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Beyond law enforcement's perspective on crime: German studies on self-reported delinquency¹

Thomas Görgen (Münster) & Susann Rabold (Hannover)

1 Development of self-reported delinquency studies in Germany

In Germany, studies on self-reported delinquency date back to the late 1960ies/early 70ies (Kreuzer, 1975; Lösel, 1975; Quensel, 1971; Quensel & Quensel, 1969). These early studies – most of them directed at rather small samples of young people at schools and universities – tend to describe less severe forms of juvenile delinquency as ubiquitous and normal phenomena in young persons' lives. They show that among young men delinquent behaviour is more widespread, more severe and more violent than among women of the same age. They also point at the fact that delinquency is not an isolated problem but often coincides with school deficits, family problems etc. (for an overview see Kreuzer, 1994a; 1994b).

Since those early stages of SRD research in Germany, a large number of studies have been published. Though meanwhile some local/regional surveys have been conducted repeatedly (or as longitudinal studies), Germany still lacks institutionalization of crime-related self-report studies – both on the victim and on the offender side. With regard to the multitude of German SRD studies on the one hand and the lack of any repeated national surveys on the other, the following report will focus on an overview of the current situation of research on self-reported delinquency in Germany; a complete inventory of four decades of German SRD research would be far beyond its scope.

2 Current situation of research on self-reported delinquency in Germany

As in most countries, German SRD studies show a strong focus on juvenile delinquency. This report distinguishes between

1. delinquency studies in the general adult population
2. delinquency studies in child and adolescent populations
3. delinquency studies in special populations.

¹ This paper emerged from a seminar within a Coordination Action "Assessing Deviance, Crime and Prevention in Europe (CRIMPREV)" funded by the European Commission (FP6) (2006-2009) and coordinated by the CNRS – Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (France). For further information on CRIMPREV see <http://www.crimprev.eu>. An earlier version of this paper has been published in R. Zauberman (Ed.) (2009). Self-reported crime and deviance studies in Europe: Current state of knowledge and review of use (pp. 125-154). Brussels: Brussels University Press.

2.1 Delinquency studies in the general adult population

The main German exception to the rule of equating SRD research with research on children and adolescents is the German General Social Survey (Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften - ALLBUS). Since 1980, ALLBUS has been conducted in two year intervals as a national survey on attitudes, behaviour and social structure. ALLBUS has a cross-sectional design; representative samples of the German population are interviewed face-to-face (in recent years via CAPI). The ALLBUS surveys conducted in 1990 and 2000 included four items on self-reported delinquency (cf. Mehlkop & Becker, 2004; Becker & Günther, 2004; Becker & Mehlkop, 2006; Lüdemann, 2002). These questions touched four widespread offences: (1) shoplifting, (2) fare dodging, (3) driving under the influence, and (4) tax evasion. In 1990, 3.051 community-dwelling German-speaking adults were interviewed; in 2000, sample size was 3.138. A 'sealed envelope technique' was used for the delinquency items in order to build trust and to emphasize anonymity and confidentiality.² ALLBUS asks for lifetime prevalence / incidence only. In ALLBUS 2000, about 37% reported at least one incident of fare dodging; lifetime prevalence rates for drunk driving (27%), shoplifting (11%) and tax evasion (13%) were lower. The mass offences measured in the ALLBUS surveys were committed more frequently by men than by women; except for tax evasion, prevalence of offences declined with age. Using 1990 and 2000 ALLBUS data for shoplifting and tax-evasion, Mehlkop & Becker (2004) analyze relationships between social class and criminal behaviour. Across offences, there was no stable relationship between individuals' social status and delinquency. Types of offences committed were affected by social status. Subjective expected probability of failure or success and internalized norms were important predictors of offending.

Beside ALLBUS, SRD research in adult populations has mostly been restricted to special samples like heroin addicts. One exception to be mentioned here is a survey of 16- to 34-year olds (460 in East Germany in 1991; 650 in East and West Germany in 1993; 1.360 in East German cities in 1993) embedded in a study on crime and social change in the wake of German re-unification (cf. Boers, Class & Kurz, 1994). As the majority of German SRD studies are on delinquency in early stages of life, the paper will turn to this part of research now.

2.2 Delinquency studies in adolescent populations

German SRD research's focus on young people is due not only to the involvement of juveniles in criminal / delinquent behaviour but also to the relatively easy access researchers have to child and adolescent subjects (cf. Kreuzer, 1994a). Surveys can often be administered in the classroom, thus keeping resources required for conducting the surveys in a limit.

The following sections will give an overview of delinquency studies among adolescents and – to a much lesser extent – children. Given the restrictions in space, it will not be possible to describe each and every study conducted in Germany.

