

**Is the Irish Media's Reportage of Gangland Crime True to Life,  
Despite Claims of Glorification?**

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## Abstract

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This thesis seeks to answer the research question, **“Is the Irish media’s reportage of gangland crime true to life despite claims of glorification?”** while also giving an insight into the term ‘gangland crime’ and outlining the role of the media. This will be achieved by conducting an online survey, questionnaires and discussion groups to obtain public attitude and opinion of gangland crime in Ireland, and of the way in which the Irish media report on the topic. A crucial part of the research process will be to question and discuss the methods of the journalist; from those who are investigating, researching and presenting the stories. The reading material sourced throughout the research process included both media related and academic sources. Both of which played an equal role in determining the concluding thoughts. The concluding argument will be based on gathering the opinion, knowledge and attitude from over two hundred people. From those totally unaware of what is involved, to those who are living with the activities of gangs in their everyday lives. The results of the research shows that although the way in which the Irish media report on gangland crime may not be deemed always acceptable, their facts, their determination and their courage in reporting in the interest of the public, justifies the lesser elements of glorification. They report the facts regardless of how well, or badly those facts are received by their audiences and despite constant ridicule of sensationalising and glorifying the topic of gangland crime, they continue to report for the best interest of the public.

## Introduction

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### **Is the Irish media's reportage of gangland crime true to life despite claims of glorification?**

In order to present a balanced and informed analysis of this chosen topic, an understanding is required. Like in so many other areas of human interest stories, crime is a topic of discussion and opinion. There is little knowledge or understanding by society however of why crime occurs and why the media report on gangland crime in the way they do.

This thesis will aim to inform the reader of the term 'gangland crime', the effects it has and create a greater understanding of the media's reporting. A hopeful conclusion will be to either confirm or dispute the question, using as much knowledge gained from the research for this thesis.

Before discussing the subject, clarification of the terminology used in this question is required. In doing this, the reader will be able to keep in mind the precise meaning of the question, rather than adopting a presumption of the meaning.

Reportage refers to the reporting of news topics, by the media. The term is used to represent all journalistic methods of reporting whether through the medium of TV, radio or print. Media as a term will be used to represent print, (both broadsheet and tabloid,) television, (including documentaries, drama series' and film,) and news programmes, (including TV and radio, current affairs programmes and daily news bulletins.)

'Gangland' is a term used to describe a world of organised crime, and a criminal underworld. The word gang describes a number of people who, through society associate with one another.

Gangland crime is a term generated by the media, and refers to the criminal activities conducted by these organised crime groups.

According to Merriam- Webster's dictionary, to glorify is to cause to be or seem to be better than the actual condition of a subject or topic. In this case, it would be to make gangland crime seem better than the reality of what it actually is.

Although information will be taken from specific books related to Irish gangland crime, an analysis of how these publications were written will not be discussed. For the purposes of this study, it is to represent the way the media report on gangland crime and how those who do not willingly choose to engage in the stories of gangland crime, receive the information.

Specifying this research to the Irish media, allows for greater access to those who are involved in the reporting, informing and investigating of gangland crime. In discussion the focus will therefore be largely referring to evidence from Irish sources. The opinion and knowledge of the public will correspond correctly to the evidence provided through Irish publishing and broadcasting.

Primary research will outline who the audience is specifically, and where they source their information about gangland crime. Through questionnaires, it will aim to highlight areas in society where a lack of understanding of crime sits, and where effected areas react to questions.

Gangland crime occurs within society, whether accepted or not it is a reality. Speaking to society gains an understanding of the attitude towards gangland crime in Ireland. In order to come up with a conclusion of non-bias as to whether or not the Irish media's representation of gangland crime is true to life, specialists in law, sociology, criminology and the media will be interviewed.

This area of research was chosen because of the influence it had on the decision to study Journalism. As a world which seems only suited to fictional plots, the impact that gangland crime has on society is much broader than most realise or believe. From the journalism side, a huge amount of respect and admiration is given, personally, to those who are reporting on this world on a daily basis in order to benefit the Irish people. They use their fearless and determined talent

to do what they can to assist in making Ireland a safe place for society, and this thesis creates an opportunity to identify this.

## Methodology

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In order to research and develop a strong concluding argument to the question **‘Is the Irish media’s reportage of gangland crime true to life despite claims of glorification?’** primary and secondary methods of research were used. In order to have gained a non-biased, balanced argument, it was crucial to have an understanding of the two key elements to this question.

The Irish media area is one of all genres, styles and formats. Through both print and broadcast media, crime is significantly covered and discussed. Yet, the attitude towards crime among society in Ireland seems to be one of oblivion and a lack of understanding.

Gangland crime, and the reality of this crime, was more crucial to understand and research, in order to compare facts to the ‘facts’ which the media feed the reader, listener and viewer. This could have only been done through discussing this criminal world with those who have been directly involved, witnessed and had gangland crime dominate their lives and world- whether through personal choice or not.

Both primary and secondary sources were used throughout this research. Both are equally important to compare the factual pieces of information, and relate them to communities and those directly affected by the media’s portrayal of gangland crime in Ireland.

Although many of the interviewees were those working in the media industry, there were equally a number of important interviewees from the legal profession, political and community welfare whom provided an insight into the realities of gangland crime.

An online survey questionnaire was conducted to target a broader opinion and attitude from ‘the ordinary person’. The overall attitude towards gangland crime became evident adding to the argument and allowed for the assumed conclusion to continue to develop.

Primary research for this thesis study was done to gain the opinion and attitude from over two hundred people which the table below breaks down and identifies through figures. The results of respondents are seen at the back of this thesis, from the online survey questionnaire and the youth club questionnaire which was given to respondents in person and answers were then transferred for analysis. (See pg. 52 for results.)

CATEGORY GROUP	FORMAT	SAMPLE SIZE
Journalists/ Media	Interview	5
Community Welfare	Interview	2
Politics	Interview	1
Legal	Interview	2
Online survey	Survey Questionnaire	215
Springfield Youth Club	Questionnaire	5
Finglas Training Centre	Group Discussion and Questionnaire	5
Anonymous Source	Interview	1

\*Table represents the breakdown of interviewees and respondents whom are primary sources.

Interviewees were met face to face and, in two circumstances, via phone and email. Meeting all interviewees personally, and face to face, was most definitely a priority in conducting the research and developing this thesis. As a study of journalistic practise, it is crucial to have been capable of developing discussion through interview circumstances. This is a lot more difficult via phone or email, and so was avoided as much as could have been.

The online survey was live for approximately one month whereby respondents gave an overview of their news intake and the format of news which they interacted with. The aim of this was for these respondents to represent a portion of Irish society in the attitude towards news, and media.

Out of 215 respondents only one person chose the option, “never make an effort to listen, watch or read the news,” when asked how often the engagement of national news occurs for them personally. Considering this result, it is obvious to see that news is a huge part of society,

whether deliberately engaging in it or not. It is a part of Irish people's lives and so the media's role and responsibility is proven to be hugely important, and significant.

The questionnaire was used to gather the attitude towards a specific aspect of Irish media and gangland crime. Choosing teenagers attending a youth club in Tallaght, County Dublin, it was crucial to investigate the younger generation habits of news consumption.

If attention is being given to the Irish media by teenagers as young as fourteen, daily, it is again evident how crucially important the Irish media is in society.

Similarly, the group discussion, as well as a questionnaire, was used for research involving the Finglas Training Centre trainees. A place predominantly for early school leavers, the training centre provides courses equivalent to Leaving Certificate level.

Education is such a huge factor in criminality that it was important to again, research into the attitude of a specific group of society who possess the 'profile' of someone who may be likely to turn to a life of criminality. An insight into their daily news consumption was not as important here, but their attitude towards the media was hugely.

Finally, an anonymous source was interviewed as someone closely affiliated with a well-known convicted criminal. Associated with gangland crime and involved in one of the biggest tragedies in the Irish media, it was a crucial opinion to take on board. Although their input was not directly used throughout this thesis, their opinion and attitude towards certain areas allowed for a better understanding about the effects gangland crime can cause. Also gained by speaking to this person was the view that the media's portrayal of certain events through film, and reports was accurately done so. That opinion was essential to confirm the accuracy of the Irish media.

This interview had to be done in a sensitive, carefully phrased way to ensure evidence of opinion or thoughts on the Irish media's coverage of gangland crime was valid. In return for speaking

about this topic, it was agreed the source would remain anonymous and also not be directly affiliated through name in print of this thesis.

Secondary sources used included previous published articles from a range of newspaper publications; both broadsheet and tabloid. Web sources were used to review reports of crime including prison rates and statistical information related to crime legislation. Equally important but not as affective for the argument, the use of published books by crime journalists and criminologists provided the basis to understand what gangland crime actually is.

Through online journals, a range of material has been sourced. This previous research allows for a broader reasoning and understanding into the media's reporting on crime. It provides theory and explanation into the media's responsibility of reporting on topics such as gangland crime.

Through researching and being informed about media law, the generalised opinion that the media fabricate stories seems somewhat impossible. The restrictions in place that media organisations must abide prevent falsified information being published and although there are most definitely times when this does occur, the consequences can have a massive financial implication that it is not worth the risk.

It is vital to recognise the significant coverage that crime has had on television through the production of television documentaries in the last few months. On both commercial and public service broadcast channels, there have been factual documentaries focusing on the prevention of crime, the exposure of areas of the country which would be vulnerable to criminal behaviour, and what the result of crime can be.

All three documentaries were used to focus on certain attitudes towards crime in order to make a substantial argument. Whether the creation of these factual programmes is as a result of the massive response RTÉ drama Love/Hate has had is most definitely a valid theory.

Similarly, discussions on radio programmes, commercial and public service, debate the same issues which are being raised throughout this thesis of research. The subject was researched through academic studies and evidence of the attitude towards crime by a society, and more importantly the effect the fear of crime has on society.

Through both primary and secondary sources the argument and conclusion has been decided. Evidence is provided through the methods, and objectives of the media. The primary research had a larger role in determining the thoughts and realistic attitude from today's society, whereas the secondary sources provided the evidence of theories necessary to explain the reasons behind this attitude.

## Chapter 1: A Representation of the Print Media's Reportage of Crime

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The purpose of this chapter is to acknowledge the way in which the media cover stories related to gangland crime. In doing this, it will prove that the media all work towards the same goal- to deliver the story to their readers appropriately.

In order to recognise an equal reportage of crime, three newspapers have been chosen to focus on. Each representing a different target market, and style, all three publications covered the chosen stories.

The three newspapers which have been chosen to compare are the Irish Times, Irish Independent and Sunday World. Taking into account, the Sunday World unlike the other two is a weekend newspaper, released only once a week, is relevant in the way in which they report the details.

It is equally relevant to mention that the Sunday World focuses primarily on crime stories and their investigative teams who explore and reveal all areas of crime to their readers. As a tabloid newspaper, it is more likely to have a crime story on the front page compared to the broadsheet style of the Irish Times.

The Irish Independent is Ireland's largest selling daily newspaper which is traditionally a broadsheet, but has recently introduced a compact format publication in replacement. A newspaper targeting the larger part of Irish society, it would be considered middle-ground in relation to broadsheet versus tabloid.

Interestingly, in an online survey conducted specifically for this research, nearly 53 per cent of respondents chose the Irish Times newspaper to be more appealing to them, compared to the 34 per cent whom chose the Irish Independent. A significant difference was between the 67 per cent who said a broadsheet newspaper appealed to them over the 33 per cent who chose a tabloid format.<sup>1</sup>

Two stories have been chosen to represent the coverage given. The first story is that of gang boss, Brian Rattigan, and his losing appeal for murder charges which he faced. The trial of the appeal took place on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in Dublin's Court of Criminal Appeal.

