘Accused in Court over raid’ DS 15/06/12
‘I threw her guts into fire’ DS 15/06/12
‘“Hostility” by teen to girl he burned’ DS 15/06/12
‘Man who spat at passers-by jailed’ DS 15/06/12
‘Jacuzzi sex rap for mute man’ DS 15/06/12
‘Man jailed on car smash rap’ DS 15/06/12
‘Clayton PA spent €1.5 Million on her credit card’ DS 16/06/12
‘“JUSTICE NEVER WINS”’ DS 16/06/12
‘De Rossa’s Son Not Guilty’ DS 16/06/12
‘Fake gun thief gets 10 years’ DS 16/06/12
‘Man due in court over drugs raid’ DS 16/06/12
‘Pair slashed Journalist’s face’ DS 16/06/12
‘FAT’S YOUR LOT!’ DS 16/06/12
‘Murder charge man is cleared’ DS 16/06/12
‘Woman Is Acquitted of Impeding Murder Probe’ DS 16/06/12
‘Assault rap man bailed’ DS 16/06/12
‘Teen admits to vicious attack’ DS 16/06/12
‘Man Cleared of Kill Rap’ DS 16/06/12
‘Teen scarred man for life’ DS 16/06/12
‘HOW BIG BROTHER HAS OUR GANGS ON THE RUN’ DS 16/06/12
‘“I don't want to kill him”’ DS 16/06/12
‘Benefits fraudster avoids jail’ DS 16/06/12
‘Teen “had drugs stashed in egg”’ DS 16/06/12
‘Judge vows to jail abuser’ DS 18/06/12
‘Man “screamed for help”’ DS 19/06/12
‘“Dara was on the ground bleeding … I asked him who shot you? He said Aidan, Aidan did Da”’ DS 19/06/12
‘Sentence Imposed an Insult to My Son's Memory’ DS 19/06/12
‘Polish Man Admits Killing Pal “in a Moment of Madness’” DS 19/06/12
‘Man Blames Cough Syrup Over Attack’ DS 19/06/12
‘No Jail for Banker Who Stole €20k’ DS 19/06/12
‘Terminally-ill man who raped five daughters will die in jail’ DS 19/06/12
‘Man denies woods murder’ DS 19/06/12
“ADAM'S P.A HAD CARD LIMIT “HALF SIZE OF SALARY”’ DS 19/06/12
‘SEX BEAST BOXING COACH MAY ABUSE AGAIN WARNS JUDGE’ DS 19/06/12
‘TRAINED COP'S ATTACK ON TWO FEMALE GARDAI’ DS 19/06/12
‘SEX ASSAULT DENTIST AVOIDS PRISON TIME’ DS 19/06/12
‘Girl's killer sentenced today’ DS 19/06/12
‘Murder attempt trial set to open’ DS 19/06/12
‘ROT IN HELL YOU BASTARD’ DS 20/06/12
‘HER PONYTAIL WAS ONLY THING LEFT OF OUR LITTLE MARI’ DS 20/06/12
‘Crash-Rap Garda was Trying to Avoid Bike Collision, Court Told’ DS 20/06/12
‘STABBED TO DEATH IN A “STUPID ROW”’ DS 20/06/12
‘Man bailed on teen rape rap’ DS 20/06/12
‘Ex-Brother denies indecent assaults’ DS 20/06/12
‘Murder rap pair further remanded’, DS 20/06/12
‘MAN CHARGED WITH KILLING TAXI DRIVER IN ROW’ DS 20/06/12
‘Woman brought drugs into prison’ DS 20/06/12
‘No Jail for Banker Who Stole €20k’ DS 20/06/12
““WOMAN'S RAPE CALL MADE ME STOP FONDLING”’ DS 20/06/12
‘Witnesses saw man get shot in the head’ DS 20/06/12
‘CLAYTON SOLICITOR TOLD €3m THEFT ACCUSED P.A TO GET LEGAL ADVICE’ DS 20/06/12
‘Drug rap man pleads guilty’ DS 20/06/12
‘Katy French case adjourned’ DS 20/06/12
‘Football star convicted of Garda abuse’ DS 20/06/12
‘Junkie burglar posed as Garda’ DS 20/06/12
‘PIPE BOMB THUGS BLOW OFF LITTLE PJ’S FINGERS’ DS 21/06/12
‘Witnesses tell trial of shooting’ DS 21/06/12
