CHAPTER 1

Policing Ethnically Divided Societies

The quality of relations between the police and the public is an important part of successful policing in any society. Good relations can facilitate police work in every area where police come into contact with citizens. Poor relations may strain interactions between police and members of the public, make citizens reluctant to report crimes and come forward as witnesses, heighten the danger of police work, lower police morale, and hamper recruitment of new officers.

Primarily Anglo-American and focused on liberal democracies, the literature on policing has largely neglected "deeply divided" societies where the police are highly politicized, prone to violence, unaccountable, and heavily biased in favor of one ethnic, racial, or religious group. With some exceptions, many of the classics in the policing literature deal with issues that are of secondary importance in these societies.[1] The result is that some fascinating questions have been ignored, such as the conditions under which a highly repressive, sectarian police force can be overhauled and the conditions under which its relations with a subordinate ethnic population can be improved. Regarding the first question, most studies of police reform examine cases where large-scale change was fairly gradual or where modest organizational innovations have taken place.[2] There is little research on societies where sweeping and relatively rapid transformation has been attempted. Regarding the second question, we know little about societies where police-community relations are at their very worst, where policing is the source of deep grievances and intense conflicts. In deeply divided societies, the police face more serious legitimacy problems, at least with respect to one communal group, than in more integrated societies. Moreover, the police are evaluated not only on their own merits but also in terms of what they symbolize as defenders of a particular system of sociopolitical domination. This points to the importance of the relationship

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between the police and the state, also neglected in the literature.[3] Even when a police force undergoes reform, its continuing association with a discredited political system and social structure typically retards improvements in police-community relations. In these societies, police reform becomes meaningful, at least for the subordinate group, only in the context of larger political and social changes. Yet, these very changes are likely to infuriate and fuel resistance on the part of the dominant group.

Northern Ireland (or Ulster) is an excellent case for examining police-community relations in a divided society. Along with the protracted conflict over Northern Ireland's territorial and constitutional status and its political system, policing (and the larger system of law and order) is one of the most hotly contested issues in this society.[4] Police actions are frequently and vigorously condemned and praised by prominent clergy, politicians, and other notables whose statements are often reported by the media. These national-level disputes not only politicize policing to an infinitely greater degree than elsewhere in the United Kingdom, but they also infuse popular discourse at the neighborhood level and affect people's attitudes and interactions with police.

Conflict over policing in Northern Ireland occurs largely along ethnic lines—between an Irish Catholic minority (38 percent of the population) and an Ulster Protestant majority (62 percent)—and police relations with Catholics differ from their relations with Protestants.[5] Relations between the police and Catholics are not as universally bankrupt as is commonly thought, but they are palpably worse than for any other minority group in the United Kingdom. Indeed, some of Northern Ireland's Catholic neighborhoods show just how bad (and seemingly irreparable) police-community relations can become. In areas where armed insurgents thrive and where the state lacks moral authority, we find the ultimate in popular estrangement and enmity toward the police, manifested in violent attacks on the police and the demand that they withdraw completely from the neighborhood. On the other side, relations between the police and Protestants are not as cordial as one might predict from the fact that the police force is almost totally Protestant in composition and historically was tied to a Protestant-dominated state. One of the findings of the present study, absent in most of the literature on Northern Ireland, is the remarkable degree of discontent over policing in some militant Protestant neighborhoods, largely due to reforms in policing over

the past two decades. The police are now under fire from sections of both Protestant and Catholic populations.

This study examines the structural factors that shape police relations with Protestant and Catholic communities and that give rise to conflict, as well as the substantive nature of those relations and struggles. Both the larger social, political, and policing arrangements and the micro-level relations (interactions and attitudes) between police and citizens are examined. I argue that police-community relations in Northern Ireland are largely determined by what I call *counterinsurgency policing* and by Protestants' and Catholics' differential *orientations to the state*, neither of which is a major factor in police-community relations in societies that are not ethnically polarized or politically violent.

This chapter presents a model of policing in divided societies, posits a set of determinants of police-community relations in these societies, and concludes with a discussion of the research methods and sources used in the study.

A MODEL OF POLICING

Compared to the extensive theoretical work on crime in the field of criminology, the policing literature is fairly atheoretical. Some of the literature, however, contains arguments that lean toward either functionalist or conflict theory. Functionalist theory holds that the police protect the citizenry as a whole from crime and disorder and contribute to the stability of the social system.[6] Police thus act in the general interest, or the interests of the law-abiding majority, even if they sometimes depart from strictly universalistic law enforcement. Conflict theory maintains that the police protect powerful interests and suppress resistance on the part of oppressed groups such as the working-class and ethnic minorities.[7] Functionalist theories examine the police in isolation from the state, because each contributes to social cohesion in its separate way. Conflict theory portrays the police as a repressive arm of the state, with the rider that the state cannot be neutral but is allied with hegemonic forces in civil society.