Rattigan was found guilty of stabbing Declan Gavin at the Crumlin Shopping Centre on August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2001. He received a life sentence which began in 2009. Rattigan at the time of the appeal, and still today, is serving his sentence in Portlaoise Prison.

At the same time of Rattigan's appeal case, he was found guilty of organising a drugs deal worth one million Euro from inside of prison. This case was significant as it was "the first time a drug dealer has been found guilty of charges connected to directing the supply of drugs while incarcerated".<sup>2</sup>

The second story which has been chosen is of the same topic, but is related to an international gang boss murder. At the time of writing this thesis, Ireland's latest victim of gun crime in relation to gangland was Gintaras Zelvys. On Wednesday, May 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, he was murdered on the Greenogue industrial estate, Rathcoole, Co.Dublin.

A Lithuanian native, he returned to Ireland from Lithuania the weekend before the attack. In February 2013, he completed his seven year sentence which he received for his involvement in organised crime. He served his time in Portlaoise prison originally, but was later transferred to Castlereagh prison when the extent of his smuggling operation of phones and drugs was discovered.

The appeal case was covered in all three of the newspapers, providing their readers with the information of the case, and some giving background to the case itself and the criminal involved. The Irish Times headline read as follows, "Gangland figure Rattigan loses murder appeal".<sup>3</sup>

The Irish Independent newspaper headline was “Gangland figure Brian Rattigan refused appeal over life sentence for murder”.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the Sunday World used the headline “How the Ratt was finally trapped”.<sup>5</sup>

All three publications felt it necessary to name him, in three different styles, by the third word of the headline. All three newspapers want their readers of totally different profiles to be informed of the person involved.

Although the Sunday World used an abbreviation ‘Ratt’ to name him, it is a Sunday newspaper and so, most people would be well informed by a Sunday and would have more than likely made the connection of the ‘Ratt’ being derived from ‘Rattigan’. Their use of the abbreviation is somewhat of an insult, like many of their other chosen words to represent gang members.

All three publications chose to describe Rattigan in the same way, all using the word gang in their descriptions. There is nothing strikingly different between each of the publications’ methods of naming Brian Rattigan. None of them make him seem anything but a criminal within society who deserves to be in prison serving the sentence he was handed for the murder he committed.

A significant difference between the publications report, on Rattigan being refused appeal on the murder of twenty-one-year-old Declan Gavin, is the word count. As assumed, the Irish Times gave the least content, reporting the day after the appeal decision was made. The broadsheet newspaper used only five paragraphs to portray the happenings of the court decision.

The Independent newspaper’s article went to print on the same day of the appeal case. With four times the paragraphs than the Irish Times had, a reasonable amount of background information was provided for readers. The Independent included details of the case that Rattigan was found guilty at.

The report which the Sunday World published was one of a slightly different style. For the reality of the paper being published days after the court appeal decision, the Sunday World chose to focus on the effect the decision had on those involved in the original conviction.

Using a modest twelve paragraphs, the tabloid weekend paper revealed the process of Rattigan's prosecution from the point of view of "top cop"<sup>6</sup> Denis Donegan. Representing the view of someone with first-hand experience develops the story and broadens the information provided to their readers.

The style of articles differs between the Irish Times and the Independent, versus the Sunday World. The Sunday World used an interview based feature to report on the case, whereas the other two use news story articles- using the facts without comment from any interviewees.

Regardless of the style, the important information is provided by both publications.

The media, made up of these three newspaper publications, are all reporting on the same story, using the same information but presenting it in slightly different styles- according to the style of the newspaper.

It is crucially important for readers and public to understand the differences between newspapers. Newspapers write appropriately for their readers. In cases of broadsheet newspapers, they are primarily focused on the political, business, economics and legal topics.

In comparison, tabloids tend to concentrate primarily on human interest focuses stories, in the form of news with an emphasis on celebrity and pop culture. The focus on both styles of newspapers is different, but this does not mean either is wrongly reporting on the story.

In the case of the article published in relation to the Lithuanian gang leader, there is no similar pattern from the Rattigan story. The Irish Times have the longest report, totalling thirteen paragraphs. The Independent chose an alternative angle with reporting two days after the Irish times newspaper.

Questioning whether the murder of Gintaras Zelvys was linked to an additional assault, the Independent covered the story in eleven paragraphs. At the time of the story breaking, the Sunday World had not yet gone to print and so their coverage via their online site was kept to a minimal. They did direct their readers to a previous story about the victim however.

The five paragraphs included details of the Gardaí appeal for information. The language the Sunday World uses however is largely different to the language of the other two publications. The word “blasted”<sup>7</sup> was used in the Sunday World, whereas “gunned down”<sup>8</sup> was the chosen synonym for the Irish Times.

The difference in words is the difference between the two publications focus. As a tabloid, the Sunday World has to gain the attention and keep the attention of readers who would be considered largely as working class, and would associate the chosen word with the action of a shooting.

Traditionally, the tabloids target that part of society whereas the Irish Times targets the middle class in society, who would appreciate the chosen ‘gunned down’ over the ‘blasted’. It is in the interest of the newspaper to write in a language appropriate for their readers.

From the results of the online survey conducted for this thesis, when asked what newspapers were expected to cover crime stories, the top three newspapers included the Irish Independent (15 per cent) and the Irish Times (just over 14 per cent). The Evening Herald received the highest, with 16 per cent of respondents expected to see crime stories covered in this tabloid.<sup>9</sup> The Sunday World was not an option given it was not a daily newspaper.

Evident by the following results, readers of newspapers are unsure as to what they are reading is true or false. A massive 45 per cent of respondents opted for this response when asked whether they felt Irish newspapers showed a realistic version of events.<sup>10</sup>

The two articles chosen to compare, through the format of broadsheet and tabloid, represent that the newspapers are all reporting on the same story. All three of the newspapers included the same information in order to inform their readers of the relevant details of both topics.

Rattigan's appeal case got slightly more coverage than that of the death of Gintaras Zelvis. It is important to note here however, that at the time of writing this, it was within days after the murder and so investigations were continuing.

Rattigan's case represented the Irish justice and judicial system by being refused his appeal. It also was significantly important for authorities and for the safety of the public that he remained in prison. The fact that Rattigan had not be granted an appeal for the life sentence he was handed in 2009 represents strength within our legal and justice systems.

The Irish media are reporting on gangland crime now, more than previously, because it is now widely affecting society. "Death by violence, death by gun is of public interest, but it is almost a gift to them [the media] because it such a means of storytelling, of people being concerned; it has all the ingredients".<sup>11</sup>

"It is open to the DPP to appeal sentences that are unduly lenient in serious criminal offences, in the cases of trials so in Central Criminal Court and the Special Criminal Court. They appeal less than two per cent of sentences and less than one per cent are increased. Within our own system it would seem, they get it pretty right in terms of the law."<sup>12</sup>

There is nothing in any of the articles comparison which would contradict the other. There is no sense of uncertainty when reading each of the articles and comparing them all. Yes, there are pieces of information in each which are unique to the individual article, but there is no element which would be questioned as to whether it is true or false.

## Chapter Two: It All Began Somewhere

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“Gangland crime is organised crime. Organised crime is where a group of people get together in an organised fashion to organise crime. ‘Gangland crime’ is a sort of metaphorical word for gang-land because they have their own morals, their own so called rules and regulations and structures. And, in their structures if somebody betrays somebody else, you get clipped. In the legitimate world you go to court; high court or you go to the police. Gangland crime is the activity carried out by organised crime; well organised and controlled.”<sup>1</sup>

The term ‘gangland crime’ became a massive topic of discussion for Irish society when journalist Veronica Guerin began exposing the underworld of drugs in Ireland’s capital Dublin through her investigative methods. Her death in June 1996 triggered massive public response towards gangland crime which resulted in measures put into place to prevent the continuation of this organised crime.

Guerin’s approach has lead today’s media in believing that the activities of gangs across the country is of public concern, and interest. The Irish media have continued Guerin’s unique approach in exposing the unidentified criminals, preventing the continuation of their crimes, as best they can.

Going back to the 1960’s and 1970’s was the time that ‘gangland crime’ began. The IRA, at that time, was the influence. “Organized crime as we know it today had not emerged except in the ranks of the Provos. The cult of organized crime and the cult of the gun began in those times with the Provos and spilled over into gangland in cities like Limerick, Dublin and Cork. The appalling crime situation we have today can be linked quite clearly back to the Provos and their campaign of the ‘70s and ‘80s.”<sup>2</sup>

To bring it more to modern day gangland as society knows it, Martin Cahill is the best place to start. Better known as ‘The General,’ Cahill began his life in 1949 and according to Paul Williams

“he would go on to become the most legendary criminal mastermind in the history of the Irish underworld.”<sup>3</sup> What made him most unusual was his refusal of drinking, smoking or drug taking. The General had one purpose in life and that was to plot crimes, commit the crimes, and then freely discuss those crimes without fear or care of being caught. By 1961, at the age of twelve, Cahill was convicted of his first criminal crime of larceny.

Released as a caution under the Probation of Offenders Act, Cahill did everything but be cautious and continued to present himself before the Children’s Court. In 1965, Cahill was sent to St. Conleth’s Reformatory School in Daingean, County Offaly giving him the opportunity and access to become close associates to those who later became members of the key figures in the Cahill gang.

Eddie Cahill, younger brother to Martin, Larry Dunne, John Cunningham (later known as the General’s ‘Colonel’) and John Gilligan are to name a few of the young criminals Cahill shared his time in the Oblate religious order run prison camp with. “Everyone involved in the emerging, underworld syndicate worked with Martin Cahill at various stages in their criminal careers. All of them considered him to be their General.”<sup>4</sup>

Hollyfield Buildings became Cahill’s family home at the age of eighteen, when released from Daingean in 1967. The complex of flats created a community of those in society who became social outcasts. “One former resident commented: ‘It was the worst, poorest, smelliest, rat-ridden scum-pit in Dublin’ but Cahill loved the place because it symbolized his world.”<sup>5</sup> Cahill’s luck of avoiding punishment for crimes he committed caught up on him by March 1970.

Convicted and sentenced to a four year sentence in Mountjoy Prison, he shared his time with Christy Dunne, who continued to commit crime upon release and, along with his brothers known as ‘The Dunnes’ and became well established armed robbers. 1973 saw a different style of crime occurring within gangland Ireland and allowed Cahill get his head start in robbery after his

release from Mountjoy. Cahill's first job became known today as "one of the biggest cash robberies in the history of the State."<sup>6</sup>

Connections were made as quick as the robberies were committed and by 1977 another key figure in gangland crime came on the scene in Mountjoy prison. Joining Cahill for his additional four year sentence, was John 'the Coach' Traynor. Traynor portrayed himself as being a criminal of upper class, who was respectable and was "a cut above the underworld riff-raff"<sup>7</sup>

By 1980 and Cahill's release, Heroin had taken over the areas Cahill was most familiar with and with the Dunnes controlling the drug culture, which was quickly evolving, Cahill opted out of any involvement with the drug trade.

The political turmoil that the Provisionals were causing, after the announcement by the Official IRA for a ceasefire, distracted authorities from any other forms of crime that gangland criminals were committing.

