Chapter 1
History and Design of the ISRD Studies

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The present volume is the first official publication on the second *International Self-Report Delinquency Study* (ISRD-2), an international collaborative research enterprise with a cross-national description and explanation of juvenile delinquency as its main objective.

In general, the cross-national description of the prevalence and incidence of delinquent behaviour allows for the assessment of national crime rates by comparing them with the crime rates of other countries. The questions to be answered are: Is juvenile delinquency normal, ubiquitous and transitional? Is there a pattern of similarity in the offending behaviour of juveniles across countries or are there any important differences? Descriptive comparisons of crime rates will call for explanations, especially if differences are observed. What are the national socio-economic or cultural differences, or the characteristics of legal or criminal policies that can explain such differences? However, one should not forget that similarities call for explanations as well.

Another goal of cross-national criminological research is the explanation of delinquent and criminal behaviour or the falsification of criminological theories. To the extent that the findings related to different nations are similar, the confidence in existing theories is strengthened. Divergent results call for explanations that will modify and ultimately improve our theories under test.

Both of these major objectives of cross-national studies apply to the ISRD project. However, cross-national research is not an easy undertaking. In order to achieve valid and interpretable results, cross-national standardization and comparability in the selection of samples, in the content and administration of questionnaires, and in the defining and coding of data, are vital. Only if the surveys are carried out with similar instrumentation, will they yield internationally comparable data on youth crime and victimization.

The ISRD project commenced in the early 1990s with ISRD-1. It began with a number of pilot studies, workshops and working papers exploring the possibility of conducting a truly standardized international self-report study of delinquency (Klein, 1989). The premises and results of the first "sweep"[1] of the ISRD study have been presented in great detail in previous publications (Junger-Tas et al., 1994, 2003), but some of its main results will be discussed briefly in the next section of this Introduction.

1.1 The First ISRD Study

The impetus for ISRD-1 was the conviction that research on the prevalence of juvenile delinquency would be highly relevant for criminal policy as well as for criminological theory. This expectation helped to start the project, in spite of the then unsolved methodological and organizational difficulties.

Thirteen countries, most of which belonged to the European Union, collaborated in the first study. They were Finland, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland, Northern Ireland, Greece, New Zealand and the US (Nebraska). The target age group for ISRD-1 was

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[1] We use the term "sweep" to indicate that we expect the ISRD study to continue in the future, following a comparable design and survey instrument, allowing for some adjustments.

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12–18 years. Six of the countries used school-based samples, while the rest used samples based on population; some used city-based samples; others, national samples. Most countries used self-administered pencil-and-paper questionnaires; a few used personal interviews. Data were collected between 1989 and 1990; the first results, published in 1994 (Junger-Tas et al., 1994), were followed by an analysis of the merged data set in 2003 (Junger-Tas et al., 2003). The relatively slow pace at which the ISRD-1 data were processed, merged and analyzed was the consequence of limited manpower (there was no funded central research centre to take responsibility for this), as well as logistic and technical difficulties in creating a standardized merged data set. Fortunately enough for us, the results of ISRD-2 became available much sooner because of the tremendous progress made since the early 1990s in electronic communication and data merging procedures.

The ISRD-1 variables with theoretical significance were primarily those drawn from the social bonding theory (Hirschi, 1969), focusing on parents, school, friends, aspirations and leisure activities. In this manner, the analyses contributed to the testing of the applicability of social bonding theory across cultural contexts. The measures of delinquency involvement were quite similar to those used by the National Youth Survey (Huizinga and Elliott, 1984).

In view of the fact that all the ISRD-1 samples were drawn in relatively comparable, western, modern industrialized countries, the main working hypothesis was that youths would show more similarities than differences in their misbehaviour. A further expectation was that there would be relatively little variation between countries with regard to the importance of established correlates of delinquency, such as age (including age of onset) and gender. Since theoretical variables, primarily derived from social control theory (e.g. school involvement and attachment, parental attachment, family composition, involvement in work, leisure and the role of peers) have been shown to be fairly robust correlates of delinquency in many different contexts and cultures, the expectation was that these measures would also turn out to be related to delinquency in the ISRD sample. In addition to expected patterns of cross-national similarities, it was also hypothesized that several *differences* would exist between the different countries. The classification of countries according to their welfare regimes in terms of income transfer systems (de-commodification, see Esping-Andersen, 1990; SCP, 2001) into three clusters (Southern Europe, Anglo-Saxon countries and North-western Europe) provided a most useful conceptual framework. Several tentative hypotheses were presented regarding national differences in the nature and extent of delinquency as well as its correlates. Encouraged by the interesting findings linking structural and legal indicators to variations in, for example, violence and drug use, the ISRD-2 study has considerably expanded the inclusion of national structural indicators as a complement to the individual survey data. In the ISRD-2 analyses, a similar (expanded) clustering of countries will be used based on the work of Saint-Arnaud and Bernard (2003) who expanded the original work of Esping-Andersen. We will explain more about this in the final Conclusions chapter.