Presented as general theories of policing, both approaches are untenable. The police must be theorized in specific societal contexts, not in terms of some a priori, universal "functions" or "interests." As Marenin argues,

> Policing is too complex to fit simple schemes which . . . glorify the police as last-ditch defenders of order against the onslaught of anarchy and subversion, or calumnify them uncritically as always and only instruments of class rule, repression, and exploitation. Both the orthodox [functionalist] and Marxist images of the police are clearly wrong. The police are not neutral and disinterested servants of the state, law, or order who provide a service which helps all equally and makes orderly and civilized life possible; nor are the police merely the blue shock-troops of repression who impose upon the dominated a system of values, order, and selective coercion which maintains and benefits an exploitative and unequal system. The police sometimes fit either view and sometimes neither.[8]

This does not mean that policing is purely situational. Policing reflects its societal context, which means that we should expect to find patterns in policing associated with different types of sociopolitical orders. I would argue that the more democratic the political order and the more egalitarian the social order, the more benign policing should be. In liberal democracies, therefore, conflict theory has less explanatory power in accounting for police structures and practices than what is claimed by conflict theorists. Although the police in those societies have intervened to suppress social movements and working-class struggles and to control minority populations, the police cannot be *reduced* to agents of class or ethnic oppression or state domination.[9] They also provide a host of services and perform ordinary law enforcement and order maintenance on behalf of the entire population. Policing in liberal democracies is a mixture of what we would expect from conflict and functional theories, but leans toward the latter.

Conflict theory is better suited, in my view, to explaining policing where state repression and/or social inequality is extreme, as in communally divided or highly authoritarian societies.[10] Our interest is in societies that are sharply polarized along racial, ethnic, or religious lines. One group enjoys institutionalized privilege and dominance, while others suffer severe economic, political, and social deprivation. Communal cleavages are the defining features of these societies, not secondary to other social structures.[11]

Relatively little research has been done on policing in divided societies. There are several case studies but little comparative or theoretical work.[12] Is policing in these societies qualitatively distin-

guishable from policing in more integrated societies? I will argue that the social and political structures characteristic of divided societies do indeed lend themselves to a distinctive type of policing that is entirely consistent with conflict theory. A *divided society model of policing* with the following dimensions is posited:[13]

1. Systematic bias in law enforcement, with members of the subordinate communal group policed more aggressively and punitively than members of the dominant group.
2. Politicized policing: strong police identification with the regime, a politicized organizational mission, and vigorous police actions against the regime's political opponents.
3. Dominant-group monopoly of the top positions in the police force and disproportionate representation in the rank and file.
4. Dual responsibility of the police for internal security and ordinary law enforcement.
5. Legal or extralegal powers giving police great latitude in their control of the subordinate population, including the use of force.
6. An absence of effective mechanisms of accountability with respect to police abuses of power. The police show differential sensitivity to the concerns of one side of the divided society, but this particularistic slant should not be mistaken for genuine, universalistic accountability transcending sectional interests.
7. Polarized communal relations with the police, with the dominant group as a champion of the police and the subordinate group largely estranged from the police.

Policing in divided societies is organized first and foremost, then, for the defense of a sectarian regime and the maintenance of a social order based on institutionalized inequality between dominant and subordinate communal groups.[14] Consequently, conflict over policing is endemic in these societies. Features 1 through 6 of the model may each contribute to chronic or acute struggles between citizens and the police and disputes between dominant and subordinate groups. The seventh element is a consequence of the other six.

It is the *combination* of the model's elements and their *magnitude* that distinguishes the policing of divided societies from that

of more integrated societies.[15] Some dimensions of the model (biased law enforcement, political influences on policing,[16] inadequate controls on police misconduct) are by no means unique to divided societies, but they are much greater in scope and/or intensity in divided societies and, in combination with the other elements, constitute a communally repressive system of policing. There are also some important qualitative differences between relatively integrated and divided societies. In the former, the police are judged according to perceptions of their impartiality, their restrained use of force to achieve lawful purposes, and their record in crime fighting. In communally divided societies, the first condition is typically inverted: sectarian law enforcement is expected and demanded by groups who want preferential treatment from the police. The second condition is equally particularistic: the ideal of minimum force is reserved for one's own population, whereas maximum force may be viewed as necessary to control the opposite group. The third condition, policing of ordinary crime, is important in divided societies, but its salience may be diluted in communities where the police are held in ill repute and where their crime-control efforts are seen as a ruse for sinister aims.