Brendan Halligan, former Labour Senator and TD during the 1973-'77 Fine Gael-Labour coalition government admits how failures caused such an uncontrollable world as we now know it; "The Gardaí didn't react rapidly enough to this new phenomenon of criminals organizing themselves. To our shame we have created a Mafia that is equal to any Mafia in Europe and have created an international crime problem of a high order."<sup>8</sup>

The Cahill's, the Dunnes and their associates saw the end of the 1970's as a window of opportunity for them and of huge weakness for the Government. They began to adopt behavioural traits and methods of the people from the North.

As security correspondent of the Irish Times, Conor Brady answered the question still asked today; 'how' and 'why' was this crime occurring. He gave three reasons; "The spill over of crime from the North, with crimes committed by republicans on the run in the South; a strong

‘imitative trend; as local criminals adopted the methods of the ‘people from the North’; and the ‘substantial reduction of Garda strength and effort’ in the South.’<sup>9</sup>

The media’s focus at the time was given to the troubles between the North and South of Ireland. Their focus was not of the activity which was developing. That is not to say it was not being covered and ignored, it was just not the focus and priority of the Irish media because the society were more concerned of the happenings between the North and South.

Irish Times journalist Padraig Yeates was one of the first to cover gangland crime in the 1980’s, known as the era of the hit man. Gangland Ireland was expanding. Dublin’s usual rows over turf were no longer solved by discussion. The closeness of criminals grew further apart and as a result “there was a proliferation of gangs and the scene became much more fragmented and violent.”<sup>10</sup>

Gerry ‘the Monk’ Hutch, an infamous serious criminal, became well known by partaking in robberies from a young age. Because of his exploits including using guns, attention was given by the media including an interview with RTÉ Radio. Hutch justified his theft admitting he could not give it up. The Marino Mart job, carried out by Hutch and his gang raided a Securicor van in Fairview, North Dublin. Hutch’s planned robbery, which was the largest cash robbery in the history of the state, earned him £1, 357, 106; over €3.1 million today.<sup>11</sup>

Fear and intimidation freed Hutch from any prosecution of the heist. In the days before the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) and anti-money-laundering legislation, criminals like the Monk were untouchable. The 1980s represented a time where gangs thrived into massive influences in Irish crime. The Garda policy during this time was to “refuse to acknowledge the term ‘organized crime’.”<sup>12</sup>

1990 was the “Year of the Gun”.<sup>13</sup> Cahill fired the first shots, one week into the first year but he was not being given the freedom he had previously been shown. Gang leaders recognised the

high risk of armed robbery which lead them to choose an alternative money making scheme- drug trafficking.

Gangland Ireland was victim to change and, it was the gang members themselves studying and theorising the way it would change. Portlaoise Prison housed gangland criminals where they made their contacts, debates were had and plans were made. “Ireland’s maximum-security prison is where the story of modern Gangland begins.”<sup>14</sup>

Home to some of Ireland’s high-risk prisoners, the E1 wing reflected the drastic change that Gangland crime had taken in the turn of the decade. The purpose of being sent to prison is for rehabilitation, retribution, incapacitation and deterrence<sup>15</sup>.

According to retired Chief Superintendent John McGroarty, it is in prison where criminals begin their friendships and alliances. “..That is how the John Gilligan gang got started, on E1 in Portlaoise.”<sup>16</sup> The friendship between Gilligan, Brian Meehan and Paul Ward, proved in video evidence to be strong and later became corroboration for one of Ireland’s biggest tragedies.

Gilligan was once described by John ‘the Coach’ Traynor as being “the best grafter I have ever met. In criminal terms he is a great businessman... But he is very dangerous if you f\*\*\* with him.”<sup>17</sup>

The media were to be proven this as a correct description. Gilligan’s gang bought drug-trafficking to a new level, one that had never been seen before in Ireland. Associates were based all over Europe which allowed for a high level of drug smuggling and distribution, while also causing devastation across the country. Veronica Guerin was not willing to let them win.

“It’ll be worse for me, and it’ll be worse for journalism or any journalist if they were to be intimidated, then that means they’ve won, and they’re not going to win.”<sup>18</sup> Guerin’s determination may have lost her, her life but it brought upon change in State law for the future of Gangland crime in Ireland.

The Noughties was a time when the Irish drug trade was worth an estimated one billion euro.<sup>19</sup> Dublin and Limerick were victims to volatile gangs controlling the cities. As a comparison, there were twenty gang-related executions in 2003. Ten years previously there were three. By 2011 the death toll of the century was close to two hundred.<sup>20</sup>

Gangland transformed; criminals' value of life diminished, and the deaths of several innocent people including Roy Collins, from Limerick, and Anthony Campbell from Dublin represented this. Martin 'Marlo' Hyland, Eamon 'the Don' Dunne, Wayne Dundon, Freddie Thompson and Brian Rattigan chose crime as a career.

“The liberal philosophy of loving the criminal, not the crime has young thugs an excuse for their behaviour – it's all society's fault.”<sup>21</sup> The new generations of gangland crime became more disconnected to society, and the attitude from society can be seen as an influence to this. The media continue to report on gangland crime in a way to inform readers, but expose those who are isolated from majorities within society.

### Chapter 3: As Stated in Irish Legislation

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Irish legislation outlines Acts of law which affect the way in which the media can, and must, report stories for publication or broadcast. Media Law, specific to the area in which is being discussed throughout this research, outlines the regulations to prevent the media publishing falsified stories.

Gangland crime is a reputable topic for attaching what can be called 'gang names' to particular people whom are involved in this type of criminal activity. There is a legitimate purpose for this practise in journalism and upholds to the obligation of the journalist to administer justice in public. It does not do harm to those who are reading the stories, it simply puts an identity to those involved, whilst protecting the media organisation.

Headlines such as “ ‘Godfather’ Murder Accused”<sup>1</sup>, “Ex-tax chief met ‘The Monk’”<sup>2</sup>, are used to protect the publications from defaming the names of the suspected criminals. The publications would lose their credibility if they continuously reported using ‘unnamed source’, ‘anonymous source’ to justify the inability of naming the criminals.

Article 40.6.1.i of the Irish Constitution states that the State guarantees the right of citizens to express freely their convictions and opinions. Due to the importance of educating public, the State will try to ensure that the organs of public opinion such as the radio and the press (it doesn't mention television or the internet) keep their right to liberty of expression, but they shall not be used to undermine public order, morality or the authority of the State.<sup>3</sup>

“Defamation is one of the most serious dangers facing journalists and the media. Eighty per cent of all defamation actions are brought against the media - and a libel action can bankrupt a small newspaper or radio station.”<sup>4</sup> The Irish media simply wish to prevent any law suits against their organisations by ensuring their use of ‘naming and shaming’ is done so correctly, according to defamation law.

According to the Defamation Act 2009<sup>5</sup>, a defamatory statement is one which tends to injure a person's reputation in the eyes of reasonable members of society. (That means that a person cannot sue for having his reputation lowered in the eyes of, for example, other members of his criminal gang.)

Defamation has traditionally been divided into two forms: libel and slander. Libel is considered to be the written form of defamation, while slander is the verbal form. The advent of modern technology has made those definitions obsolete. Even though broadcasting is, in one way, a more transient medium than newspapers, the invention of tape and video recorders and the internet means that a false statement can now be preserved in the same way as a newspaper cutting.

If the Irish media were falsifying information presented to the public, they would be culprits of an act of defamation. In this case they, like those involved in gangland activity, would be breaking the law. They could, and most likely would, face charges against their publications and would lose credibility, if they were able to continue publishing stories.

Now, a defamatory statement broadcast on radio or television or the internet would be regarded as libellous, rather than slanderous. The 2009 act abolishes the separate torts of libel and slander and replaces them with the "tort of defamation".<sup>6</sup> The change in attitudes towards newspapers has changed through the eyes of the law, according to Paul Connolly, it is now easier when it is in writing, than not;

"The libel laws are completely different for radio, TV and print. In print you can get away with a lot; you can claim people are rapists, you can claim people are murderers, and it is far harder for them to push through a libel action because in the eyes of the law less people will be effected by views put across through newspapers compared to radio and TV."<sup>7</sup>

Legal teams in media are protecting their organisations so highly that it is rare now to expose gangland members by name to prevent the risk of being sued and closed down. Although the right of freedom of speech is stated in Article 40.6.1, it is not absolute.

Subject to public order and morality, the right to freedom of speech is also guaranteed by Article 10 (1) of the European Human Rights Convention;

“In the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.”<sup>8</sup>

Due to the nature of crime reporting, it is deemed necessary to distinguish who the criminal mobs are, in the world of gangland crime. For the necessity of public safety and the responsibility of the journalist to inform their audience, it is required to then create identities to associate the criminal to the crime; without using their real names. This is not done with the objective to make the criminals somewhat better within society; it is simply a necessity.

With the intention to do so, and to provide as much information to the readers and audiences of Irish media, it is required to use alternative identities to distinguish one from the other. It is common for the media, when reporting on legal cases, to use labels such as ‘the X case’ and similarly, these methods are used in cases of gangland crime stories.

To represent these identities, names such as ‘The General’, ‘The Monk’, ‘The Don’ and ‘Dutchy Holland’ are used in the media to refrain from being accused of making a defamatory statement, which can be brought against a publication, radio station or TV channel which can cause the closure of organisations.

Newspapers continue to use these names to allow the public recognise who in fact they are referring to, as the gang names are better known than the criminals’ real names. In a survey

completed by over two hundred respondents, the results showed a significant difference of recognition between gang names and real names. The biggest was in relation to Gerry Hutch, known as 'The Monk'. One hundred people recognised the name Gerry Hutch, compared to the one hundred and eighty whom recognised his gang name, 'The Monk'.<sup>9</sup>

It's reported that the national broadcaster, RTE, paid Fr Kevin Reynolds an estimated €800,000 for libelling him in the Prime Time Investigates programme "Mission to Prey" in May 2011.

RTE's Director-General, Noel Curran, said the false allegation that the priest had raped a young African girl and fathered a child by her was "one of the gravest editorial mistakes ever made" in the history of RTE.<sup>10</sup>

A defamatory statement need not necessarily name anyone. It may suggest a person or persons by - for example - their profession, location or connections. A former Garda Commissioner was awarded £30,000 damages for the use of a graphic which featured his ears in a television programme on corruption. If just one person gives credible evidence that he recognised the complainant by the description or image, that is enough, to ground a defamation action.<sup>11</sup>

Being unable to name a suspected criminal is the case if they have not been convicted of a crime before. However, if a suspect who has had a previous offence for a crime which he/ she is a suspect for again, the name, at that stage can be published.<sup>12</sup> There is no defamation case in this situation because the reporting of a previous conviction will not affect the personal reputation of a person, as a result of making false allegations.

Media in Ireland cannot falsify a story to an extreme of making it fictional, but claiming it to be factual. Although The Constitution of Ireland guarantees rights to all of its citizens, it must be clear these rights are not absolute and may be limited in the common good. What needs to be recognised is, although the media have a significant responsibility to society, the media is made up of human beings.

Like in all cases of life, there are limitations working in journalism. While journalists are expected to have the correct, most up to date information, it is inhumane to expect that this can happen at all times. The reality of it is, journalists are fallible “trying to find out what happened in the world from people who are sometimes reluctant to tell us and, at other times, positively obstructive”.<sup>13</sup> This does not suggest that the errors journalists make go unrecognised, nor are they taken lightly.

In the case of crime prevention, legislation has been put in place to reduce crime rates and tackle the world of gangland crime. The Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009, Section 6 concerns the area of organised crime.