1.1.1 Main ISRD-1 Results

What then were some of the main observations drawn from the ISRD-1 studies? First, comparing the *prevalence rates*, we found a remarkable degree of similarity between the countries, in particular when comparing the relative rank order of the self-reported offences. Generally, the most frequently reported misbehaviours involved property offences and vandalism. We also found - consistent with other studies – that about 10% of youths in Northwest and South European countries reported more serious and diverse delinquent involvement. With regard to (soft) drug use, we found that age of onset is much later than that of delinquent behaviour.

Second, the relationship between *age, gender and delinquency* in the three country clusters (Southern Europe, North-western Europe and the Anglo-Saxon countries) was explored. Specifically, age of onset for different types of offences (vandalism, property, violence, drugs and serious offences) was compared among the three country clusters. Those who reported having committed serious offences have a lower age of onset than those who did not report such offences. Girls' age of onset was higher than boys' with the exception of drug use. In all the country clusters, females had considerably lower levels of delinquency than males, in particular for violent offences, drug abuse and serious delinquent acts. The impact of father absence on delinquency was much stronger than that of mother absence, among both boys and girls in all country clusters.

Third, selected measures of *family and school-based social control* were employed to further explore the noted relationships between age, gender and delinquency, comparing Southern Europe, Anglo-Saxon countries and North-western Europe. As expected, in all country clusters, girls' socialization was characterized by more supervision and control than boys'; surprisingly, girls tend to get along less well with their parents than do boys. The relationship with parents was significantly associated with overall delinquency, vandalism and property offences (i.e. fairly non-serious delinquency), in all countries. However, with the exception of North-western Europe, this was not the case for serious offences and violent acts. In all countries, disliking school and playing truant were significant correlates of delinquent behaviour. In particular, school failure was related to serious and violent delinquency, but this was not the case with respect to non-serious offending. In all three country clusters, delinquent youths were more likely to spend time with friends, while non-delinquents spend more time with their family.

Fourth, the *role of peers and leisure activities* in delinquent behaviour in general, and group delinquency (co-offending), in particular, was examined. Several questions were addressed: (1) which variables determine belonging to a group of friends and the choice of leisure activities?; (2) is spending time in a large peer group typical for all youths or rather restricted to delinquent youths only?; (3) are youths whose social networks revolve around a large group of friends more likely to commit certain types of misbehaviour than youths who are less involved with peers? The analysis indicated that belonging to a large group of friends increases the probability of delinquency, confirming what we know from literature. However, we found that group membership did not result from a bad relationship with one's father, nor from being held back in school. It seems to increase with the number of friends and with being enrolled in school. Group membership is age-related and part of a social network created within a school setting. As such, it is unrelated to delinquency, since young people do a lot of things together with others without this leading necessarily to delinquent behaviour. For example, we found that in Southern Europe all leisure is normally spent in groups outside the home, without resulting in higher delinquency rates than in other countries. Whether a juvenile joins a delinquent group rather than a conventional one is to a large degree determined by his own functioning in other conventional systems such as school. To the extent that he is marginalized, he will seek the company of other marginalized youths where alcohol and drug use are encouraged and delinquent behaviour is considered normal (Warr, 2002; Thornberry and Krohn, 2003).

Fifth, self-reported data on the use and sale *of soft and hard drug* and alcohol consumption were also analyzed. International comparisons were made with regard to the age of onset of use and the interrelationships between drug use (soft and hard), involvement in drug sales, and self-reported involvement in other delinquent activities. The results indicate that the pattern is almost the same in all 11 countries: the first psychotropic substance juveniles are taking is alcohol – between age 13 and 14 – followed by soft drugs and eventually by hard drugs. Interestingly, the findings suggest that in western youth populations soft drug use is hardly considered as deviant behaviour, let alone as criminal behaviour. Drug selling appears to be limited to drug users and particularly to hard drug users.