As with all ideal types, there is variation in the degree to which empirical cases approximate this model. The fit is quite close for some societies (e.g., white-ruled Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa), but less so in others. There is also likely to be variation *within* societies in the manifestation of elements of the model. The balance between security policing and conventional policing, for instance, may vary considerably depending on the ethnic profile of a community. In South Africa, white areas traditionally enjoyed conventional policing while black townships were policed in a militarized and highly authoritarian fashion. Qualification is also necessary for feature 7 in the model—the idea that "the dominant community looks on the police as the guarantor of its position, while the subordinate community tends to see the police as the agents of their oppression by the dominant community."[17] Communal populations are internally differentiated by class, age, political orientation, and other factors, each of which may affect perceptions of policing. Within a subordinate ethnic group, for example, persons who are elderly, middle class, and politically conservative are likely to be less critical of the police than their young, working-class, radical counterparts.

Moreover, the police may actively strive to co-opt the former, driving a wedge between them and other sections of their ethnic group.

At the same time, the dominant ethnic group's approval of the police is not automatic. Although they are generally predisposed to support and defend the police, this acceptance is not unconditional. Much depends on whether police remain steadfast in upholding the right kind of "order," which spells tight control over the subordinate population. Problems arise when the police actively distance themselves from sections of the dominant community, as may happen when the latter's demands clash with police interests or capacities. This can produce serious tensions which may explode in violent incidents, as illustrated recently in South Africa in altercations between police and militant white supremacists.

The model suggests a rather close affinity between the police and ruling elites, but this does not mean that the police are always readily available instruments of state power, whose interests are wholly compatible with the government's.[18] Empirically, the degree of congruence in their interests varies over time and place. The police have a measure of autonomy from the regime, which allows them to pursue their own *organizational interests*—interests that may sometimes clash with regime policies or enforcement of certain laws, and lead to subtle forms of noncompliance or active resistance to regime demands. Interest in improving the image of the force or in minimizing danger to police officers, for example, may make police wary of implementing especially controversial policies. (It should not be assumed that these police forces are necessarily oblivious to the value of generating at least some consent in the subordinate community, if only to make their work easier.) The *political orientation* of police officers also may create friction with the regime—for example, if a hard-line regime refuses to endorse minor concessions to a subordinate population that might reduce unrest and thereby ease pressures on police or, conversely, if a modernizing regime begins to promote reforms that police strongly oppose. An example of the latter is police opposition in South Africa to the reforms (in apartheid structures and in policing) introduced by President F. W. de Klerk since 1990.[19] In short, the police in divided societies may act in ways that are not always consistent with the priorities of political elites or the wishes of the dominant communal group, but as a general

rule their ties to regime and partisan interests are substantially stronger than in more integrated, democratic societies.

The divided society model best characterizes unreconstructed and relatively stable societies (though some of its features are potentially destabilizing). Some of the qualifications above become especially salient during periods of progressive change in the social and political order, which may lead to the withering of some traditional patterns of policing. Northern Ireland allows us to examine policing in both a traditionally divided society (under Protestant, Unionist rule, 1921–1972) and a modernizing one (under British rule, 1972–present). Under Protestant rule, Catholics were politically powerless and socioeconomically disadvantaged. As a minority whom Protestants deemed disloyal to the state, they were denied civil rights and discriminated against in housing and jobs. Under British rule, Protestants no longer wield executive and parliamentary power, and the British regime has attempted, with some success, to dismantle the institutional supports for ethnic inequality. (Since Protestants continue to control much of the economy and disproportionately staff the institutions of law and order, I will refer to them as the "dominant" ethnic group, but it is a dominance that has been diluted under British rule.)

The two regimes can also be compared for their respective impact on policing. Policing under Protestant rule closely resembled our model, as Chapter 2 shows, whereas under British rule policing has in some respects moved away from the model. Northern Ireland is one of the few divided societies where a sustained attempt has been made to revamp policing, and it may have gone the furthest in police reform of any contemporary divided society.[20] Since British intervention in the early 1970s, the aims have been to universalize law enforcement, depoliticize the force, increase accountability, and build popular confidence in the police. Changes have occurred in some of these areas, as Chapter 3 shows.