“‘Criminal organisation’ means a structured group, however organised, that has as its main purpose or activity the commission or facilitation of a serious offence;”<sup>14</sup> This defines what gangland crime is. Although the term may have become a media used word, gangland crime is organised crime.

Legislation in any democracy will usually “seek to protect the citizen first from unjust physical harm such as assault, and further protect their rights to property. For an act to be considered a crime, it must be considered to injure the community as a whole, not just the victim.”<sup>15</sup>

When the rights of a citizen are attacked, the State decides by law that there ought to be a form of sanction for those that violate the accepted standards. “It is with this in mind, we enact criminal sanctions to punish / rehabilitate those that violate the rights of others.”<sup>16</sup>

Irish media have a responsibility to acknowledge when the rights of a citizen are not being upheld. Journalists and broadcasters alike are the educators to the public who in cases which are alien to public knowledge, they inform society of issues which the country faces. Whether it be economically, politically or criminally- the media deals with the issues equally.

“Is it in the public interest? That is always the first question that we ask ourselves not, will it be entertaining or if it will make good ratings. With current affairs documentaries, we would ask

would it be in the public interest. Our responsibility is firstly, to ensure that [the documentary or story] is in the public interest and also, to tell them something that they didn't know."<sup>17</sup>

In December 2011, The Hindu Online newspaper questioned whether the media glorify criminals. Concluding that yes they do, their argument included the following statement from a former police officer and ex-Information Commissioner K.V.R Tagore; "At present, we see a disturbing trend of glorification of murderers and serial killers by the media. They dwell on the gory details of the crime. This has a negative effect on the readers."<sup>18</sup>

One would have to question, if the media didn't report on the "gory details" then how would the portrayal of horrific crimes such as murders be factual and valid? Murder is a serious crime. The media have a responsibility to inform the public of these crimes. Not to mention, nothing about reporting on 'gory' is worthy of being associated with 'glory' and therefore their way of reporting is not being glorified; it is being factually informing.

Without informing the people within society of the issues faced and crimes being committed, legislation would not be in place to do what is required; which is to protect citizens. The media have a role to acknowledge when legislation is being abused, to benefit society. Considering the public reaction towards crime, it is evident that the public do not like what they are hearing; which they shouldn't be. The media are succeeding in their objective to report on crime.

How anyone can justify that the way in which the Irish media report on gangland crime is anything related to glory seems bizarre. Their description and exposure of truly despicable actions by those involved in criminal gangs seems in no way glamorous.

## Chapter Four: Understood, Discussed and Judged by the Public

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According to Stephen Breen, of the Irish Sun newspaper, his role is to “deal with all matters of criminal behaviour in the public interest for the readers. That includes covering aspects of public activity, gangsterism and drugs gangs.”<sup>1</sup>

When the readers engage in news about gangland crime it seems somewhat ignorant that they would then adopt an attitude that they are unaware of what is going on. They evidently do, because 47 per cent of respondents, of the online survey conducted for this thesis, engaged in news daily.<sup>2</sup> The majority (thirty seven per cent) recognised their knowledge of crime to be ‘poor’.<sup>3</sup> Without the media’s reportage of gangland crime, it can be assumed that, that percentage of respondents having a poor knowledge of criminal gang activity in Ireland, would be increased.

“There are at present according to the Garda Commissioner twenty five criminal gangs operating in Ireland today- most are Urban based- Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Sligo- but they also have links to every county and active all over the country.”<sup>4</sup> In an Ipsos MRBI poll, only 1 per cent of the one thousand respondents felt that crime and justice was “the most important issue facing Ireland today”.<sup>5</sup>

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) latest crime figures show that there has been a significant increase in the murder and manslaughter rate, including gangland murders. “One third of the fifty four murders last year were gangland murders, up from eleven in 2011.”<sup>6</sup> Considering these statistics, it is evident that the media are reporting on an issue which is substantial in Irish society and they are highlighting an area which needs which is very much present in Ireland.

A respondent to the online survey for this research commented on a personal view of gangland crime, which was largely common amongst all respondents. “I think they should all be put in a field and let them fight it out among themselves and leave the innocent/ decent people of Ireland alone.”<sup>7</sup> The issue lies within that statement. Innocent people are not being left alone,

and are becoming victims of gangland crime. Taking Anthony Campbell for example, he was murdered as a result of being present during the assassination of 'Marlo' Hyland. An innocent twenty-one year old plumber was killed as a result of the uncontrollable actions within the organised crime underworld.

The media are showing this through their reporting but the way in which the public respond to it creates the illusion that the media are exaggerating and glamorising. Anyone being shot and killed is not glamorous- those who think differently are the ones glorifying it and making it seem unrealistic. Claiming that the way in which the media report on crimes such as murder, is somewhat glamorous is as unacceptable as if the media was in fact falsifying stories.

Twenty-one people, who have expert knowledge in various areas related to gangland crime, were spoken to for this thesis. None of those people made gangland crime a topic of light hearted discussion. By speaking to the journalists involved themselves, they are witnessing and reporting on gangland crimes often enough, that it is keeping them in a job. Paul Reynolds, crime correspondent for RTÉ, believes that the crime situation in Ireland is one "of our own making." There is enough crime out there that "every national newspaper has at least one reporter specialising in Crime".<sup>8</sup>

"The fact is that every gangland killing is a testament to our failure as individuals and as a society. It's a failure to care for our fellow citizens; a failure to give them the same chances that we got ourselves; a failure to give them the same reasons as we had for not ending up in their situation in life."<sup>9</sup>

When asked whether the Irish media portray a real life account of gangland crime through TV series such as Love/Hate, the least amount of respondents felt that it was nothing like true life. Sixty two per cent of respondents opted for the option of it being true to life, with exaggerated elements present for the purposes of entertainment.<sup>10</sup> This makes sense. Ultimately the Irish

media, in relation to TV specifically are required to entertain. They want viewers to return to their TV to allow the continuation for a production.

Yet by the media presenting these stories to the public, through newspapers, TV and radio they are accused of glorifying the world of gangland crime. Paul Williams, crime journalist and author through his work in the early eighties was ridiculed for his exposition of this criminal activity, he was laughed at by other media organisations, broadcasts were sent out by media organisations making a joke out of what Williams and Veronica Guerin were doing.

“We were ‘exaggerating’ when we said they were millionaire criminals. Then, within two months of Veronica Guerin being murdered, the Guards realised that these guys had made at least twenty five million pounds, which was astronomical. We were proved, at every level, to be right but we were told it was tabloid exaggeration.”<sup>11</sup>

“The truth is stranger than fiction.”<sup>12</sup> The fear of reality of crime is most definitely present within society. “In the late 1960s, social policymakers and researchers realized that the problem of crime was compounded by the problem of fear of crime.”<sup>13</sup> The media have been recognised as being a primary influence on people’s views of crime.

The media does not cause crime. Society causes it, and society’s failures allow for it to happen.

“The media only makes crime into a bloody spectator sport”<sup>14</sup> By watching the lives of the vulnerable map out in front of their eyes, gives society something to base their own better lives on, making themselves be grateful that it isn’t their son, their daughter, or their parent who are caught up in a life of crime.

The reality of it is, is that when gangland crime is occurring at the rate in which it is now, there is no guarantee that innocent people in society won’t get caught up in the actions of gang members. “These killings are being carried out on our doorsteps, on the streets where our children play and at the very heart of our peaceful and law abiding communities. If we don’t get

tough on crime, we risk more innocent people, like Donna Cleary, getting caught up in a spiral of vicious gangland activity. These people have no respect for our community or the people who live in it.”<sup>15</sup>

John Lonnergan has recently “turned his attention to a group of teenagers from the disadvantaged communities that keep the cells of his former alma mater well stocked”.<sup>16</sup> Conor Lally, the crime correspondent for the Irish Times newspaper, pitched the concept of training a group of teenagers to take part in a circus performance and then creating a documentary to show how intervention can prevent criminal, anti-social behaviour.

One of the teenagers, Eddie McElligott, felt the involvement in the programme allowed him to get out of the potential trouble he may have been involved in, within his community. “There’s things going on there, people falling into drugs, getting stabbed. You might get into that if you’re not careful; smashing places up or robbing cars.”<sup>17</sup> The public almost expect that certain people, from disadvantaged areas, purpose is to fill the prisons, and unfortunately it is that easy to distinguish the areas.

The media took on this project and broadcasted it on RTÉ showing that the public perception of people living in “areas of deprivation where there has been no status for males achievable through work or other interests, therefore status, money and power are gained through membership, often from early teens, of a ‘gang’”<sup>18</sup> can be directed to alternative options. The media’s role to represent the prevention, the occurrence and the result of crime is evident in publications, programmes and documentaries.

The public attitude towards gangland crime is creating an illusion that what the media are exposing is somehow false. The reality of it is, “there are crooks in politics, there are crooks in business, there are crooks in the banks, there are crooks in the church”<sup>19</sup> and the media have a responsibility to report on every part of society that is, and that is not, doing what it is expected

and supposed to do. Gangland crime is no different, and in cases of sensationalising it, there is no “need to sensationalise or ‘hype up’ a story. Crime stories are sad and shocking in themselves”.<sup>20</sup> Through real life documentaries such as TV3’s ‘The Estate’ and RTÉ’s ‘John Loneragan’s Circus’ and ‘Life on the Inside’, those who suffer in the world of crime are on camera claiming the same things the media do in their reports. There is no difference.

There is an element of making it seem like the criminal figures in gangland crime are somehow fictional characters, but the fact is, is that the media’s methods of reporting on gangland crime works. It exposes the stories to the public, it prevents law suits for their organisations and it presents a much larger issue that the country faces. It attracts interest, for the fact it creates human emotion reaction. “It’s very difficult when you go to the funeral or a home to somebody who has just lost their son to gun violence- it’s not fun. Going to funerals of young men who have died violently it is horrible.”<sup>21</sup>

In the case of RTÉ’s drama Love/ Hate it has attracted huge public response both good and bad, but according to one of the actors who plays ‘Elmo’ it is true to his experience of living in a similar environment of the Love/ Hate culture. “I don’t think we’re doing anything that is anyway far stretched from the truth, what you see in the show is how it is.”<sup>22</sup> The media’s methods of broadcasting the drama which attracted one million viewers “is one of the most watched television programmes in the history of Irish broadcasting so people must be enjoying it and engaging with it, and that has to be a good thing”.<sup>23</sup>

There is no doubt that the media’s methods of reporting on gangland crime is narrowly focused on how best it will be received by the majority of audiences, but their methods allow the message of the seriousness of gangland crime be received by the public. It is a surely reasonable explanation as to why the public are so quick to assume it is fiction and not fact because the world of gangland crime is almost so surreal that it couldn’t be happening within walking distance of some of the most influential people in the country.

## Chapter Five: Gangland Crime is a Reality in Society

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Recognising how crime affects communities demonstrates largely the purpose of the media's purpose of reporting on gangland crime. Through the print media a very specific focus is concentrated on in order to present 'news'. Through other mediums such as TV documentaries, an alternative focus is used to recognise the realities of crime in certain geographical areas of Ireland.

Speaking to two different groups of young people, living in areas surrounded by gun crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour, the knowledge and experience that minors, as young as fourteen, have about gangland crime is shocking. Their unanimous opinion that the activities which the media claim to occur on a regular basis, do in fact happen, justifies the media's reportage of this crime.