‘Boy, 5, who had his fingers blown off cried out: “What's happening to me?”’ DS 21/06/12
‘Man on trial over €134k robbery’ DS 21/06/12
‘Garda Vehicle hijack man was on drugs, court hears’ DS 21/06/12
‘SOLDIER WHO ’DANCED ON MAN'S FACE' AVOIDS JAIL’ DS 21/06/12
‘“I will never forget my Mari but I have to forget her killer”’ DS 21/06/12
‘SEX ASSAULT TRIAL HEARS MEDICAL EVIDENCE’ DS 21/06/12
‘Gardai make raid on “grow house”’ DS 21/06/12
‘“HE LAUGHED AFTER GUNNING ME DOWN”’ DS 21/06/12
‘EX-P.A. “SAID SHE SPENT ADAM CASH”’ DS 21/06/12
‘MURDER HUNT AFTER MAN IS FOUND DEAD ON BATHROOM FLOOR’ DS 21/06/12
‘Man Jailed over valium’ DS 21/06/12
‘Grooming rap man appears in court’ DS 21/06/12
‘Man admits arson attack’ DS 21/06/12
‘Jailed man on explosives rap’ DS 21/06/12
‘BATTLE AND DUM, DUM, DUM’ DS 22/06/12
‘I was absolutely astonished she'd spent €434,000 on horses’ DS 22/04/12
‘HUNT UNDERWAY TO CATCH BOMB THUG’ DS 22/06/12
‘Accused “was at the scene”’ DS 22/06/12
‘Jailbird gets two years for drugs’ DS 22/06/12
‘Prosecution in Killing case rests’ DS 22/06/12
‘Woman Held in Murder Probe’ DS 22/06/12
‘Sex case accused “Kind and Gentle” says wife’ DS 22/06/12
‘Man is bailed for two weeks’ DS 22/06/12
‘Retired Christian brother accused of assault’ DS 22/06/12
‘Gran tells court of kidnap terror’ DS 22/06/12
‘Threat man to be sentenced’ DS 22/06/12
‘CCTV tape needed in PJ case’ DS 23/06/12
‘The things she bought were not for me’ DS 23/06/12
‘Trial told of kidnap claim’ DS 23/06/12
‘Perv threatened to kill sex attack victim’ DS 23/06/12
‘MAN HIJACKED GARDA JEEP AND ASSAULTED OFFICER’ DS 23/06/12
‘GLOATING THUG CAGED FOR HORROR ATTACK’ DS 23/06/12
‘My escape from hell’ DS 23/06/12
‘I didn’t work street for 10 months … until last week’ DS 23/06/12
‘Mum jailed for neglect’ DS 23/06/12
‘Two arrested in arson probe’ DS 23/06/12
‘MAN DIES AFTER PUNCH TO HEAD’ DS 25/06/12
‘Tragic victim got one punch in the head … he fell heavily to ground’ DS 25/06/12
‘Thug who attacked journalist celebrated fatal blow’ DS 26/06/12
‘Man on trial for attempted murder’ DS 26/06/12
‘COP CLEARED AFTER FATAL ACCIDENT’ DS 26/06/12
‘Jail for mule who took coke tablets’ DS 26/06/12
‘THUG CELEBRATED FATAL BLOW TO JOURNO’ DS 26/06/12
‘EX-PRIEST ADMITS SEXUAL ASSAULTS’ DS 26/06/12
‘JURY TO BEGIN DELIBERATIONS IN SEX ATTACK CASE’ DS 26/06/12
‘Two years added to sentence’ DS 26/06/12
‘Sex attack victim says she is like a ghost’ DS 26/06/12
‘Wounded pulling knife from neck’ DS 26/06/12
‘SIX YEARS FOR STABBING PAL TO DEATH’ DS 26/06/12
‘Legal argument in Adam PA trial’ DS 26/06/12
‘“DEAD MAN'S FOOT MISSING”’ DS 26/06/12
‘Man admits burglaries’ DS 26/06/12
‘£5m COKE HAUL DEALERS JAILED’ DS 26/06/12
‘Jail for pervert who made girl (12) take porn photos’ DS 26/06/12
‘Teen kept gun over drug debt’ DS 26/06/12
‘SUPERGRASS LEADS COPS TO €280m HAUL’ DS 27/06/12
‘COPS FEAR BLOODBATH AFTER €280m COCAINE HAUL’ DS 27/06/12