Since each of the dimensions of the divided society model may cause serious discontent and conflict, we might predict that reforms running counter to the model should help reduce discontent in the subordinate group. But in Northern Ireland progressive changes (in the direction of greater accountability, more even-handed law enforcement, depoliticization) have not helped to defuse conflicts over policing or generate popular confidence in the police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). Policing remains fiercely con-

tested and police relations with certain communities abysmal. For Catholics, this is partly because the objective changes are not perceived as meaningful in a context where Protestants are still heavily overrepresented in the force, the RUC retains its dual role in conventional law enforcement and internal security, and formal norms have not satisfactorily constrained police use of force and other questionable conduct. Foremost in importance is the counterinsurgency role of the police (discussed below). For Protestants the reforms have already gone too far, demonstrably undermining law and order and constraining the RUC in its fight against Catholic insurgents. The reforms are thus devalued by both groups, seen by many Catholics as insubstantial or cosmetic, by Protestants as unwarranted concessions to Catholics.

EXPLAINING POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Our dependent variable, community orientations toward police, has both attitudinal and behavioral dimensions: it includes neighborbood residents' views, preferences, and complaints about policing, and their behavior toward police officers. (I follow conventional usage in treating these community orientations as synonymous with "police-community relations," bearing in mind that it is citizens' attitudes and behavior that will be explained, not so much police attitudes and behavior.) I will show that community orientations to police in Northern Ireland, and arguably in other divided societies, are shaped by four main variables:

1. Police effectiveness in performing their ordinary duties, such as crime fighting, at the neighborhood level, and their treatment of civilians (e.g., fairness, civility, restrained use of force) in the course of this ordinary work.
2. The intensity of counterinsurgency policing in a neighborhood.
3. The legitimacy of the state in the neighborhood political culture.
4. National-level controversies over policing that receive attention in the mass media and that spill over into local communities, becoming part of neighborhood discourse and evaluations of policing.

In socially integrated, liberal democracies, variable 1 is the primary determinant of police-community relations and the others are of secondary importance or absent altogether.[21] Relations are primarily a function of ordinary law enforcement practices at the neighborhood level, though publicized incidents occurring elsewhere may also have some effect.[22] Counterinsurgency policing is not unknown in liberal democracies (apparent in riot policing and police surveillance of suspected subversives), but it is typically limited, not the hallmark of police organization and practice.[23] The state is a background factor. Considered basically legitimate by most of the population (whatever their specific criticisms of its performance), the state has a positive, if largely unseen, effect on evaluations of the police. Even for those persons who are alienated from the state, this appears not to adversely affect their views of the police.[24] As for major policing controversies, they are much less frequent in relatively integrated, liberal democracies than in divided societies.[25] When they occur only occasionally, the police may be able to weather the storm without long-term damage to their image.

In deeply divided societies like Northern Ireland, all four variables are important. Together, they determine whether a particular neighborhood evaluates the police favorably or unfavorably and how residents interact with police. But it is counterinsurgency policing that, I argue, is the master variable shaping police-community relations in Northern Ireland. Central during the period of Unionist rule, counterinsurgency policing has increased dramatically under British rule, largely as a result of the civil unrest that began in the late 1960s.

Counterinsurgency policing (or security policing) refers to efforts to maintain public order, combat sectarian, intercommunal violence, and protect the state from subversive and violent opponents. We find it in crowd control during demonstrations and riots; surveillance of suspect individuals and groups; undercover operations against special targets; militarized patrolling in troubled areas; and the use of exceptional legal powers on the street, during house searches, and to detain and interrogate suspects. Compared with conventional policing, counterinsurgency policing has generated little scholarly attention, largely because it is not prominent in the liberal-democratic societies studied by most researchers.

Counterinsurgency policing is not necessarily "evil"; it may

be motivated by legitimate state interests, implemented judiciously, and beneficial for the population at large. But, if not properly controlled, it is conducive to gross abuses of power, serious deviation from what is considered normal policing, and popular estrangment from the police and the state in communities experiencing it as oppressive. Northern Ireland is familiar with each of these outcomes.