2.2.1 Cross-sectional surveys

Since 1998, a series of SRD studies with adolescents (and children) has been conducted by Hanover-based Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony (KFN; cf. Baier, Pfeiffer,

² Using data from ALLBUS 2000, Becker & Günther (2004) conclude that mail surveys could be a way to improve data quality in SRD research (e.g. because of exclusion of interviewer effects).

Simonson & Rabold, 2009; Baier & Pfeiffer, 2007; Wetzels, Enzmann, Mecklenburg & Pfeiffer, 2001; Wilmers, Enzmann, Schäfer, Herbers, Greve & Wetzels, 2002). There have now been repeated surveys in the cities of Hamburg (1998, 2000, 2005), Hanover (1998, 2000, 2006), Leipzig (1998, 2000, 2004), Munich (1998, 2000, 2005), Stuttgart (1998, 2005) and Schwäbisch Gmünd (1998, 2005) and a number of (yet) not repeated surveys in other cities, towns and rural areas. Most of these surveys were funded by the cities themselves.

The first nationwide representative survey – funded by the German ministry of the Interior – was conducted in 2007 and 2008 among 44.610 9th and about 8.000 4th graders (cf. Baier, Pfeiffer, Simonson & Rabold, 2009). The self-administered questionnaire asks for 12 types of violent and property offences and uses a 12 months reference period. One third of all 9th graders reported at least one offence during the last 12 months (33,9%). While delinquency as such appears to be widely spread, severe forms of violence (severe assault, robbery, sexual violence) are reported by only 1,5 to 2,9% of adolescents. Violent offences, damage to property and severe forms of theft were reported much more frequently by boys than girls whereas there was no gender difference with regard to shoplifting.

KFN surveys repeatedly found connections between the social situation of juveniles and their delinquent behaviour. Delinquency is higher if families are economically disadvantaged and if educational perspectives / options of juveniles are very limited. Offending rates decline with rising school level.³ KFN surveys focus upon links between social exclusion, ethnicity and violence. In the 2007/2008 school survey, significantly higher prevalence rates of severe forms of violence were found among juveniles of non-German origin. Only the prevalence rates of Asian pupils were similar to ethnic Germans' rates; for less severe forms of assault, young Asians reported even lower rates. With regard to property offences the role of ethnicity remains unclear. Some migrant groups had lower rates (e.g. Turkish and Arabic migrants) in comparison to ethnic Germans while others reported higher prevalence rates (e.g. Polish or Italian).

KFN surveys point at associations between experiences of parental violence in childhood and self-reported violence. Part of the higher rate of violence among young Turkish males can be explained by their victim experiences. The concept of "violence-legitimizing norms of masculinity" (cf. Enzmann & Wetzels, 2003; Enzmann, Brettfeld & Wetzels, 2003) - drawing on Nisbett & Cohen's (1996) 'culture of honor' – is used to explain differential levels of violence in ethnic groups; these norms are strongest among youths of Turkish and former Yugoslav origin. In recent KFN surveys, media use in general and violent video games / computer games in particular are important variables, supposed to influence school achievement, empathy, and aggressive behaviour (Mössle, Kleimann, Rehbein & Pfeiffer, 2006).

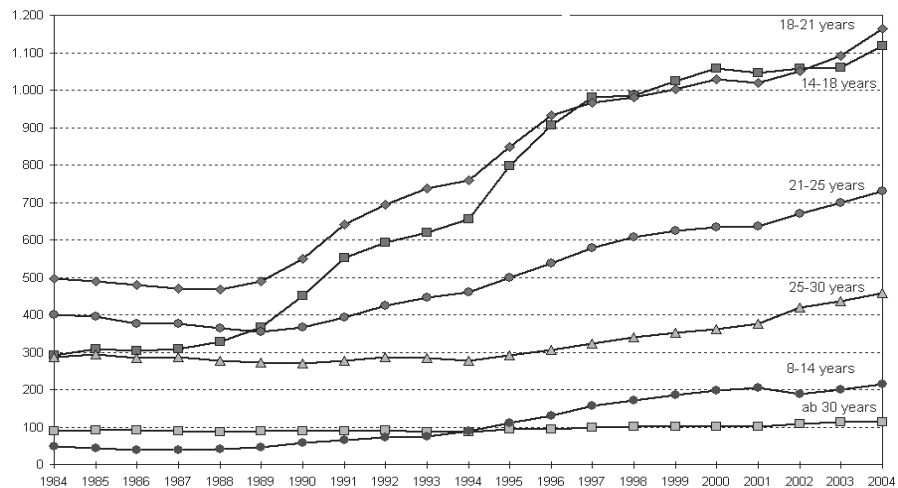
A recent study by Brettfeld & Wetzels (2007) on young Muslims living in Germany focussed on attitudes but also included some questions on SRD. The sample of 2.683 9th and 10th graders in the cities of Hamburg, Cologne, and Augsburg consisted of three subsamples: non-Muslim youths without migration background (n=1.553), non-Muslim youths with migration background (n=630), and Muslim youths (n=500). With regard to four violent offences (robbery, assault without weapon, threat with weapon, extortion), the study used a 12 months reference period. Brettfeld & Wetzels (2007) found self-reported violence to be more prevalent among migrants than among ethnic Germans. The more interesting finding was that for non-Muslim youths, there was a negative relationship between