Sixth, cross-national differences and similarities in the *social response* to youthful misbehaviour were presented. Multivariate analyses focused on the issue of whether there are nation-specific differences in the likelihood that the self-reported misbehaviour was ever detected, and if so, by whom, with what consequence. Overall, we found that most misbehaviour went undetected and – when detected – had no consequences. Interesting was that in the Anglo-Saxon cluster, youthful misbehaviour was more likely met by formal social control (i.e. the police).

1.1.2 Lessons Learned From ISRD-1

ISRD-1 showed the feasibility of quantitative, cross-national comparative self-report studies that can yield important results relevant for theory and criminal policy. The study also contributed to the improvement of comparative self-report methodology. In spite of its success, ISRD-1 points to the need for improvement of the organization of international studies and of the research methodology. For example, drawing a national random sample of individual juveniles turned out to be more difficult than expected because of the problem to reach juveniles of the lower class or of ethnic minorities. This made comparative analyses of the relationship

between social disadvantage or ethnicity and the prevalence of delinquency difficult or impossible. Another problem was that the participating countries took many liberties to modify and adapt the "standardized" questionnaire. The biggest problem concerned the measurement of delinquent behaviour: Some countries used quasi-objective categories such as "once", "two to five times", and "more than five times", and some countries used subjective categories such as "rarely", "sometimes", and "often", making comparisons difficult or questionable.[2]

An important lesson learned was that much firmer organizational leadership is necessary to achieve the necessary standardization of the methodology, including regular workshops with all participants. The organizational as well as the methodology of the ISRD-2 project has been changed accordingly, including a constant monitoring of the research process.

1.2 The Present Study

As is to be expected, the objectives of the second ISRD study were more ambitious than those of ISRD-1:

1. To describe the prevalence and incidence of offending and victimization among youths between the ages 12 and 15 (corresponding to grades 7–9 or the first, second and third class in secondary schools in most participating countries)
2. To obtain measures of the relative rank ordering of prevalence of different types of youthful misbehaviour and victimization
3. To examine cross-national variability in patterns of correlates of self-reported delinquent behaviour
4. To describe cross-national differences in the importance of minority status with respect to self-reported offending and victimization patterns in this age group
5. To learn more about correlates of criminal behaviour in this age group and to test different explanations of crime, such as social control, self control, social disorganization and life style theory
6. To examine the importance of the school and neighbourhood context of this age group's misbehaviour
7. To describe the aspects of delinquent trajectories among this age group in participating countries, such as age of onset, frequency and versatility
8. To describe the reactions of official authorities and those of other agents, such as parents, teachers or shopkeepers, to juvenile delinquency in this age group
9. To study the importance of micro-level (individual), meso-level (school and neighbourhood), and macro-level (city and country) variables for self-reported delinquency in this age group in participating countries
10. To advance knowledge of the methodological issues involved in conducting cross-national survey research
11. To contribute to the development of repeat studies to measure trends in youth delinquency over time in a number of (primarily) European and North American cities and countries

One important goal not listed above was to expand the number of countries participating in the study.

1.2.1 Methodological Standardization: with Some Flexibility

The ISRD-2 design is a major improvement over ISRD-1, in particular with respect to focusing on the importance of developing and enforcing a research protocol that was to be followed by all participants. Borrowing from the real-estate agent's emphasis on "location, location, location", our mantra became: "standardization, standardization, standardization!" Indeed, from its very inception, ISRD-2's explicitly comparative design intends to minimize the confounding impact of possible cross-national differences in study design and implementation on noted cross-national differences and similarities, through standardization: Of survey instruments, sampling plan, and standardized data entry method (the latter was made possible by using the free EpiData software: Lauritsen, 2006). We feel confident that we have mostly succeeded in achieving a truly standardized comparative research design – albeit with the expected challenges and modifications. Nonetheless, as will be further discussed in the concluding chapter of this volume, it may be more realistic and true to the quirky nature of cross-national research to aspire to "*flexible* standardization".

[2] For additional discussion of some of the methodological and logistic challenges of ISRD-1, see Junger-Tas et al. (2003).

The ISRD-2 design attempts to build in a certain degree of flexibility through its *modular* design. Countries differ in many respects, such as their administrative structure, geography, size of population, degree of urbanization and culture. Countries also differ in research resources, which is why we developed a research design that is scientifically as rigorous as possible, while still flexible, realistic and pragmatic. One way to accommodate national differences is to follow a modular approach to the questionnaire construction as well as allowing some flexibility of the sampling design. In a modular design, a distinction is made between a *core* part (of the instrument and the sample), which every participant has to include in order to be part of the ISRD-2 study, as well as additional (*optional*) modules, which may be included by those participants who have the funds and the interest to do so. Additional modules ideally should also be standardized in order to allow comparisons among subsets of countries. This approach provides flexibility, while ensuring a basic level of standardization and comparability.