Counterinsurgency policing is of paramount importance in Northern Ireland because of its independent effects on citizens' attitudes, observations, and interactions (largely negative in neighborhoods that experience most of it, in contrast to those that see little of it), *and* because of its effects on the other three variables outlined above: (1) it fuels most of the national-level conflicts over policing, (2) it is the primary means of defending the state, and (3) it affects how well the police handle conventional crime. In other words, counterinsurgency policing has both direct effects on community orientations to police and indirect effects as mediated by larger conflicts over policing, its connection to the state, and its impact on ordinary policing. In areas where counterinsurgency operations are a prominent part of neighborhood life, the direct effect on residents is paramount. Where counterinsurgency policing is relatively rare, its direct effect on residents is low, but it may still affect evaluations if perceived as detracting from ordinary policing or when it becomes a contested issue on the national stage.

Citizens' attitudes are shaped not only by police behavior but also by what police symbolize. In some societies they are perceived as the linchpin of public order and protectors of the citizenry, rather than defenders of a system of power and privilege. In divided societies, the association of the police with a particular power structure is a critically important determinant of police-community relations. However much autonomy the police have from a regime, they remain the most visible agents of state power. A community's perception of the state thus has major effects on its relations with the police, much more consequential than in less polarized societies. Policing in Northern Ireland is inextricably tied to the legitimacy of political institutions; perceptions of the state condition perceptions of the police. The legitimacy of the Unionist state for Protestants predictably inflated their views of the RUC, whereas Catholics' distaste for that state lowered their opinion of the police. Under British rule since 1972, the moral

authority of the state is low for both Catholics and Protestants, which adversely affects both groups' evaluations of the RUC.

In Northern Ireland attitudinal polarization on the police and other institutions of law and order is pronounced and few people take a centrist position. But, under British rule, relations between the police and the Protestant and Catholic populations have become more complicated than a simple dichotomy of orientations. There are increasingly significant differences *within* the Catholic and Protestant populations, differences important enough to justify an analysis based not only on the two larger populations but also on their major subgroups. Following the standard distinctions made in the literature on Northern Ireland, I examine four groups: staunch Republicans, moderate Catholics, staunch Loyalists, and moderate Protestants. (One of the groups was predominant in each of the specific neighborhoods I studied.) Staunch Republicans and Loyalists hold more extreme views than their moderate Catholic and Protestant counterparts regarding the British state and the national question, and they are more prepared to condone or participate in protest actions and political violence. The book shows that each group's distinctive relationship with the police is shaped by the four variables outlined above.

Since the study deals with police-community relations, the concept of "community" deserves clarification. I follow the common definition of community as a small territorial area that is fairly well integrated and homogeneous, the members of which have, or perceive themselves to have, shared interests, values, and identity. Some locales clearly do not have these characteristics, but others do. In highly segregated societies, we are likely to find communities with high degrees of territoriality, resistance to external encroachment, and shared experiences and perceptions of state authorities. They may be "defended neighborhoods," to use Gerald Suttles' term, exclusive and aggressively protected against outsiders.[26]

Many of Northern Ireland's communities are defended neighborhoods par excellence. Residential segregation of working-class Protestants and Catholics traditionally has been high, but it increased markedly in the early 1970s as a result of a series of attacks on persons living in the "wrong" neighborhoods. From 1969 to 1972 approximately 15,000 people were driven out of their former neighborhoods by firebombings of homes, threats of

forcible eviction, or fear of attacks. (Relocation for these reasons continued for several years after 1972 but on a much smaller scale.) During this four-year period the proportion of Belfast's Catholics living on streets where Catholic households constituted more than 90 percent rose from 56 percent to 70 percent; the proportion of Belfast's Protestants living on streets over 90 percent Protestant rose from 69 percent to 78 percent.[27] Today, residential segregation remains high in Belfast and in some other areas, and in 1993 half of Northern Ireland's population lived in areas whose inhabitants were over 90 percent of one religion or the other.[28]

Segregated housing is one reason why people in Northern Ireland "have quite definite ideas about what their neighborhood is" and a strong sense of its boundaries.[29] Residential segregation traditionally has been associated with loyalty to a locale whose identity is shaped in part by its differences with neighborhoods of the opposite ethnic group, which are often nearby. Segregation has a narrowing effect on a person's circle of contacts and fosters prejudice toward the other side, but it also has a positive effect insofar as it contributes to the formation of fairly cohesive communities organized to protect members from violent attacks by outsiders. In turn, as Georg Simmel pointed out, such attacks (which continue to occur in Northern Ireland) increase communal solidarity and foster a distinctive neighborhood identity.[30] Especially in Northern Ireland's troubled communities (but also in other areas), residents are highly suspicious of outsiders, who might pose a threat—a sensitivity conducive to the development of strong overarching allegiances, despite internal differences. Indeed, the largest cities of Belfast and Londonderry are often referred to as clusters of "urban villages"—relatively insulated, self-sufficient, integrated localities. (At the same time, people have a keen sense of their larger ethnic identity—as Protestants or Catholics—that transcends the local neighborhood and fosters identification with their ethnic counterparts in other locales. Catholics and Protestants have their separate schools, newspapers, churches, political parties, voluntary associations, clubs, and pubs, and there is very little intermarriage.)