3 The 2007/2008 survey studied four types of schools ("Hauptschule", "Realschule", "Integrierte Gesamtschule", "Gymnasium") which offer different educational and vocational perspectives to their graduates.

religiosity and SRD. For non-Muslim youths, prevalence of self-reported violence declined from 43.2% (not at all religious) to 18.5% (very religious); for non-Muslim Germans, the respective values were 26.7% and 14.3%. For young Muslims (29.2% vs. 28.6%), there was no such connection between religiosity and violence.

One important topic in German research is the discrepancy of trends in recorded crime and in self-report studies over time. Whereas – as figure 1 shows - officially recorded juvenile violence displays a rising tendency over more than two decades, this does not hold true for self-reported offences.

Figure 1: Violent crime suspects per 100,000 of respective age group, Germany, 1984 – 2004

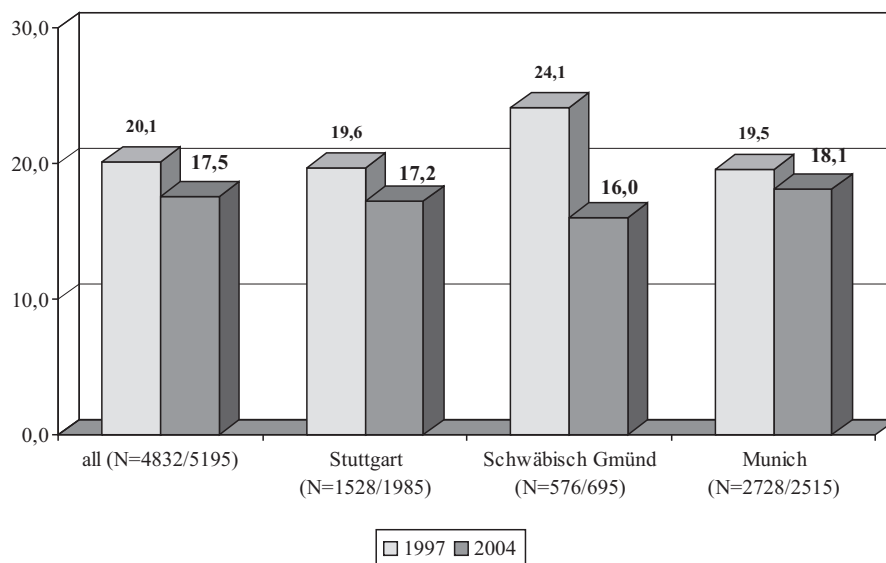


Source: German Federal Criminal Police Office: Police Crime Statistics; Violent crime: Homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault

Pfeiffer & Wetzels (2006) and Baier (2008), in comparing 1998 and 2005 KFN survey results, show that this is not true for self-reports. The prevalence of victim experiences as well as self-reported offences has diminished (offender prevalence: 20.1% to 17.5%); the percentage of repeat serious offenders (5+ violent offences /12 months) was also smaller in 2005 than in 1998. The severity of reported victim experiences has decreased. Comparisons of 1998 and 2005 data also show that factors influencing reported crime have changed: willingness to report has risen, negative attitudes towards violence have grown stronger. This partially explains the rise in officially recorded juvenile violent crime; its visibility and the readiness of victims to file charges against the offender have increased.⁴

4 Recent German school surveys also point at a reduction of violence in schools. These findings are backed by data from insurance companies. This counters popular perceptions that school violence is growing in frequency and severity (cf. Oberwittler & Köllisch, 2004; Tillmann, Holler-Nowitzki, Holtappels, Meier & Popp, 2000). Studies in the 1990ies had already questioned the common perception of a constant increase in school violence (cf. Schwind, Roitsch, Ahlborn & Gielen; 1995; Schwind, Roitsch & Gielen; 1995).