1.2.2 Thirty-One Countries

One major challenge in comparative research is the small *N* problem (Ragin, 1987); typically, studies include only a handful of countries. There is no doubt that there are great advantages to having a larger (rather than a smaller) number of countries involved, not only from a purely methodological perspective but also because of the potential theoretical and policy implications. So, naturally, we wanted to expand our geographical coverage; we especially were keen to include countries from Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time, we were also concerned with keeping the project manageable by maintaining the main focus on Europe.[3] While ISRD-1 involved 13 mostly European countries, we were able to more than double that number for the ISRD-2 - to a total of 31.[4] Figure 1.1 below provides a bird's eye overview of the ISRD-2 countries.

Thus, ISRD-2 was conducted in 15 western European countries, 12 of which are EU member states: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. In addition, ten countries in the eastern part of Europe did participate, of which six new EU member states were funded by the European commission (one EU member state joined the study after the application was introduced), and three non-EU members were funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Russia. Furthermore, Canada and the United States represented by four states (Illinois, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Texas) were part of the study, and finally for the first time some countries outside Europe and North America did participate: Aruba together with the Netherlands Antilles, Suriname and Venezuela. Figure 1.1 also shows which countries used a city-based sample or a national sample.

It probably goes without saying that the inclusion of particular countries in our study was not based on any kind of random sampling (from among the sampling frame of some 200 countries); rather, we tried to invite as many participants as possible. Since we lacked a central funding agency, it was quite a challenge to get researchers (either from universities, research institutes, or government agencies) aboard our project in a timely manner. As Fig. 1.1 shows, ISRD-2 still misses a number of Eastern and Central European countries, as well as the UK, among others.

1.2.3 National and City-Based Sampling Designs

Large scale criminological survey research predominantly investigates victimizations. The aim of crime victimization studies is to estimate the amount of crime for a certain time period and region as precisely as possible. Therefore, great efforts are made to achieve results that are nationally representative. This holds likewise for national studies (e.g. the US Crime Victimization Survey or the British Crime Survey, see Rennison and Rand, 2007; Hough et al., 2007) and for international studies (e.g. the International Crime Victimization Studies, van Dijk et al., 2008).

[3] We intend to expand our geographic coverage to other continents in the third sweep.

[4] Note that Norway and Iceland participated but did not write a chapter. Canada contributed a chapter but will not be part of the merged data set.