All of this is to suggest that the concept of "community" is appropriate in studying local-level relationships with the police in Northern Ireland. We shall see that Northern Ireland's communities, particularly those in the most segregated areas, are the locus of strong collective views and experiences of the police.

The final theme addressed in the book is the question of the *possibilities and limits of improving police-community relations in an ethnically polarized and strife-torn society*. Under what conditions can the police gain the confidence of each of our four types of communities, and under what conditions will they lose support or see their relations deteriorate further? Since the model of police-community relations in divided societies is more complex—that is, there are more determinants and they are interrelated—than what obtains in less divided, liberal democracies, we should expect that improvements in relations would be more difficult in divided societies. In Chapter 7 and the Conclusion, I address questions of improvement and deterioration in relations with the help of the four factors outlined above. I also assess the state's efforts to improve relations via community policing. *Community policing* refers to a style of policing that seeks to build ties between police and residents to reduce crime, deal with other local problems, and make police more responsive to neighborhood needs. It may take the form of regular meetings with community groups, foot patrols, youth programs, and so forth. We shall see that residents of Northern Ireland's troubled neighborhoods are skeptical or suspicious of virtually all police actions, however benign, and that community policing cannot compensate for the more common police practices that aggravate people, nor for the state's basic lack of legitimacy. Not only will such experiments fail in these neighborhoods, but they may also backfire. Indeed, in Northern Ireland's most troubled neighborhoods, community policing has had an *adverse effect* on police-community relations, making an already bad situation even worse. Chapter 7 shows how this dynamic works.

None of this is to say that police-community relations are frozen solid in Northern Ireland. Police and citizens are not destined to harbor as much ill will or to interact as belligerantly as they do in some areas. I will argue that relations can be improved, to some extent, where they are presently poorest not by community policing but instead by *progressive changes in counterinsurgency policing*. Liberalizing security policing is not a contradiction in terms. Public order and internal security can be maintained in ways that are much less aggravating and alienating than in contemporary Northern Ireland.

SOURCES AND METHODS

Three types of data sources were used in the study: documentary, survey, and interview. Written materials included annual reports of the police and the civilian complaints board, reports of commissions of inquiry, parliamentary debates, publications of Northern Ireland's political parties, and newspaper reports. Particularly useful newspapers were the *Belfast Telegraph*, the *Irish Times*, the *Irish News*, and the *Independent*.

Several surveys have tapped public attitudes on policing. The most comprehensive are the 1987 Policy Studies Institute's poll and the 1990 Northern Ireland Social Attitudes Survey, conducted by Social and Community Planning Research. I use these data to help profile each of our four types of community's attitudes toward the police. However, the survey data are not sufficient for understanding these orientations. Since they typically sample large populations, the generalized results mask geographically specific neighborhood patterns; they yield fairly superficial data and are not designed to elicit respondents' interpretations and understandings and the contingencies on which specific attitudes hinge; and the often dichotomized response options may conceal respondents' ambivalence on particular questions. For example, the question "Are you satisfied with the police?" tells us very little. An affirmative response may conceal underlying reservations or dissatisfaction with a specific aspect of policing, and it tells us nothing about the reasons why subjects report satisfaction. Neither are surveys designed to unravel apparent contradictions in responses to different questions. It is not uncommon to find people reporting "satisfaction" or "confidence," but then critically evaluating specific aspects of policing.

Surveys in Northern Ireland present additional problems. The sensitivity of some questions may yield responses that exaggerate approval of the police and underreport extreme views. Support for various aspects of policing may be more shallow than affirmative responses suggest, even if there is a high degree of consistency across different polls. Another vexing problem is the sometimes significant number of respondents who select the "don't know" option. The survey findings presented in this book should therefore be treated cautiously. Fortunately, these data have been triangulated with other data sources.