The group of trainees from Finglas Training Centre, discussed how although they do read the stories the day after an incident happens locally, there are times when they question how the journalists got the information "some stories you are told are true, some aren't true. You just don't know which one is true and which isn't."<sup>1</sup>

"Most of the things that happen in Finglas we shouldn't even be seeing with our own eyes."<sup>2</sup> Drugs, people being shot, robberies, seeing people on the ground dead after being shot. They have to report if there is a shooting, but I think they should just stick to the facts... there is no point bringing his history up; if he was in trouble with the Gardaí and that they owe this money to that person, that's what gets people whacked, the papers get people shot"<sup>3</sup>

The media tell the stories of how families and communities are broken down as a result of gangland activity. "Most of my time is spent reporting on or trying to analyse, assess or explain some of the most awful, tragic and horrific events that can possibly occur in people's lives.

Tragically and all too often, it is not peoples' lives but peoples' deaths that I have to report on"<sup>4</sup>

If the media omitted the activities of gangland crime, it would create an element of 'normality' within society and, although it is exactly that for some, it cannot be justified to be a normal occurrence in people's lives. "People look down their noses at us, and it's because they've never gone through it, we see it every day so it's normal- if it happens, it happens."<sup>5</sup>

The media's reporting of gangland crime in areas such as Finglas exposes the lives of those living in "four or five pockets of Finglas that gives Finglas the bad image it has".<sup>6</sup> Without the media's coverage of this sort of crime, it would result in an unawareness of the seriousness and harm gangland crime causes. The fact that young people are witnesses to this crime validates their descriptions of gangland crime being out of control, and being a serious issue within society.

It can be said that in certain cases such as with the broadcasting of Love/ Hate that the portrayal of the criminals is not extreme enough, to be received by some people. The explanation from a fifteen year old as to why characters such as Nidge and Darren are powerful that it was "because they have a nice house and they would make money from doing drugs"<sup>7</sup> can most definitely question the methods of portraying gangland crime. In argument, it is not the medias' responsibility to protect those who may be vulnerable to turning to that way of life, it is more important to report than not just to protect the small amount of vulnerable people. If a person at the age of fifteen believes that having a nice house and doing drugs makes them powerful, that is hardly the influence of the media that is encouraging that mind-set.

John Lonergan, former Governor of Mountjoy Prison in Dublin, in his documentary 'John Lonergan's Circus' on RTÉ puts it simply down to a recognised "six tiny geographical areas within our capital City"<sup>8</sup> where seventy-five per cent of Dublin born prisoners are from. With greater investment of care and compassion given to young people of socially deprived areas, Lonergan believes that the social behaviour can be changed, to then prevent a life in prison.

This sort of community work within the affected crime areas in the country will undoubtedly have a positive effect for those who may have got trapped in a life of crime. Conor Sludds, manager of Finglas Training Centre has had to deal with early school leavers who end up trapped in that exact life, and he sees the repercussions. “A lot of the criminals killed recently, I have known through the centre here.”<sup>9</sup>

Sludds marks the killing of Robert Gaynor as an example of how history in this underworld is repeatedly causing heart ache and how the use of a gun is causing deaths. Daniel Gaynor was shot and killed on August 10<sup>th</sup> 2010, one month after he was suspected of murdering Colm Owens, at a location next door to the training centre. The connection Sludds makes is “Gaynor was walking along with his two kids and was shot dead. At the age of about four and six years of age, Robert [his brother] and Daniel Gaynor’s father was robbing a post-office and brought the two boys with him when he committed the armed robbery, and the Gardaí shot him dead”.<sup>10</sup>

“The structural reordering of work, family, and leisure activities, and the measuring and distribution of property are more powerful factors in crime changes than the breakdown of rules, anonymity, or changes in social control mechanisms.”<sup>11</sup>

Rottman’s findings tend to highlight the importance of focusing on the process of social change as it affects the patterning of social roles and social interaction. As he says, it is not change per se that is the culprit “but the restructuring of the details of ordinary lives that creates conditions conducive to a changing level and pattern of crime”<sup>12</sup>

“Along with this interest comes also the element of fear. With all this new and detailed knowledge of crime – particularly violent crime and the criminal underworld, there is now an element of fear of crime in the community.”<sup>13</sup>

“There are now about 13,000 heroin addicts in the socially deprived areas of Dublin and a recent study indicated that heroin addicts are responsible for about two-thirds of all indictable crime in the city.”<sup>14</sup>

Aodhan O’ Riordain believes that gangland crime is “poverty eating itself up. It’s poverty turning in on itself and exacting revenge on itself. But I think the challenge like people like me is convincing everybody that it is everybody’s problem. I think if you are living in a society where young people are killing each other it’s a problem, we used to care when it was happening in Northern Ireland but we don’t have sympathy for poor people, and that’s the challenge for all of us.”<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, the media have that challenge also to expose the unknown to society for their benefit. They are ridiculed for their methods in pursuing to report on the activities of gangland crime but it is in doing that the change can occur. Their reportage of gangland crime benefits more than it does harm.

What is most definitely evident through the online survey conducted for this thesis is that ‘society’ considers gangland crime as something ineffective in their individual lives. There is most definitely an attitude of leaving gangland criminals be, as long as they stay in their own areas and not come anywhere near others. Society is happy with that response- to ignore and hope it will not turn up at their door one day.

“A Judge of the High Court, Mr Justice Robert Barr said “the greatest injustice in contemporary Irish life is our failure as a caring society to take sufficient steps to rescue from crime those who are born to it and have the misfortune of existence without reasonable support in the marginalised, economically and socially deprived fringes of our society”.”<sup>16</sup>

The attitude of teenagers aged between fourteen and fifteen seemed somewhat mature in comparison to those over the age of eighteen who took part in the online survey. Their

acceptance that the reported activity known as gangland crime does occur, was striking. One could argue their youth allows for the gullible attitude of believing everything they see, hear or read. Then again, their vulnerability can be said to allow them accept the facts and not feel a need to deny the realities.

The reality is, is that they are witnesses to the crimes of gangland. Participants of the questionnaire, given to five youth club attendees, responded to whether the activities presented on RTÉ Drama Love/ Hate represented a real life scenario. All respondents said it was real. Two commented putting it as simply as “I live in Fettercairn and I’ve seen stuff” and “it’s totally true, I live in Fettercairn”.<sup>17</sup>

If people as young as fourteen and fifteen are being exposed to gangland crime up close, in their everyday lives- it proves how existent gangland crime is. It presents an absolute reason and purpose for the media to take on the role and responsibilities to expose this part of society. The fact that some people, who may be privileged to live in a particular area unaffected by shootings and drug deals on their door steps, does not lessen the seriousness of gangland crime.

Although the media’s methods of reporting, whether in cases of gangland crime, pop culture, economics or politics, can be considered to be sensationalised for the purposes of the audience, their representation cannot be claimed to be false or misleading. The activities of gangland crime are most definitely occurring. The journalists, crime correspondents and investigative journalists who were spoken to for this research are the ones on the frontline of the crimes.

Their research and first hand experiences within the world of gangland crime is what they present to those who are so unaware that this way of life is present in the lives of many, they are convinced it doesn’t happen. Their impact on gangland crime may seem somewhat influential to those unaware of the truths of gangland crime. Like in any aspect of crime, there is a much

broader knowledge required in order to understand why crime occurs and what influences criminal behaviour- and the media seem somewhat insignificant in being a factor of influence.

“It would be unrealistic to expect any government to be able to remove motivations to offend, whether this involves a street mugging or a non-payment of tax. What can be controlled, however, are the responses to crime, which may contain within them some solutions.....

Politicians do not have the power to affect crime rates directly, at least in the short term, but they do have the power to influence the nature of the response to crime and the tone of the debate about its consequences. The responsible use of this power is in the interest of humanity, justice and economy.<sup>18</sup>

If the politicians have no control over crime rates, the media most definitely does not. They have the power to acknowledge the crime occurrence, and inform the public of that. Their power in reporting gangland crime has been demeaned by Constitutional legislation preventing An Garda Síochána directly speaking to the media. The media’s efforts and determination to protect and inform the public of criminal activity in order to prevent the continuation of crime may not always be accepted by every citizen of Ireland.

At time, their methods may cross lines which people regard as being unacceptable or cold hearted. However, from speaking to every contributor of this thesis there is one similar objective. That is to prevent the occurrence of gangland crime, hinder the continuation of death tolls existing as a result of gangland crime and to want society to have similar aims for the future of our society.

## Conclusion

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This thesis study has researched and investigated into the way the Irish media report on gangland crime, in order to determine whether or not the attitude that the media glorifies the activities of gangs is true or false. By this, it has recognised the objectives of the journalists who report on gangland crime, and why the way they report may be recognised as glorifying the subject.

The purpose of choosing this area was to question whether the information the public receives through broadcast and print is in fact a true account of gangland crime in Ireland. With a large amount of opinion circling around about whether or not the Irish media uses these stories to inform or whether it is simply a case of selling content, it would determine the truth about the media's intentions in reporting on gangland crime.

This study shows that the media's aim in reporting gangland crime is to primarily inform society of the devastating, criminal behaviours of those who are involved within the underworld of gangland. It represents a broad scale of those in society who are affected by criminal activity. The media presents the information gathered from a range of people who are experts in this area, and they investigate, source and conclude the information provided similarly to what has been done for this thesis.

The findings from interviewing those witnessing the actions of gangland criminals provide the evidence that the media are presenting a true to life account of their everyday lives. It has been recognised that for many people in society, this world is one of complete unknown and can explain as to why there is ignorance towards the media in their reportage of gangland crime.

The results of speaking to those working within the political and legal systems in Ireland represent the legislation and political demands which are required in order to control this section of organised crime. It is most definitely required to prevent this uncontrollable situation, which proves that gangland crime is as big an issue as it is claimed to be, by the Irish media.

The research into previous articles dated back from 1999 and previous to that also, up to the most recent at the time of writing this thesis allowed for an insight into the methods of reporting on gangland crime. There was no significant difference proving that the Irish media's representation of gangland crime has been consistent throughout all newspapers; both tabloid and broadsheet.

Although both formats of newspapers represent different styles and approaches in the way in which they present their reports, there is no element in the reports which would contradict the other in terms of factual information. The evidence of information from all sources of media concludes in the same way.

The results of this research suggest a lack of understanding and knowledge that many people in society have towards gangland crime. A realistic conclusion would be that although there is every intention by the media to educate and inform the public about the implications of gangland activity, it is merely impossible to achieve this in modern day society.

Overall it is an argument which does not allow for a mutual agreement on whether the media represent a true to life account, or not. Ethical principles, morals, education and opinion prevent an equal understanding into the representation of gangland crime made by the media. However, the research conducted for this thesis does represent that the reportage of gangland crime by the media is more realistic than it is a false one.

Taken together, this research suggests and validates the role of the Irish media in reporting on gangland crime. There is an undisputable place within the media and news for reports on gangland crime. The importance of reporting is proven by the evidence provided by witnesses and those effected by gangland crime. The crimes committed by gangs across the country are in no way acceptable and by the media stopping to cover this topic, it somewhat permits the continuation of the gangland culture within our society.

The findings of researching public attitude and opinion on gangland crime show that society deems this criminal behaviour unacceptable. The continuation of the media's reportage of gangland crime is crucial to control this activity by exposing the world to then allow for action to be taken like in the case of the introduction of the Criminal Assets Bureau.

