Chapter 2

Methods

In order to answer the research questions data from the Transfive study is used in all four papers. In this section background information on the Transfive study is given, as well as information on the sample and measurements that will be used in this dissertation.

2.1 The Transfive study

In 1907, the Centrale Vereeniging voor Kinderbescherming (Central Association for Childcare) was founded, and it was commissioned to establish a reform school for Catholic children. On the 14th of September in 1911 the Catholic reform school was officially opened in a Dutch town near the German border. It could accommodate 200 children, which was a relatively high capacity in that time period (Bijleveld, Wijkman & Stuifbergen, 2007).

An old registration book that contains data of all boys who were registered at the reform school was made available by the institution. For the first 198 boys, who were registered between the 19th of June in 1911 and the 23rd of February in 1914, this book described the backgrounds from which the boys were placed in the reform school. The problems and home situations of the boys were mixed. Some boys were placed in the reform school because of concerns about their character and problem behavior (including delinquency). Others were institutionalized because of the behavior of their parents (including crime, prostitution and alcohol abuse), who were - according to guardian organizations – not able to take proper care of their children. In some cases problems were described which are not viewed as problematic nowadays, such as ‘having a Protestant father’ (Bijleveld, et al., 2007). However, for most boys accumulations of severe problems were described. Table 2.1 summarizes the risk factors for criminal development to which these boys were exposed according to the registration book. It is remarkable that most of these risk factors resemble the risk factors of boys who are treated in juvenile justice institutions nowadays. An important difference, however, is that boys nowadays usually are only send to such institutions after actually showing problem behavior, while most of the boys in this sample were only “at risk” for problem behavior without actual problematic behavior of the boy mentioned in the registration book. The high
prevalence rates of risk factors in Table 2.1 indicates that these 198 boys constituted a high-risk sample in terms of offending and violence.

**Table 2.1 Risk factors of the boys placed at the institution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk factor</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delinquent parent(s)</td>
<td>22 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased parent(s)</td>
<td>29 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol abuse parent(s)</td>
<td>26 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral problems child</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral problems sibling(s)</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low morality parent(s)</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced parent(s)</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Bijleveld et al., 2007, p. 17.*

The 198 boys were, on average, 13 years and two months old when they were placed in the reform school, and stayed at this institution for four years and eight months, on average (Bijleveld et al., 2007). This average length of stay was much longer for those boys than it is for boys who are placed at same institution nowadays. For example, boys who were placed in ‘Harreveld’ between 1989 and 1996 only stayed at the institution for two years on average (Van der Geest et al., 2005). After leaving the reform school, the first 198 boys usually were put to work for a ‘patron’, usually an entrepreneur or a farmer. They remained under supervision of guardian organizations until the age of 21.

**2.2 Sample**

In order to establish a multigenerational study, the parents and all descendants of these 198 boys were traced in Dutch genealogical and municipal records, with a retrieval rate of 100 percent. Those sample members who emigrated during the course of the follow-up were considered as lost to follow-up and their descendants were not further traced (Bijleveld et al., 2007). All legal partners (i.e. from marriages or registered partnerships) of the sample members were also traced in municipal records and included in the dataset so that information on both parents is available for each sample member. Figure 2.1 summarizes the sample.
The 367 parents of the 198 boys are indicated as ‘Generation 1’ (G1) since they are the oldest generation in the sample. The G1 were born in 1870 on average. The 198 institutionalized boys are called G2 and were born on average in 1899. The G2 married with 207 partners, in total. From these marriages, 621 children were born which are called the G3. The G3 were born, on average, in 1932 and had a total of 585 partners. The G4 are the 1,315 children of the G3 and their partners, who were born in 1960 on average. The G4 married or cohabited with 1,130 partners and had 1,982 children which are called G5. These G5 are, on average, born in 1986. Although some of the older G5 have partners and children (G6), these G6 are not included in the current sample because the N is low and these children are still almost all below the age of legal responsibility (i.e. younger than twelve years old). The G1 were studied retrospectively, while the G2 (from adulthood onwards) and all subsequent generations were followed prospectively. The G1 and G2 had all died at the moment of data collection, while surviving G3, G4 and G5 were on average 76 years, 48 years and 22 years old, respectively. The sample members are predominantly ethnically Dutch, Catholic and from families that were part of the lower social strata of Dutch society around the 1900s, and are therefore not representative for the entire Dutch population.
In this dissertation only information on the three youngest generations (G3, G4 and G5) is used for three reasons. First, these generations are followed prospectively over their entire life-course, while the G1 and the G2 (during childhood and adolescence) were followed retrospectively. Second, the G2 were placed under supervision until their 21st birthday, which may have affected their criminal behavior at least up to that age. Third, the conviction data of G1 and G2 was collected from different archival sources that most likely provide less good coverage than the conviction data for the younger generations.