Insofar as sensitive issues are covered, in-depth interviews have advantages over surveys, since they permit greater rapport between researcher and subject. They also allow us to explore respondents' ambivalence about specific matters and the qualifications untapped in answers to fixed-choice questions. Intensive interviews are not only sensitive to the complexities of individuals' attitudes, preferences, and complaints, but they can also help explain why people subscribe to those views. Researchers have rarely used in-depth interviews to explore public attitudes on policing, and never in Northern Ireland.[31] A few participant-observation studies in Northern Ireland have reported, inter alia, on a community's experiences with the security forces, but they have not presented members' own accounts in any depth, nor have they explored the range of issues covered in my research.[32]

I sought interviews with a broad range of individuals who were well situated to discuss police-community relations. This resulted in four sets of respondents, over 70 individuals. One sample is drawn from the elected city and district councillors who sit on Police-Community Liaison Committees. Most of Northern Ireland's local councils have established such committees, and I interviewed representatives from 17 committees, traveling to each city and town where they are located. A major purpose of the committees is to help improve police-community relations, and I examined their efforts and impact in this area (see Chapter 7).

Northern Ireland's political parties have been passionately involved in policing issues, particularly since the outbreak of political violence in the late 1960s. Most of the major parties represent Protestants or Catholics almost exclusively and tend to articulate ethnically specific perspectives on policing. Frequently voicing criticisms and demands that are antithetical, the Protestant and Catholic parties play a major role in contesting policing at the national level. Their general positions can be derived from media reports, but interviews were necessary to probe their perspectives more deeply and to raise questions neglected in the mass media. I interviewed the security spokesman or another top leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, Democratic Unionist Party, Social Democratic and Labour Party, Sinn Fein, and Alliance Party.

A third group of subjects work in government departments and official bodies involved in some way in policing. The Police Authority, the police complaints commission, and the Northern Ireland Office play a role in formulating policing policies, han-

dling complaints, or attempting to improve relations between the police and public. Information was sought on agency practices and goals, perceptions of community concerns and attempts to address them, and the nature of each agency's relations with the RUC. I also interviewed two chairmen of the Police Federation, the union representing 95 percent of the RUC.

Repeated attempts were made to gain permission from the RUC to interview officers attached to its Community Relations Branch. I hoped that the chief constable might see this as potentially in the RUC's interest, a way of highlighting a type of gentler policing as a counterbalance to the security policing that draws so much attention. But my requests for access were denied. Van Mannen notes that "antipathy and distrust of the academic researcher are endemic to most police departments,"[33] but the RUC arguably has better grounds than many others to worry about the consequences of research for the morale and safety of officers. While I awaited decisions on my requests to conduct interviews, some police officers and soldiers were killed or injured in attacks by the Irish Republican Army (IRA).[34] The tremendous physical danger facing RUC officers reinforces a siege mentality and galvanizes organizational norms of secrecy and suspiciousness of outsiders—present in other police forces but extreme in the RUC. This understandable protective insularity converges with a compelling interest, on the part of RUC chiefs, to minimize adverse publicity, whether it results from academic research, journalistic exposés, or government investigations. This may explain why research on even a seemingly innocuous side of policing like community relations was rejected by the RUC's gatekeepers.[35]

As it turned out, I did manage to interview some officers unofficially and to attend some community policing functions, thanks to introductions from third parties. I have kept their identities and police stations strictly confidential, since they acted without official permission. Data on community constables' attitudes and experiences are reported in Chapter 7, with the proviso that they are drawn from a small number of individuals and are intended simply to illustrate how some community cops view the RUC's relations with the public and what they are doing to improve matters. The study is not primarily about community policing or police perspectives, but about community orientations to the police.

This brings us to the fourth group, a sample of 40 community-based informants close to the grass roots of their respective

neighborhoods: community workers, local politicians, and clergy located in 20 neighborhoods, most in Belfast. (A list of these interviewees appears in the Appendix.) A few of the community workers have worked in both Catholic and Protestant areas, and their comments on both areas are used, but most of the informants worked exclusively in one type of community. Interviews were conducted in Catholic, Protestant, and mixed lower-class and middle-class areas. Some of the neighborhoods were well insulated from those of the opposing ethnic group, whereas others were in borderline or interface areas. The initial respondents were drawn from two short lists of voluntary civic groups (I approached all these groups) and from the 21 community centers administered by Belfast City Council (I interviewed workers at 10 centers).[36] Snowball sampling was used to identify other informants. Subjects were asked for names of persons knowledgeable about the community, which generated a second sample. Where possible, I tried to cross-check the responses by interviewing other persons in the neighborhood.