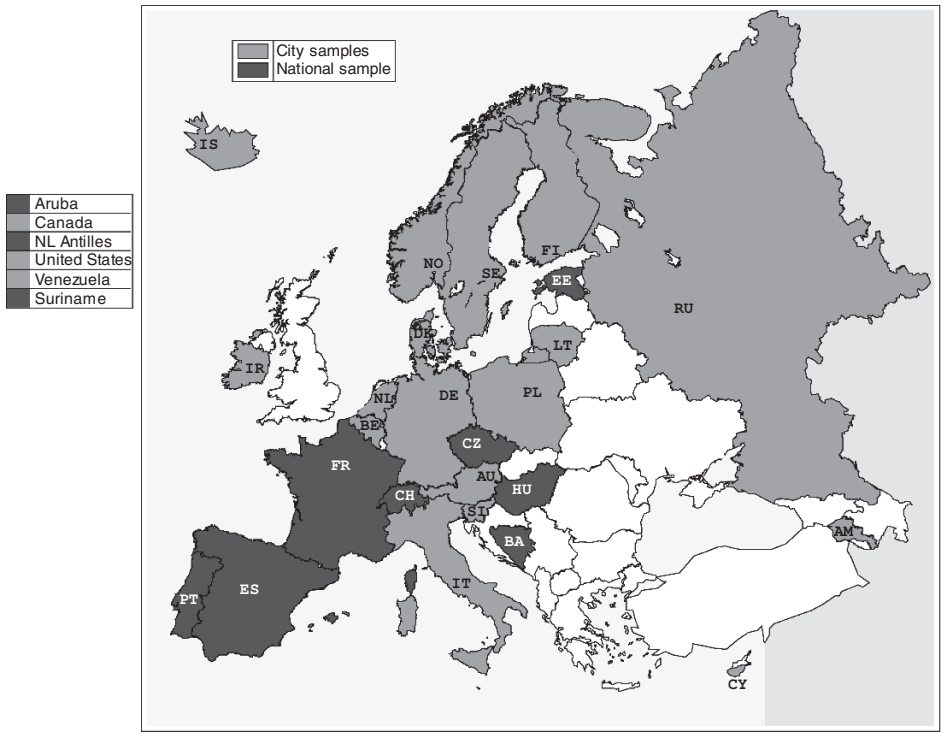

Fig. 1.1 ISRD-2 samples of 25 European and 6 American countries. *Notes:* total $n = 71{,}400$; number of large or medium-sized cities = 62; number of small town clusters of 2–9 towns = 16 (excluding Canada)

In so far as studies of self-reported delinquency also aim at *describing the amount of crime* in a certain time period and region, the gold standard likewise is nationally representative samples. However, the description of the prevalence of delinquent behaviour is but one objective of the ISRD-2 study. For the *explanation* of crime rates and of the criminal behaviour of offenders, the representativeness of the sample is less important than the precise measurement of relevant covariates on the individual as well as on the meso- and macro-level. To explain observable differences in prevalence rates across countries and to test criminological theories, not only individual level data but also data on the local or macro level are needed. City-based samples offer the possibility to measure these variables that differ locally more precisely. Therefore, in the ISRD-2 study city-based random sampling is preferred to national random sampling.

Altogether, the following are reasons to prefer city-based samples:

- There is a significant methodological advantage to using structurally similar sampling units, such as cities. The structural characteristics may be used to assess the comparability of cities, as well as the extent to which these variables play a role in the nature and extent of juvenile delinquency. Cities may be better directly comparable than countries. It also deals with the small *N* problem inherent to country-level analysis, simply stated: there are many more cities than countries.
- A city-based sampling design allows for multi-level (hierarchical linear modelling, HLM) analyses (Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). Thus, one of the real benefits of this approach is the study's ability to use city-level contextual information that may be used in an HLM design. The possibility of simultaneous multi-level analyses creates a new feature to the ISRD-2 design. In addition to city information, we did collect some school-based information, which adds an additional level of analysis across countries. Thus, the city-based option has the very important advantage that multi-level statistical analyses may be conducted (country level, city level, school level, as well as individual level). In this context, be it noted that we have collected a large number of local

and national structural indicators which will allow the triangulation of data (i.e. combine individual survey results with aggregate indicators at the city, regional and national level) in future analyses.

- The major purpose of the ISRD-2 study is to examine correlates of juvenile delinquency and victimization derived from criminological theories, which makes the representativeness of the sample of secondary importance (Maxfield and Babbie, 2001). City-based samples of our target group (12- through 15-year-old secondary school students) do permit the evaluation of international similarities and differences of *correlates* of delinquency. Estimates of prevalence and incidence of offending still may be made, albeit at the city-level rather than for the entire nation.
- It is very costly and time-consuming (if not impossible) to draw a nationally representative random sample of youths, particularly in large countries (such as Russia, Canada or the US). Drawing samples from a (small) number of cities requires considerably less resources. An important additional advantage is that our design allows for the inclusion of more than the minimum number of five cities and towns per country. City samples have an additional advantage in that some cities may be eager to participate in a "benchmark" study, such as the ISRD-2.
- The effects of policies are easier evaluated at the city-level than at the country-level. In a city-based design, structurally equivalent units are compared and accordingly, the impact of specific (crime) policies will be better assessable.
- Since cross-national comparisons of rates based on *trends* have higher validity and reliability than simple comparisons of rates, the same cities which participated in ISRD-2 might participate in successive ISRD waves. This may be a more attainable goal at the city level, rather than at the level of nation-based samples.

One has to recognize, however, that even if the city-based samples are representative for the cities selected, the collection of city-samples of a nation will, in general, *not* be *nationally* representative. Therefore, the analyses of the merged ISRD-2 data set in Volume 2 will predominantly be based on representative samples of *cities* of all countries, not on national samples.

The individual objectives of the participants of the ISRD-2 study are heterogeneous. Those whose major objective was to use the ISRD-2 data to describe the amount of crime in their country or who live in a small country rather preferred national random sampling, whereas those whose research interests were more focused on explaining local differences and testing criminological theories or who live in a large country rather preferred city-based sampling (see Fig. 1.1). With the exception of Spain, the participants who opted for a national sample oversampled at least one large city to make analyses on the level of cities possible for all countries.