This thesis aimed to gather information from those who have involvement and knowledge of the world of gangland crime. A broad scale of experts on this area were approached from areas of law, politics, criminology, youth and community welfare, journalists and investigative journalists, and most importantly the public aged as young as fourteen, to seventy years of age.

Research into the intervention of community welfare and support through groups such as Finglas Training Centre present the suggestion that more projects and programmes targeted at those living in dis-advantaged areas, vulnerable to criminal activity, can prevent the continuation of gangland crime and criminal activity overall. The ability to give a young person the confidence, reassurance and belief for them to achieve, allows them to achieve as proven in John Lonergan's Circus TV documentary.

This thesis concludes that the media represent a true to life account of gangland activity, irrespective to the attitude that it is glorified. Through researching several sources of information relating to the history of gangland crime, the crimes committed, the appalling actions made by gang members, and the many deaths that have occurred as a result, the world 'glorify' most definitely is not a word which would be chosen to describe the way the media expose this form of underworld criminality.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp.95.

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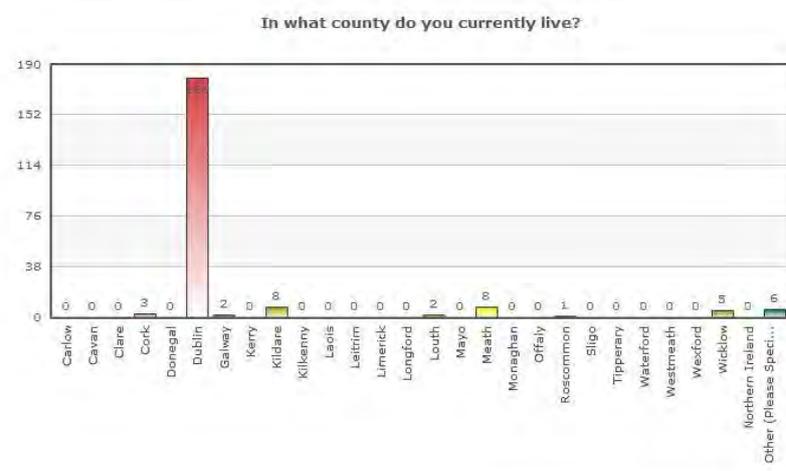
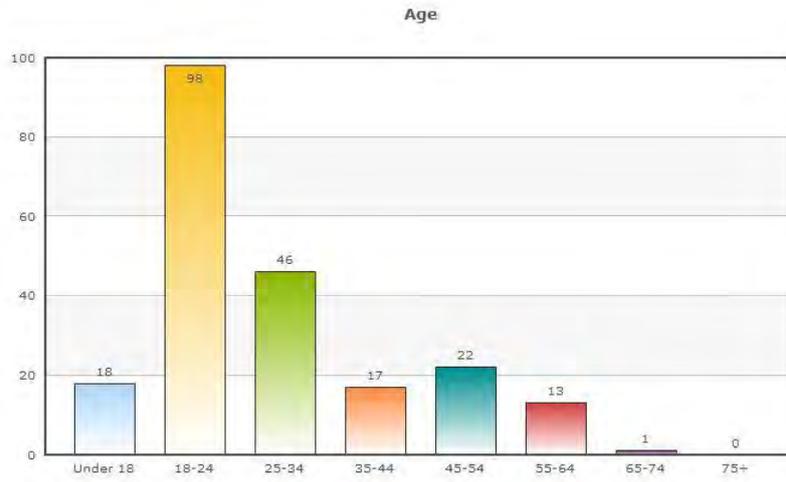
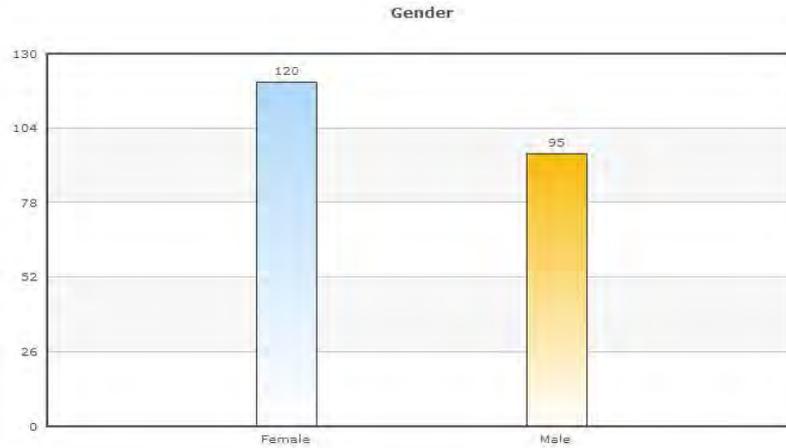
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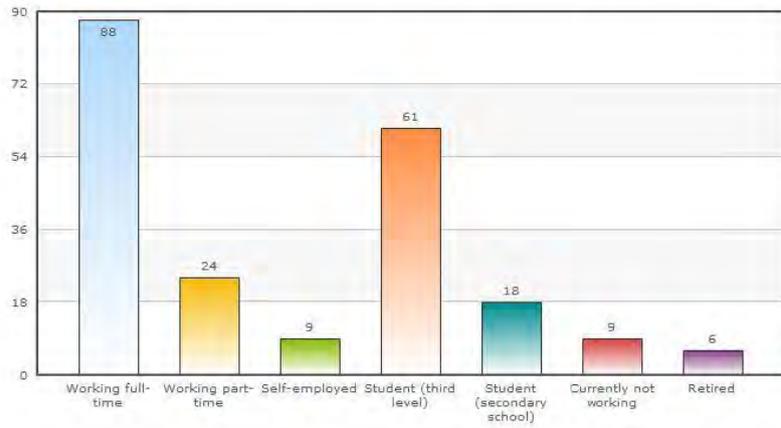
Williams , P. (2013). Interview on Gangland Crime . Interviewed by Leah Hughes [in person]  
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# Research Survey and Questionnaire Findings

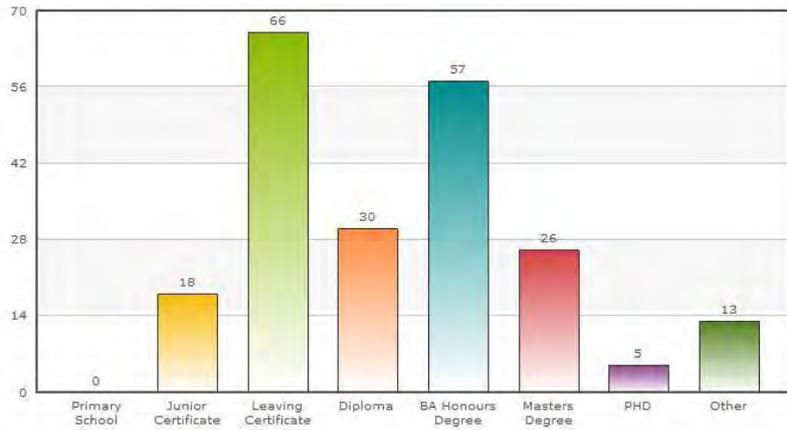
Note: Total Respondents of Survey: 215



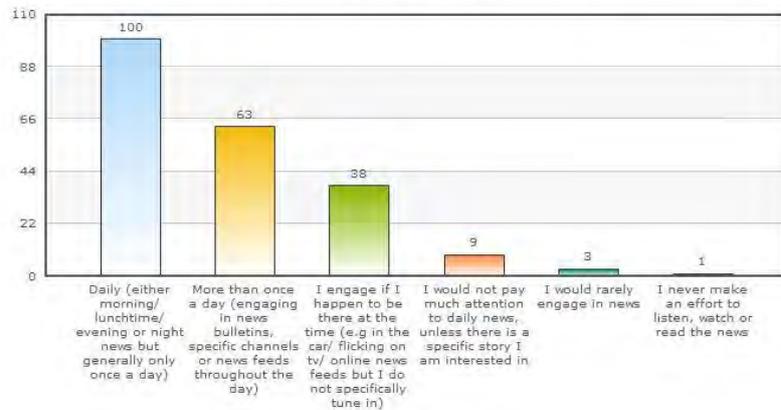
Which of the following best describes your current occupation status?



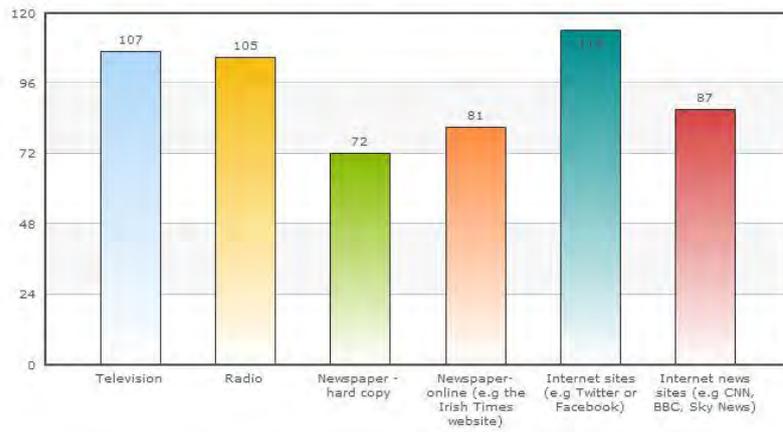
What is the highest level of education you have completed?



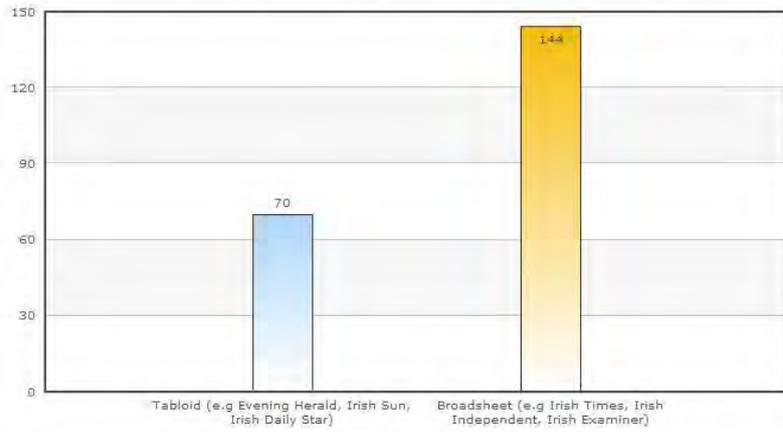
How often do you engage in national news? Including newspapers, radio, tv, online sources whether social media or news websites.