The purpose of these interviews was to *examine in depth predominant community evaluations and experiences of policing.* My informants' positions in the community and their activities on behalf of constituents means that they often hear comments and complaints from ordinary people, some of whom request help in dealing with the police; that they are in a position to observe interactions between police and residents; and that these informants are well versed in the neighborhood culture. They are therefore uniquely situated to articulate the perspectives and describe the experiences of ordinary people in their areas.

The interview schedule contained some standard questions asked of all respondents and others tailored to the specific respondent's position in the community or the type of community in which he or she lived and worked. Questions addressed, inter alia, community complaints, approval, demands, and experiences of policing; changes in attitudes over time; perceptions of policing on the other side of the ethnic divide; views of various community policing mechanisms; awareness of and attitudes toward the civilian complaints board; views on the composition, impartiality, and legitimacy of the RUC; assessments of how the police handle their ordinary duties; and what, if anything, the police could do to elicit more local support. Responses to the standardized questions were analyzed across interviewees on a question-by-question

basis, with special attention to similarities and differences in responses of persons located in the same neighborhood as well as in different neighborhoods.

I have no reason to believe that my interviewees deliberately camouflaged attitudes or distorted them in a socially acceptable direction. I judged the interview data to have a high degree of validity, in terms of being reasonably accurate descriptions of community orientations toward the police. But two sources of bias may have crept into the data. First, there is a danger that at least some respondents will discuss only the negative aspects of policing and that, by virtue of the probability that they hear mostly complaints, their characterizations of local opinion may exaggerate the criticisms held by average members of the community. People with praise for the police may make favorable remarks in passing but they are less likely than the aggrieved to make a special effort to contact community leaders to express their views. Some of my interview data appear to reflect this tendency; that is, I got an earful of criticisms and complaints in the militant Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods (though I also heard positive comments in the Protestant areas). I am confident, however, that the data reflect the *dominant* neighborhood culture in each type of community, which prevails over individuals holding minority views. I found substantial consistency in informants' descriptions of prevailing community orientations toward police in staunch Republican areas and in staunch Loyalist areas, both among informants located in the same neighborhood and across different neighborhoods of the same type, although naturally there were differences related to the specificities of each locale. The degree of consistency in the findings suggests that these data can be taken as a barometer of the most serious issues pertaining to policing in the neighborhoods studied. The data on moderate Protestant and Catholic communities also clustered around a dominant set of themes, largely positive for the moderate Protestants and more mixed for the moderate Catholics, depending on the dimension of policing in question.

A second possible source of bias relates to snowball sampling, which may yield a sample of informants who share one anothers' views to such an extent that the data are skewed and variations within the population are not tapped. I tried to minimize this in two ways. First, I had several snowballs rolling, each based on a different list of community organizations, as noted above. Second,

some interviewees provided names of persons they knew well and others they did not know but considered useful contacts. A few even referred me to people on the opposite side of the ethnic divide. I believe these procedures helped broaden the sample sufficiently.

Access to community informants was remarkably easy and, in most cases, rapport was quickly established. Most respondents did not hesitate to grant interviews, and they gave freely of their time and hospitality. Only one person declined to be interviewed—a priest concerned about the sensitivity of the subject matter. It is surprising that this concern was not voiced more often. Other researchers in Northern Ireland have been accused of being spies for the security forces, British intelligence, or the CIA; no one made any such comment to me. After I described my research objectives and why I was requesting the interview, rarely was I questioned about my motives or sympathies. And I was only once asked to show my university credentials (to officers in Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA).

Ease of access was perhaps partly due to the fact that respondents were anxious to express their views to an American researcher. Had I hailed from Northern Ireland, elsewhere in the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland, I almost certainly would have found it more difficult to gain access to and the confidence of both sides of the society; questions about my impartiality and motives would have been more salient. To preempt suspicions of bias, I stressed in my letters of introduction or initial phone conversations that I had already begun to interview both Protestants and Catholics in different parts of Belfast, and that I wanted the views of all groups. A second reason for the high response rate may be the profound salience of policing and security issues in Northern Ireland, issues that figure prominently almost daily on the nightly news and in the press. Policing is a matter of long-standing public controversy, and my respondents were clearly eager to discuss their perspectives and experiences with me. Indeed, most of them spoke without hesitation about controversial and sensitive issues, apparently seizing the opportunity to discuss community orientations or to "set the record straight" about local relations with the police.

Interview responses were recorded by hand as largely verbatim statements.[37] Because of the sensitive nature of many of the questions and concern for the safety of my interviewees, tape-recording was judged unwise. Tape-recording would have been