1.2.3.1 Step 1: Selection of Cities

The ISRD-2 is a school-based study with school classes as primary sampling units; the aim was to have about 2,100 youths per participating country. The sampling process involved two stages: (1) selection of cities/towns; and (2) drawing a random sample of classrooms from the 7th, 8th and 9th grades (i.e. of classes of 12/13 to 14/15 year old students) in these cities and towns.

The first sampling decision was to decide which cities or towns to include. The city-based sampling design was based on a minimum of five cities or towns per country, the main selection criteria being size, degree of urbanization and demographic and economic variables. The aim was to obtain three sub-samples, including a metropolitan area (defined as one of the main economic centres of a country with a population between 500,000 and one million inhabitants) a medium-sized city (of size 120,000 ± 20% inhabitants) and three small rural towns (10,000–75,000 inhabitants). The design allowed for optional additional samples for those who wished to enlarge the scope of their sample, for example, adding specific, significant cities, in terms of geographic or economic criteria and differential crime rates. An excellent example is Italy (see Chap. 16), which has a total of 15 cities and towns and covers the whole country.

According to the agreed upon sample selection criteria, the three sub-sample groups would be equally represented in the final sample: a metropolitan sub-sample with 700 students, a mid-size city sub-sample with 700 students, and a small town cluster sub-sample with 700 students (combined from three small towns). Ideally, each country attempted to select cities, which are considered typical for the country. The selected cities were as comparable as possible to other cities/towns of the same size. Although not selected randomly and

limited in numbers (and in the potential to generalize), the cities that were used provide a reasonable representation of participating countries. They also provide good contrast to each other (geographic, economic and ethnic composition) and they present a diversified social climate in which youth crime and misbehaviour can be studied.

Our decision to use mainly a city-based sampling plan turned out to be a good choice, both for pragmatic as well as for theoretical reasons. From a *practical* perspective, most participating countries had no problems selecting one large city, one medium-sized city and three small towns from which to draw the sample of classes. In retrospect, the boundaries we set for city size need to be slightly revised in order to adjust for the relative differences between countries with respect to what is considered a big or small city.[5] Overall, we were successful in collecting samples in 31 large and 31 medium-sized cities and 61 small towns. Most countries selected their research sites based on regional representation and/or accessibility and convenience (e.g. France, USA). In the end, we have a total of 62 large and medium-size cities and 16 clusters of 2–9 small towns (see Fig. 1.1).[6]

Eleven of the countries (see Fig. 1.1) opted for a national sample for a variety of reasons: Availability of national classroom sampling frames, smaller country size, or the desire to have data at the national level. Fortunately, with the exception of one country all researchers were able to oversample at least one large city in these national samples, which allows us to maintain the advantage of a city-based approach even within the national samples. These over-sampled (regional) samples can be weighted down in order to make the overall sample nationally representative.

1.2.3.2 Step 2: Classroom-Based Selection of Respondents

The second stage of the sample selection was random. The individual chapters report in some detail about the actual sampling procedure used to select the student respondents in each county. For most countries, this information is also available in more detail in technical reports at web site of the book (see below). The sampling plan asked for a random selection of 7th, 8th and 9th grade classrooms in the selected cities (representing 700 students each, 2,100 total). All samples were stratified according grade level (7th, 8th and 9th grade), some additionally to school type (academic, technical or vocational). The minimum core sample was randomly selected from among the 7th, 8th and 9th grade classrooms at the schools in the selected cities/towns or nations. A stratified multi-stage sampling procedure was used. First, a listing of all secondary educational schools of the selected cities was created. This included public and private schools, vocational, technical and academic schools. Then, a listing of all 7th, 8th and 9th grade classrooms in these institutions was constructed. By selecting classes randomly from these listings, the number of students drawn was proportional to the proportion of students in each school type.[7] Selecting students by grade level rather than by age facilitated the practical management of respondent selection as well as a greater level of comparability. In addition, because in nearly all countries school is compulsory for grade 7–9 students, the selection of classes allowed having a greater representation of lower class respondents and of ethnic minorities (Oberwittler and Naplava, 2002).