2.3 Measurements

Information on the respondents is derived from four different sources. Information from the municipal administration records (in Dutch: Gemeentelijke Basis Administratie (GBA)) was used to obtain demographical variables. Official judicial documentation was used to measure offending behavior. Data from the Defense Archives and Registration Information Center (in Dutch: Defensie Archieven en Registratie Informatie Centrum (DARIC)) was used to derive variables on physical and mental health, family members, sexuality, education, employment and leisure time. Finally, the court files of the cases of sex offending were examined in order to obtain information on the victims of these crimes.

2.3.1 The municipal administration records

The demographic variables for each sample member were obtained from Dutch municipal administration records. These data include the dates of birth, death, marriage and divorce or separation. Moreover, it is indicated in these data whether the sample member had a biological or step-parent. The gender of the sample members was available from the municipal administration records until 1994. From the records after 1994, gender was unknown but could be clearly determined from the given name in all cases but one, which was coded as a male.

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3 Consent to collect data on (partners of) the descendants of the 198 men was obtained from the Agentschap Basisadministratie Persoonsgegevens en Reisdocumenten of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.
2.3.2 Official judicial documentation

Information on criminal behavior was obtained from the computerized, paper and microfilmed archives of the Dutch Criminal Records Documentation Service (‘judicial documentation’), in December 2007\(^4\). The registrations which resulted in a conviction were counted. Acquittals and so-called ‘technical dismissals’ (i.e. dismissal of a case by the public prosecutor because of insufficient evidence and the case being expected to result in acquittal) were not counted. Cases that never received a disposition, or that resulted in a policy dismissal (i.e. dismissal of a case because the prosecutor deemed it unfeasible to prosecute, for instance because the perpetrator had already paid damages), were counted as convictions.

Offenses have been classified, based on the ‘CBS standard classification for offenses’ (Eggen & Van der Heide, 2005). The violent crimes in this classification include: all hands-on sex crimes (i.e. rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse), crimes against life (i.e. murder and manslaughter), threats, assaults, physical injury, robbery and extortion. All other crimes are considered as non-violent offenses, including property offenses, arson, drugs offenses, weapons offenses and less serious offenses such as traffic offenses and environmental offenses. Offenses were timed to the date the crimes were committed. If the date of commission was unknown, it was estimated as one year before the conviction date. If the conviction date was missing as well, the commission date was timed as July 1 of the year of registration.

This judicial documentation does not contain data on individuals born before 1912 and may miss people born between 1912 and 1916. Therefore, sample members born before 1916 were excluded from the analyses in this dissertation. The records are complete for the remaining participants, apart for those sample members born in the Almelo ‘arrondissement’ before 1967, which applies to no more than 3% of the G3 and G4.

\(^4\) Consent to collect data on the criminal behavior of the (partners of) the descendants of the 198 men was obtained from the Ministry of Justice.
2.3.3 Defense Archives and Registration Information Center

Data from the medical examinations prior to the mandatory military service was obtained from the Ministry of Defense for most of the men born after 1928\(^5\). These data were usually collected when the conscripts were around age 18 and consist of a wide range of variables, based on the examination of physical and mental health and on questions about the conscripts’ family, sexuality, education, employment and leisure activities. Of these variables, however, only data on the resting heart rate levels of the sample members is used in the current study.

These data are not available for all men, since the medical screening could be cancelled if it was clear that someone would be exempt from military service. Possible reasons to be exempted include conscientious objections, indispensability in family businesses, being the main provider in families, extensive prior criminal behavior or ‘brother service’\(^6\). In 1992 the Dutch government decided to suspend the mandatory military service, and the medical examinations stopped. As a consequence, data from the defense archives and registration information center is available for 227 G3-men, 542 G4-men and 190 G5-men.

2.3.4 Court files

A final source of information are the court files of all cases of sex offending that were found in the judicial documentation of the sample members\(^7\). This information was used to identify the victims of the sex offenses and to determine the relationship between the victim and perpetrator of the sex offenses. In total, 54 percent of the court files could be retrieved from the archives of the courts or the archives of one of the Dutch provinces. Of the court files studied, two thirds contained enough information to determine the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator of the sex offense.

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\(^5\) Consent to collect data from the medical examination for military service for the male descendants of the 198 men was obtained from the Ministry of Defense.

\(^6\) ‘Brother service’ refers to the policy of the Dutch government that implies that not all brothers from larger families had to serve. Until 1966, only the three oldest brothers had to serve in the armed forces. From 1966 onwards, only the two oldest brothers had to serve.

\(^7\) Consent to examine the court files was obtained from the Public Prosecution Service.
References