‘MAN IN COURT ON JOURNO DEATH RAP’ DS 27/06/12

‘ATTACKER BIT OFF PART OF WOMAN’S NOSE’ DS 27/06/12

‘Boy charged with assault’ DS 27/06/12

‘Cops probe brutal stab attack on teen boxer’ DS 27/06/12

‘CLAYTON DENIES ASKING TO USE P.A CREDIT CARD’ DS 27/06/12

‘DELIBERATIONS SET TO START IN SEX ASSAULT TRIAL’ DS 27/06/12

‘Manslaughter rap man on bail’ DS 27/06/12

‘Dad jailed for selling cannabis’ DS 27/06/12

‘Theft rap man is refused bail’ DS 27/06/12

‘Murder trial delayed by DPP’ DS 27/06/12

‘Murder accused was “provoked”’ DS 27/06/12

‘Tiger kidnap accused bailed’ DS 27/06/12

‘Garda’s shock at alleged kick’ DS 27/06/12

‘Pair saw man shoot at car’ DS 27/06/12

‘Two arrested after drugs haul’ DS 27/06/12

‘SEX ASSAULT TRIAL JURY STILL OUT’ DS 28/06/12

‘DOUBLE WHAMMY FOR €280m DRUG SUSPECT’ DS 28/06/12

‘Nostril bite victim to undergo surgery’ DS 28/06/12

‘Airport rampage man gets sent down’ DS 28/06/12

‘Theft rap PA “booked €20k flight”’ DS 28/06/12

‘Man denies armed raid rap’ DS 28/06/12

‘Accused “drove victim to site of shooting”’ DS 28/06/12

‘Gardaí seek bag theft duo’ DS 28/06/12

‘Man denies false imprisonment’ DS 28/06/12

‘Murder trial jury deliberates’ DS 28/06/12

‘Chef jailed for pint glass slash’ DS 28/06/12

‘Gardaí probe bomb attack’ DS 28/06/12

‘CLAYTON EX-P.A TRIAL JURY TO RESUME DELIBERATIONS’ DS 29/06/12
‘Mother rape rap man goes on trial’ DS 29/06/12
‘Man assaulted Garda at bonfire’ DS 29/06/12
‘RICH SEX ATACKER FACES UP TO TEN YEARS IN JAIL’ DS 29/06/12
‘Two men charged in €280m drug haul’ DS 29/06/12
‘KIDNAP TRIAL TOLD OF PRINT’ DS 29/06/12
‘“No evidence” in fatal raid rap’ DS 29/06/12
‘Pole attack teen bailed’ DS 29/06/12
‘GUNSHOT RESIDUE “WAS FOUND IN PANTS”’ DS 29/06/12
‘Rape accused boy remanded’ DS 29/06/12
‘GARDAI APPEAL FOR HELP ON NOSE BITE ATTACKER’ DS 29/06/12
‘Man is Jailed for face slash attack’, DS 29/06/12
‘Gardaí appeal on pipe bomb’ DS 29/06/12
‘Man on trial for attempted murder’ DS 29/06/12
‘How thief spent U2 Adam's €2.8m’ DS 30/06/12
‘ADAM AND THIEVE’ DS 30/06/12
‘SWINDLER'S DAD SAYS SHE “DESERVES WHAT SHE GETS”’ DS 30/06/12
‘WOMAN IS QUIZZED AFTER NOSE ATTACK’ DS 30/06/12
‘THUG GETS 7 YEARS FOR GARDA ATTACK’ DS 30/06/12
‘MAN JAILED OVER €200K HEROIN’ DS 30/06/12
‘MAN NOT GUILTY BY REASON OF INSANITY’ DS 30/06/12
‘DNA “MATCH FOR ACCUSED”’ DS 30/06/12
‘BANK HELD UP IN TERRIFYING RAID’ DS 30/06/12
‘Teen admits robbery role’ DS 30/06/12
‘Accused guilty of murder’ DS 30/06/12
‘MAN: I WAS FRAMED OVER COKE STASH’ DS 30/06/12
‘Gun rap man loses appeal’ DS 30/06/12
‘MAN DENIES RAPING MUM ON MOTHERS DAY’ DS 30/06/12
‘DRUGS RAP MAN BACK FROM EUROS’ DS 30/06/12
‘SPIKE IN ECONOMIC CRIME AS RECESSION HITS HARD’ DS 30/06/12
‘Teen mugged kids to buy drugs’ DS 30/06/12
‘Man is accused of harassment’ DS 30/06/12
‘MONET DAMAGE: ART THIEF HELD’ DS 30/06/12