We decided to sample classes at compulsory school age to obtain a more representative sample with cross-national comparability. In retrospect, this choice turned out to be a somewhat mixed blessing, primarily because of problems with the comparability of the different national school systems. There are differences in the age of compulsory education (e.g. Belgium 18, Italy 15, although Italian kids are obliged to follow some form of education – be it an apprenticeship – until age 18), major differences in number and types of secondary education (general, versus technical vs. vocational), national differences in grade repetition policy (e.g. in Belgium, repeating a grade is much more common than in the US), national – and local – differences in the actual organization of secondary education (e.g. not all students belong to a particular "classroom";

[5]Cities with 300,000 inhabitants and more are defined as large, cities with 100,000 to less than 300,000 inhabitants as medium sized, and towns with 10,000 to less than 100,000 as small towns.

[6]Canada will not be merged to the ISRD-2 data set and Spain did not oversample large cities.

[7]To standardize the sampling procedure participants could make use of the "Survey Manager", an Excel program especially written for the ISRD-2 study to manage the list of schools and classes, to draw random samples of classes, and to manage the survey administration.

a "classroom" often is an artificial category) and national differences in how special educational needs are met – to mention but a few of the most obvious obstacles.

Apart from the lack of comparability of school systems, there were other realities which challenged the actual implementation of the classroom-based design encountered in individual countries, such as: (1) lack of availability of sampling frame (i.e. listing of individual 7th, 8th and 9th grade class rooms); (2) lack of cooperation of selected schools; (3) obstacles provided by requirement of having active parental consent (e.g. USA); (4) ambiguity about definition of 7th, 8th and 9th grade (resulting in disproportionate age groups in some countries). Further details can be found in the individual chapters and the technical reports.

In view of all these obstacles, it is little wonder that the original goal of strictly random sampling of classrooms was not fully realized in all countries. That is the bad news. The good news is that there was a low level of refusal among students who were contacted (discounting the refusal at the levels of schools and parents). Last but not least, for most countries, we have a rather detailed accounting of exactly how the sample was obtained. This was achieved by employing standardized "Administrator Forms" by which all participants could keep track of response and refusal rates. Thus, each country has maintained a careful accounting of the exact procedures used in the sampling process, often coupled with attempts to assess the degree of representativeness of the achieved sample by making comparisons with other available data.

The achieved sample size of the merged ISRD-2 data set is 71,400 cases. Although this is an impressive number, more important is the fact that the data were obtained in a standardized manner that allows to obtain comparable and fairly reliable estimates of the incidence and prevalence of juvenile delinquency.

1.2.4 The Survey Instrument

In addition to a flexible sampling design, ISRD-2 opted for a modular construction of the questionnaire, including a core module with one or more optional modules of variables. This design allows participants with specific theoretical or policy interests to develop such additional modules. The core ISRD-2 instrument is modelled after the ISRD-1 questionnaire. Since we wish to achieve comparisons between and within countries as well as consider trends in juvenile delinquency over time, we maintained a number of the original ISRD-1 questions. Moreover, these questions are commonly used items which have proven their reliability and validity over the years.

First, this is the case for all questions on specific delinquent acts as well as *lifetime prevalence* (did you ever commit…), *current prevalence* (did you do this last year), *frequency* (how many times did you do this), the *age of onset*, the *circumstances of the act* (did you do this on your own, or where did you do this) and *social reactions to the offence* (who detected the offence and what was the reaction). Second, this refers to some *social demographic variables* including age, gender, family composition, socio-economic status and education level. Third, we maintained a small number of *theoretical variables*, mainly related to social control theory, including relationship with parents, parental supervision, and attachment to school, commitment to school, truancy and peers. However, we included a great number of additional correlates and theoretical, explanatory variables, such as *victimization* (have you ever been the victim of extortion, physical violence, theft and bullying) and *reporting to the police*, *lifestyle variables* (leisure occupations, friends of different religion or ethnic group, number of delinquent friends), *attitudes towards violence*, a shortened version of *the Grasmick self-control scale* (including items on impulsivity, risk seeking, self-centredness, temper), *school context* (what does school offer?; what does school mean to you?; do stealing, fighting, vandalism and drug use happen in school?), *life events* (death or serious illness of parent/family member, parental conflicts, separation/divorce) and information on *neighbourhood* (attachment, cohesion and disorganization). The ISRD-2 questionnaire can be found on the web-site of this book (see below).