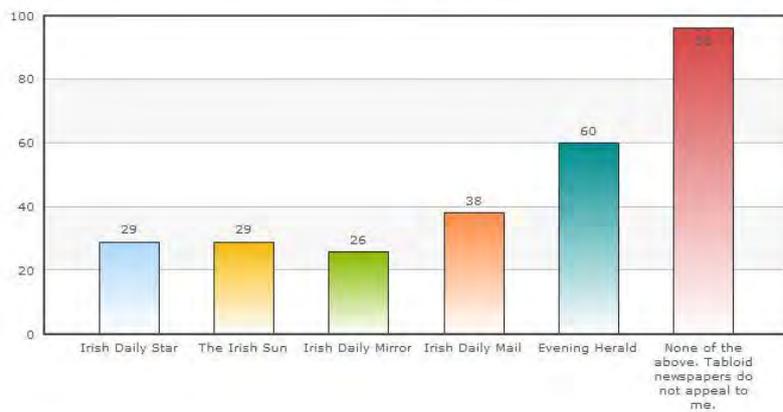
Where do you generally source national news? (Choose all that apply)



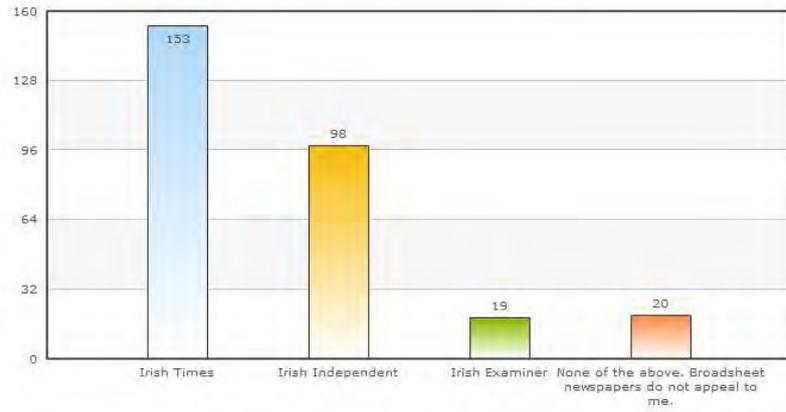
Which format of newspaper do you, or would you be most likely to buy?



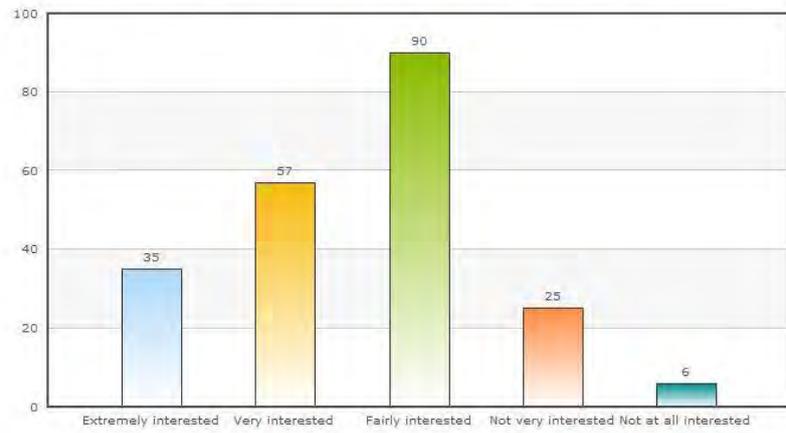
Which of the following tabloid newspapers appeal to you? (Whether you purchase them or not)



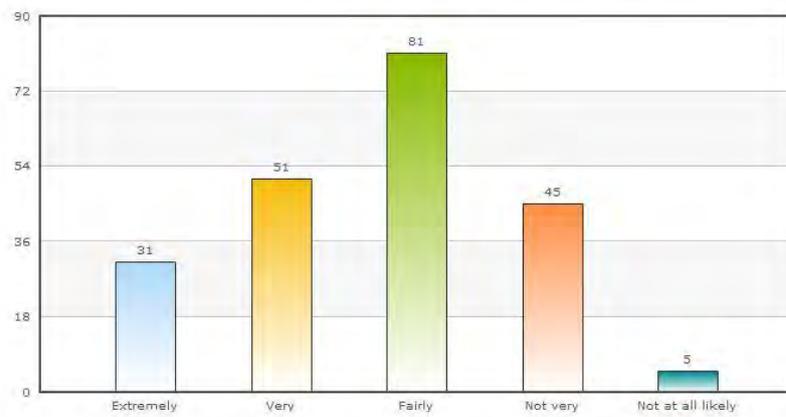
Which of the following broadsheet newspapers appeal to you? (Whether you purchase them or not)



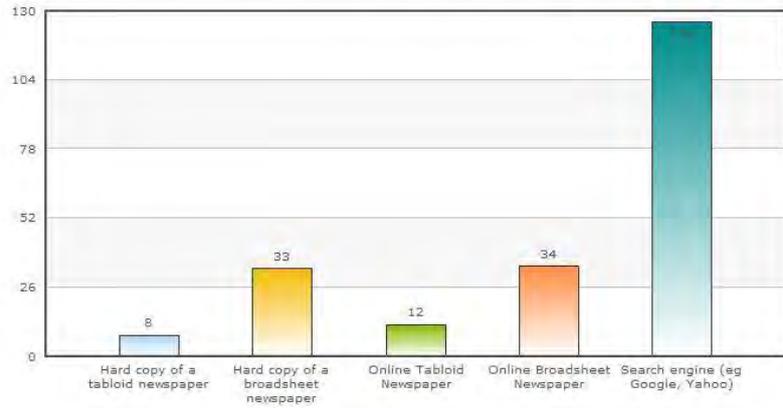
How interested are you in news stories related to crime?



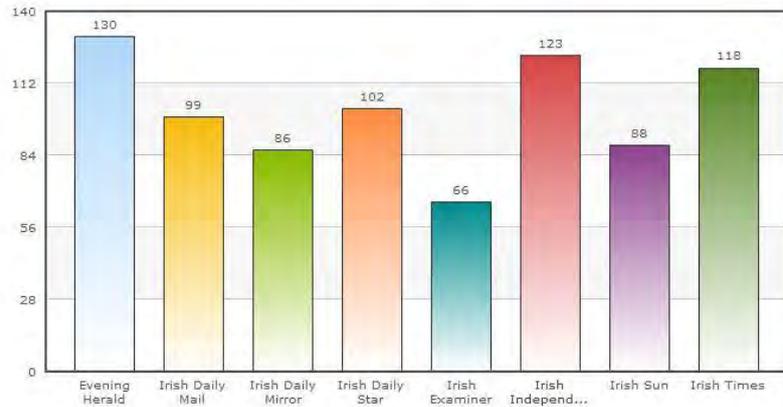
How likely would you be to read a crime news story and want to further inform yourself about the story?



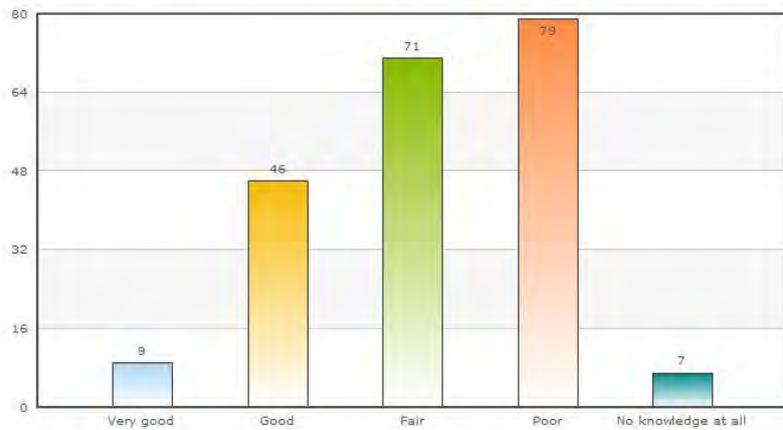
**If you wanted to know about a specific crime related news story where would you go to find information about it?**



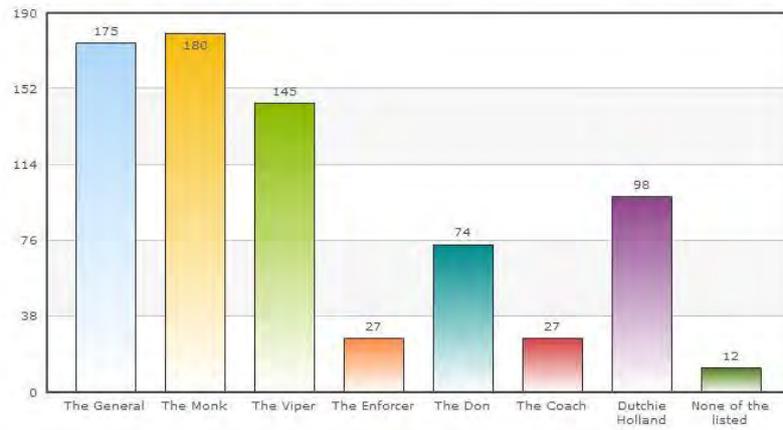
**In which of the following newspapers would you expect to see crime stories covered in?**



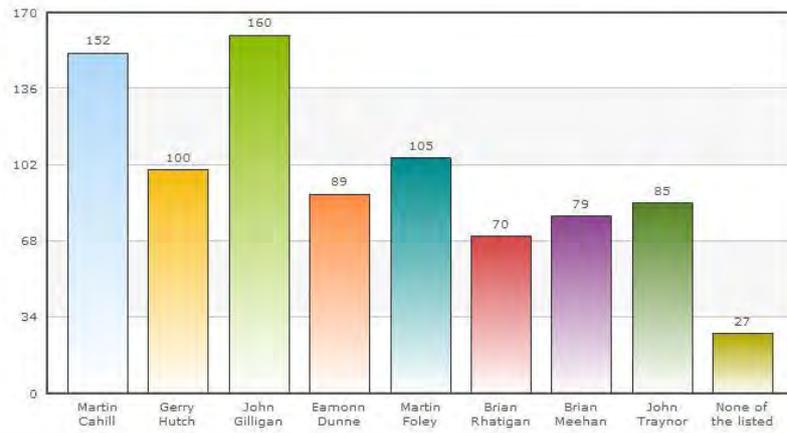
**What level of knowledge would you say you have of criminal gang activity in Ireland?**



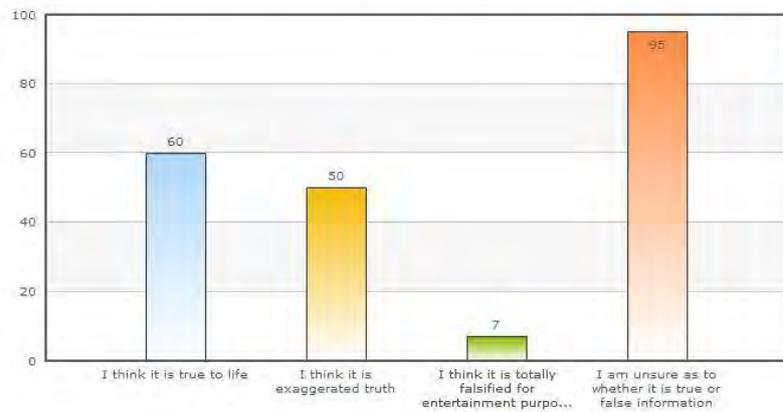
Do you recognise any of the following names? (You can choose multiple answers)



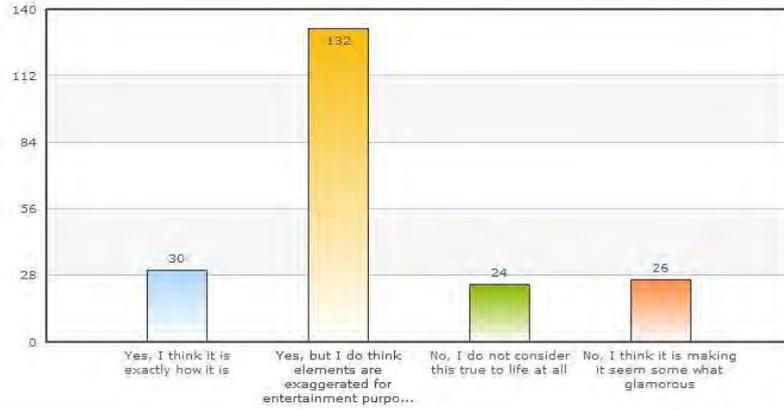
Do you recognise any of the following names? (You can choose multiple answers)



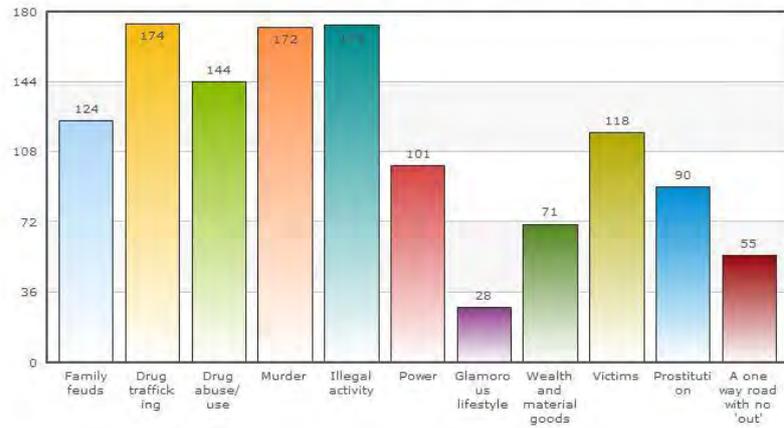
Do you think IRISH newspapers show a realistic version of events when it comes to gangland crime?