Irish Independent

‘30 seconds of madness that led to Brian Murphy's death’ II 28/02/04
‘The Anabel Killing: Drama as pathologist rethinks how Brian died’ II 30/03/07

‘Court told PA put Clayton's €310,000 into own account’ II 12/06/12
‘Gang brothers jailed for nine years’ II 12/06/12
‘Young man critically ill in hospital after row’ II 12/06/12
‘I never got to give my little girl a final kiss, says mother of arson victim (5)’ II 13/06/12
‘Solicitor jailed for stealing €750,000 from his clients’ II 13/06/12
‘Clayton's PA bought NY apartment with his money, court told’ II 13/06/12
‘Fraud probe fund paid for 28 trips by one HSE boss’ II 13/06/12
‘Mums in fight outside school’ II 13/06/12
‘Family seek 'justice' for Nicola's uncle’ II 14/06/12
‘Garda vehicle cut across biker before crash, trial told’ II 14/06/12
‘Clayton PA not entitled to write cheques for herself, court told’ II 14/06/12
‘My son said, 'I'm going to kill you' - then attacked me with a shovel’, II 15/06/12
‘Driver who “tragically maimed” passenger jailed’ II 15/06/12
‘Former PA to U2 star owned 22 horses, court hears’ II 15/06/12
‘Two men to appear in court over drug hauls’ II 16/06/12
‘De Rossa's son 'not guilty through insanity' of attack’ II 16/06/12
‘Woman cleared of destroying evidence at murder scene’ II 16/06/12
‘Fury as killer gets nine years’ II 16/06/12
‘Clayton's PA “spent 1.5m on credit card in four years”’ II 16/06/12
‘Ex-director faces sentencing for making false VAT returns’ II 18/06/12
‘Clampdown on travelling thieves’ cuts break-ins’ II 18/06/12
‘Boxing coach is jailed for raping “future world champ”’ II 19/06/12
‘12-year sentence for drug-debt gun killer “too lenient”’ II 19/06/12
‘Attack accused lost control, court told’ II 19/06/12
‘Probationer Garda attacked two female colleagues’ II 19/06/12
‘Dentist avoids jail for sex assault of girl (19)’ II 19/06/12
‘Fatal crash car was stolen’ II/19/06/12
‘Clayton PA had €23,000 credit card limit, trial told’ II 19/06/12
‘Man dies after being stabbed eight times during street row’ II 20/06/12
‘Man arrested over cannabis seizure’ 20/06/12
“‘Mari's killer knew she was in house when he started blaze”’ II 20/06/12
‘Vital evidence from ex-girlfriend secured criminal conviction’ II 20/06/12
‘Murdered pensioner (67) was “strangled at home”’ II 21/06/12
‘Drug experts clash in sex-attack trial’ II 21/06/12
‘Man jailed for shooting his cousin in legs over will dispute’ II 21/06/12
‘Shatter to decide on inquiry into murder of priest’ II 21/06/12
‘Bicycle helmet saves life of boy (5) maimed by pipe bomb’ II 21/06/12
‘Huge surge in attacks over past five years’ II 21/06/12
‘Man released from custody after stabbing’ II 21/06/12
‘Clayton aide admitted spending his money, court told’ II 21/06/12
‘Little boy was found with mum's dead body’ II 21/06/12
‘Boy undergoing tests after pipe bomb attack’ II 22/06/12
‘Woman still faces murder quiz’ II 22/06/12
‘Brother of model Gilson is banned for drug driving’ II 22/06/12
‘Man accused of sex attack is kind and gentle, says wife’ II 22/06/12
‘Astonished Adam: I bought things for my home, my PA bought cornflakes’ II 22/06/12
‘Woman in murder inquiry released’ II 23/06/12
‘Man guilty of armed airport rampage’ II 23/06/12
‘Man gets 12 years for attack that left victim in wheelchair’ II 23/06/12
‘Probe after Garda team seizes six pipe bombs from shed’ II 23/06/12
‘Frustrated customer imprisoned broadband salesman’ II 23/06/12
‘Clatyon: I never treated my PA as an indentured bond-servant’ II 23/06/12
‘Journalist murdered in assault’ II 25/06/12
‘Murder hunt launched after journalist killed in assault’ II 23/06/12
‘Voodoo' gangs trafficking women to sex work’ II 25/06/12
‘Social welfare staff threatened and spat on by benefits clients’ II 25/06/12
‘Journalist killed in a random attack of murder’ II 26/06/12
‘Journalist killed in random attack’ II 26/06/12
‘Instantly likeable and larger than life’ II 26/06/12
‘Journalist's family in shock at violent death’ II 26/06/12
‘Eugene's generosity and zest for life will remain with me’ II 26/06/12
‘Nurse changed forever by attack’ II 26/06/12
‘Fraudster Bolger “hit by son-in-law”’ II 26/06/12
‘Jail for pair who hid €4.8m cocaine haul in pineapples’ II 26/06/12
‘Garda cleared of causing road accident that left biker dead’ II 26/06/12
‘“Mr Clean” held over €250m cocaine seizure’ II 27/06/12
‘“Mr Clean” suspected mastermind behind €250m drugs haul’ II 27/06/12
‘Fugitive holds four staff hostage in chemist's shop’ II 27/06/12
‘Trainee Mechanic (21) charged with manslaughter of journalist Eugene’ II 27/06/12
‘U2's Clayton tells court his credit card was declined’ II 27/06/12
‘Gardai hunting “rabid” woman who bit of part of victim's nose’ II 28/06/12
‘Man who nearly rammed airplane gets seven years’ II 28/06/12
‘Abuse claims have devastated my life, says cleared priest’ II 28/06/12
‘Crime bosses have lost up to €3m each in “Mr Clean” cocaine seizure’ II 28/06/12
‘Clatyon PA used bank card for one year after being cut off, court told’ II 28/06/12
‘Gardai pursuing new leads in hunt for nose bite attacker’ II 29/06/12
‘Two in court over €250 drug bust’ II 29/06/12
‘Stab victim refuses to press charges’ II 29/06/12
‘Man guilty of sex assault on woman’ II 29/06/12
‘Court told Clayton's assistant “went on an orgy of spending”” II 29/06/12
‘Double killer free but must not contact victims' family’ II 30/06/12
‘Legal reform effectively freed killer’ II 30/06/12
‘Jail for ex-mayor's son in sex attack’ II 30/06/12
‘Woman quizzed in nose-bite assault’ II 30/06/12
‘Seven years for “horrific” Garda attack’ II 30/06/12
‘Trio took €67000 from victim after threatening him with hit man’ II 30/06/12
‘Clayton PA found guilty of stealing €2.8m from star’ II 30/06/12
Irish Times