A main concern was to create an instrument which was approved of by all participating researchers. Although a few countries added some questions, with the exception of Canada and Ireland the sequence of questions, their phrasing, the answer formats and thus the integrity of the survey instrument was preserved by all participants. Most of the surveys were conducted in a classroom setting, and self-administered (pencil-and-paper) by the students (generally, with supervision by researchers; in some cases, with supervision by teachers). In a few countries, the administration of the question-

naires was computerized (Switzerland, Denmark and Finland). A randomized controlled experiment conducted before the start of the ISRD-2 showed that both ways of administration produce very similar responses (Lucia et al., 2007). Although great care was taken in maintaining comparability between countries, unavoidably, some unanticipated problems emerged. Some of these problems are common to any survey research endeavour (such as those reflecting lack of care in formulating particular questions, e.g. double negation in a question related to neighbourhood; or the question on downloading which fails to make the distinction between legal and illegal downloading) while others are peculiar to the comparative nature of the ISRD-2. For instance, we encountered different translations of particular offences, such as robbery/extortion, and purse snatching, reflecting different legal interpretations and systems.

A major threat to international comparability of survey data – even if the questions are the same – is lack of standardization in definition and coding of variable values. In the ISRD-2, there was virtually no deviation from the pre-coded answer categories (which had caused much trouble in ISRD-1), because we used EpiData (Lauritsen, 2006) to create standardized data entry masks defining data formats and rules for data entry. This data entry method forces uniformity in coding of similar questions across different languages. Although the adaptation of data entry masks to small deviations of questionnaires for each country proved to be a rather labour intensive endeavour, this was greatly outweighed by the resulting standardization and reliability of the coded data. For those countries that employed computerized administration of the questionnaires, the data files produced were individually adapted to the common format. This allowed a comparatively smooth merging of the data sets of the 30 countries. It should be noted that the current chapters are based on separate data files of the individual countries. Because a second, common data-cleaning procedure was applied to the merged data set, it is possible that slightly different results may be produced in Volume 2.

1.3 This Volume

The present volume includes 28 national summary chapters out of a total of 31 participating countries: 13 chapters of western European countries (11 are EU member states), 10 chapters of eastern European countries (7 are EU member states), furthermore, chapters of Canada, the United States, Venezuela and Surinam as well as one chapter combining results of Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles. Norway and Iceland did not write a separate chapter, although their data are part of the international merged data base (see Volume 2).

As an organizing framework, we employ the country clusters suggested by Saint-Arnaud and Bernard (2003), which is an elaboration of Esping-Andersen's work (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Saint-Arnaud and Bernard's clustering groups the countries according to different welfare policies. We expand the clusters identified by Saint-Arnauld and Bernard by adding an Eastern/Central European and a Latin American cluster, thus grouping the countries into six clusters (at the same time, defining the sequence of chapters that follow):

- Western European countries (The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France, Switzerland and Austria)
- Anglo-Saxon countries (Ireland, Canada, USA)
- Northern European countries (Finland, Sweden, Denmark)
- Mediterranean countries (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Cyprus)
- Eastern and Central European countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Russia and Armenia)
- Latin America (Venezuela, Surinam, Aruba and The Netherlands Antilles)

Because we have found this clustering scheme to be robust and useful, we will also employ this country clustering in our subsequent analyses of the merged data set (Volume 2).

What makes the book particularly interesting is this great diversity of participating countries, giving a first impression of the degree to which delinquency is a reflection of the specific make up of a society. Each chapter has been written by the original research partners in the ISRD-2 project, and – although each chapter tried to follow some minimum guidelines as to content and structure (i.e. including life-time and last year prevalence tables of offences) – it is a definitive plus that each contribution was thus able to capture the unique national style and particular concerns with problems related to its youth. We thought it helpful, however, to conclude the book with a summarizing chapter. In this final chapter, we provide a brief discussion of the main findings of the ISRD-2 study, as well

as a preview of the next steps that we are taking in order to fully explore the very rich ISRD-2 data set comprised of more than 71,000 individual interviews representing some 30 countries, over 60 cities and a number of small town clusters.

As will become clear in this and subsequent publications, the ISRD study moves us a step forward in understanding the parameters of youth crime cross-nationally and the variances attributable to national differences, and in discovering patterns of theoretical correlates of delinquency, alcohol and drug use, and victimization. Given that the study is one of the first attempts to collect comparative survey data on the topic of youthful misbehaviour in an internationally collaborative fashion, it undoubtedly will further contribute to the development of comparative survey methodology.

Additional background information, including more detailed technical reports and the ISRD-2 survey instruments of participating countries, is available on the web-site of this book at http://webapp5.rrz.uni-hamburg.de/ISRD/JDEB/.

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