Do you think IRISH T.V (e.g Love/ Hate) portrays a true to life portrayal of the life of a gang member?



Which of the following options do you associate with the term "Gangland Crime"



Questionnaire: The Jokers Youth Club

Please circle your answer and write on the lines provided. If you need extra space please write on back and mark what Q it is for. Thank you for all your help ☺

1. Age: 14
2. Year in school: Second
3. Do you ever read the newspaper?  YES  NO
- If yes, what newspaper? The Herald
4. Do you ever watch the News at home? YES  NO
5. Do you ever listen to the radio and hear the News?  YES  NO
- If yes, what radio station do you listen to most? Spin 103.8 and 98Fm
6. Do you/ have you ever watched Love/ Hate?  YES  NO
- Who is your favourite character? Why? Darren, because I think he is the best
7. Can you explain what Love/ Hate is about? Irish Gangland
8. Do you think Love/ Hate shows what happens in real life or is it all made up? FAKE  REAL
- Why do you think that? I hear it on the radio
9. Do you think people like Darren and Nidge in Love/ Hate are rich and powerful?  YES  NO
- What makes you think that? Because of the drugs
10. Do you think that people in Love/ Hate are criminals who might end up in jail? YES  NO
11. What is the best thing about Love/ Hate? It is exciting to watch and shows you to never get involved in gangland.
12. Explain, as best you can, what 'gangland crime' means (write as many things that come to mind):  
**It means that it is a bad life to live it just gets you in trouble.**

Questionnaire: The Jokers Youth Club

Please circle your answer and write on the lines provided. If you need extra space please write on back and mark what Q it is for. Thank you for all your help ☺

1. Age: **15**
2. Year in school: **Fifth**
  
3. Do you ever read the newspaper?  YES  NO  
- If yes, what newspaper? **Echo**
  
4. Do you ever watch the News at home? YES  NO
  
5. Do you ever listen to the radio and hear the News?  YES  NO  
- If yes, what radio station do you listen to most? **Spin 103.8**
  
6. Do you/ have you ever watched Love/ Hate?  YES  NO  
- Who is your favourite character? Why? **Nidge or Darren, because they are the funniest**
  
7. Can you explain what Love/ Hate is about? **Love/ Hate is about crime and drugs in Ireland**
  
8. Do you think Love/ Hate shows what happens in real life or is it all made up? FAKE  REAL  
- Why do you think that? **Because crime like that goes on in Ireland and other countries**
  
9. Do you think people like Darren and Nidge in Love/ Hate are rich and powerful?  YES  NO  
- What makes you think that? **They have a nice house and they would make money doing drugs**
  
10. Do you think that people in Love/ Hate are criminals who might end up in jail?  YES  NO
  
11. What is the best thing about Love/ Hate? **The actions and crime**
  
12. Explain, as best you can, what 'gangland crime' means (write as many things that come to mind):  
**Gangland crime is lots of people getting up together to kill people.**

Questionnaire: The Jokers Youth Club

Please circle your answer and write on the lines provided. If you need extra space please write on back and mark what Q it is for. Thank you for all your help ☺

1. Age: **14**
2. Year in school: **Third**
  
3. Do you ever read the newspaper?  YES  NO  
- If yes, what newspaper? **Sun**
  
4. Do you ever watch the News at home?  YES  NO
  
5. Do you ever listen to the radio and hear the News?  YES  NO  
- If yes, what radio station do you listen to most? **FM104 and Spin 103.8**
  
6. Do you/ have you ever watched Love/ Hate?  YES  NO  
- Who is your favourite character? Why? **Nidge, chap is class**
  
7. Can you explain what Love/ Hate is about? **Junkies selling drugs**
  
8. Do you think Love/ Hate shows what happens in real life or is it all made up? FAKE  REAL  
- Why do you think that? **I live in Fettercairn and I have seen stuff**
  
9. Do you think people like Darren and Nidge in Love/ Hate are rich and powerful?  YES  NO  
- What makes you think that? **The show [Love/Hate]**
  
10. Do you think that people in Love/ Hate are criminals who might end up in jail?  YES  NO
  
11. What is the best thing about Love/ Hate? **Nidge**
  
12. Explain, as best you can, what 'gangland crime' means (write as many things that come to mind):  
**A lot of gangs on land doing crimes**

Questionnaire: The Jokers Youth Club

Please circle your answer and write on the lines provided. If you need extra space please write on back and mark what Q it is for. Thank you for all your help ☺

1. Age: **14**
2. Year in school: **Second**
  
3. Do you ever read the newspaper?  YES NO  
- If yes, what newspaper? **Echo**
  
4. Do you ever watch the News at home?  YES NO
5. Do you ever listen to the radio and hear the News?  YES NO  
- If yes, what radio station do you listen to most? **Spin 103.8**
  
6. Do you/ have you ever watched Love/ Hate?  YES NO  
- Who is your favourite character? Why? **Nidge, he is always in trouble**
  
7. Can you explain what Love/ Hate is about? **Love and hate between people**
  
8. Do you think Love/ Hate shows what happens in real life or is it all made up? FAKE  REAL  
- Why do you think that? **It happens everywhere**
  
9. Do you think people like Darren and Nidge in Love/ Hate are rich and powerful?  YES NO  
- What makes you think that? **Because he beats people up**
  
10. Do you think that people in Love/ Hate are criminals who might end up in jail?  YES NO
  
11. What is the best thing about Love/ Hate? **Fighting**
  
12. Explain, as best you can, what 'gangland crime' means (write as many things that come to mind):  
**Places that are covered in gangs**

Questionnaire: The Jokers Youth Club

Please circle your answer and write on the lines provided. If you need extra space please write on back and mark what Q it is for. Thank you for all your help ☺

1. Age: **15**
2. Year in school: **Fifth**
  
3. Do you ever read the newspaper?  YES NO  
- If yes, what newspaper? **Echo**
  
4. Do you ever watch the News at home?  YES NO
5. Do you ever listen to the radio and hear the News?  YES NO  
- If yes, what radio station do you listen to most? **FM104**
  
6. Do you/ have you ever watched Love/ Hate?  YES NO  
- Who is your favourite character? Why? **Nidge. N/A**
  
7. Can you explain what Love/ Hate is about? **Love/ Hate is about love and hate**
  
8. Do you think Love/ Hate shows what happens in real life or is it all made up? FAKE  REAL  
- Why do you think that? **It is totally true, I live in Fettercairn**
  
9. Do you think people like Darren and Nidge in Love/ Hate are rich and powerful?  YES NO  
- What makes you think that? **They think they are one thing but they are clearly the opposite**
  
10. Do you think that people in Love/ Hate are criminals who might end up in jail?  YES NO
  
11. What is the best thing about Love/ Hate? **N/A**
  
12. Explain, as best you can, what 'gangland crime' means (write as many things that come to mind):  
**Gangs on land committing crime**

**Finglas Community Training Centre Questionnaire**

Name (if you wish to remain anonymous please state and an alternative name will be used): **James O'Shea**

Age: **19**

When did you leave school? **2010**

Why did you leave school? **I was finished [due to leave after completing Leaving Cert]**

What are you currently studying in the centre? **Cooking**

What do you hope to do when you finish your course? **To get a job**

What do you imagine your life to be in five years? **Get out of here**

What good things have/ or will change in your life because of attending this training centre?  
**Give you something to do and hope to get something out of it**

What is the best thing about coming to the training centre? **Something to do**

How important is it to you to finish your course and become educated to go on to further educate yourself?  
**Don't know if it will change me but I hope I get something out of it**

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**Finglas Community Training Centre Questionnaire**

Name (if you wish to remain anonymous please state and an alternative name will be used): **Daniel Stanley**

Age: **16**

When did you leave school? **N/A**

Why did you leave school? **I got kicked out**

What are you currently studying in the centre? **Art and wood work**

What do you hope to do when you finish your course? **To get a job**

What do you imagine your life to be in five years? **Be a jockey**

What good things have/ or will change in your life because of attending this training centre?  
**I don't think I will get anything out of this**

What is the best thing about coming to the training centre? **Doing things**

How important is it to you to finish your course and become educated to go on to further educate yourself?  
**N/A**

**Finglas Community Training Centre Questionnaire**

Name (if you wish to remain anonymous please state and an alternative name will be used): **Nikita McCann**

Age: **18**

When did you leave school? **I finished school**

Why did you leave school? **[Was due to leave]**

What are you currently studying in the centre? **Level 3 and 4 courses**

What do you hope to do when you finish your course? **Leaving and going to college**

What do you imagine your life to be in five years? **Be finished in college**

What good things have/ or will change in your life because of attending this training centre?  
**I will have my Leaving [Certificate]**

What is the best thing about coming to the training centre? **N/A**

How important is it to you to finish your course and become educated to go on to further educate yourself?  
**Very, because I need my leaving to go to college**

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**Finglas Community Training Centre Questionnaire**

Name (if you wish to remain anonymous please state and an alternative name will be used): **Tommy Murdiffe**

Age: **18**

When did you leave school? **2009, aged 14**

Why did you leave school? **I got expelled**

What are you currently studying in the centre? **Fetac Level 4, Major Award**

What do you hope to do when you finish your course? **Go to College Ide**

What do you imagine your life to be in five years? **I would like to maybe have more qualifications**

What good things have/ or will change in your life because of attending this training centre?  
**My attitude towards learning is better and so is my attendance**

What is the best thing about coming to the training centre? **Friends**

How important is it to you to finish your course and become educated to go on to further educate yourself?  
**Very important because the country is in a bad way with jobs so you need as much help as possible**

**Finglas Community Training Centre Questionnaire**

Name (if you wish to remain anonymous please state and an alternative name will be used): **Jennifer Gilsean**

Age: **17**

When did you leave school? **17**

Why did you leave school? **Too frustrating, got bored**

What are you currently studying in the centre? **Fetac Level 4, Health and Safety**

What do you hope to do when you finish your course? **Go to college and get a good job**

What do you imagine your life to be in five years? **Hopefully working doing catering or hairdressing**

What good things have/ or will change in your life because of attending this training centre?

**Just making me stick to the same thing**

What is the best thing about coming to the training centre? **Getting all the work that I have to do done**

How important is it to you to finish your course and become educated to go on to further educate yourself?

**Without it I can't go to college or do what I want to do so it is fairly important.**

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