‘Two arrested following discovery of explosives’ IT 11/06/12
‘Father tells of holding dying son in his arms’ IT 12/06/12
‘Mother describes having to endure retrial of son's killer as inhumane’ IT 12/06/12
‘Two Galway brothers sentenced to nine years under anti-gangland law’ IT 12/06/12
‘Garda feared for life, court told’ IT 12/06/12
‘Potential for major loss of life at airport incident, trial told’ IT 13/06/2012
‘Two accused of assault causing harm to Senator served with books of evidence’ IT 13/06/12
‘Garda claims motorcyclist speeding before fatal crash’ IT 13/06/12
‘Girl (5) died after man set house on fire, court told’ IT 13/06/12
‘Accused of cleaning up murder scene’ IT 14/06/12
‘Garda car cut across bike before crash, court told’ IT 14/06/12
‘Murdered student's family calls for justice for uncle’ IT 14/06/12
‘Man remanded in custody over robbery at home of three pensioners’ IT 14/06/12
‘Airport incident man was insane, court told’ IT 14/06/12
‘Man jailed for firing shots at house in Limerick told Gardaí he was drunk’ IT 15/06/12
‘De Rossa feared being killed, court told’ IT 15/06/12
‘Six year sentence for causing “harm almost beyond belief” to passenger’ IT 15/06/12
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