Figure 2: 12-months prevalence of self-reported juvenile violence in Munich, Stuttgart, Schwäbisch Gmünd, 1997 and 2004 (KFN student surveys, in %; cf. Baier, 2008)



Among other cross-sectional SRD studies to be mentioned are the surveys conducted by Dünkel and colleagues in Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania. Dünkel, Gebauer & Geng (2007) compare data from surveys of 9th graders conducted in Greifswald in 1998 and 2002.⁵ They show a significant decline of lifetime and 12 month prevalence of violent offences; this holds true not only for robbery (where the decline is mirrored in police data) but also for assault (where police data indicate a rise of the number of violent offences). In a survey of 4.028 8th graders in the city of Bochum (Feltes & Goldberg, 2006; Goldberg, 2006), 13.5% reported having assaulted somebody in a way that he /she needed medical treatment during the last year; 8.5% reported robbery. Prevalence of violence differed with ethnic origin and was especially high among Turkish youths (27%, compared to 11% in German and 15% in Polish subsamples). In a survey of 9th graders in the cities Freiburg and Cologne in 1999 (Oberwittler, Naplava, Blank & Köllisch, 2001), 11.5% of all females and 28.9% of all males reported having committed at least one violent act (assault, robbery, blackmail, threat with weapon) in the last year. Of all offences, theft is not widespread among girls (28.0%) and boys (41.3%).

German SRD studies are and have been integrated into the International Self-Report Delinquency Studies. An SRD study among youth in the southern German city of Mannheim found similar rates of offending among indigenous and migrant youth (Sutterer & Karger, 1994). The University of Hamburg⁶ is in charge of the German part of ISRD 2. The survey is conceived as a national multicenter study, a survey among 7th, 8th and 9th graders in one metropolitan area, one middle-sized town and 3 small towns in a rural area, covering juvenile delinquency as well as victimization.

5 The 1992 sample (724 9th graders) was part of the multinational Mare-Balticum-Youth-Survey conducted in Germany, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (Dünkel, Gebauer & Kestermann, 2005).

6 The core research team consists of Dirk Enzmann, Franziska Seyboth-Teßmer, and Peter Wetzels.

2.2.2 Longitudinal studies

There are some German self-report studies taking a longitudinal approach. Funded by German Research Foundation (DFG), annually repeated surveys in schools in the cities of Münster and Duisburg (cf. Boers & Reinecke, 2007; Boers, Reinecke & Walburg, 2006; Weins & Reinecke, 2007) are part of an integrated cohort and panel design. In Münster, a survey among 1.949 7th graders (mean age 13 years) was started in 2000 and repeated annually until 2003. The Duisburg surveys started in 2002 (n=3.411) and are repeated until 2007 (i.e. until 18 years of age). Measures of delinquency include lifetime and 12-month prevalence of 16 offences (violence, vandalism, property and drug offences). Findings point at a slight decrease in self-reported delinquency over time. Processes of spontaneous desistance can already be found in early adolescence. In the Duisburg sample – being a city with a high proportion of migrants – the overall prevalence rates of male Turkish youths are very close to that of young men without migration background; delinquency among Turkish girls was found to be significantly lower than among comparable German female adolescents.

A prospective longitudinal study conducted in Bremen (Schumann, 2003; 2004; 2007) measured self-reported delinquency over a time-span of 11 years. The sample consisted of 424 graduates of German Hauptschule and of special schools for handicapped children (Sonderschule). Data on education and work were recorded on a monthly basis; self-reported delinquency was measured annually and supplemented by official data on court-recorded crime. The study focussed on interactions between educational and work biography, delinquent behaviour and interventions by the criminal justice system. It found that work biography and delinquency are to a large extent independent spheres. However, decisions made by the criminal justice system were influenced by young people's work and educational status. Harsh CJS interventions were found to impede education and vocational career and to increase the risk of greater persistence of delinquent behaviour.

Between 1977 and 1996, the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of the Central Institute of Mental Health, Mannheim, conducted a prospective longitudinal study which included measures of SRD (cf. Lay, Ihle, Esser & Schmidt, 2005; Schmidt, Lay, Ihle & Esser, 2001). The original cohort consisted of a random sample (216 children) and a screening sample (183 children with behavioural problems) of children born in 1970 and resident in Mannheim in 1978. The sample of 399 eight-year-old children was followed up at ages 13, 18 and 25. 321 children participated up to t4 (179 ?, 142 ?). At all ages, data were obtained from parents. At ages 13, 18 and 25, structured interviews and questionnaires measuring self-reported delinquency were administered to the young subjects. The questionnaires consisted of 14 to 18 items describing delinquent and criminal behaviour. The researchers distinguish three life course types of delinquency: episodic juvenile delinquency, continued juvenile delinquency up to adulthood, and late-starting delinquency in early adulthood. They report that in early adulthood, the decline in recorded crime is larger than with regard to self-reported offences, implying that the prevalence of persistent offending is underestimated by police and court data.

A study by Lösel & Bliesener (2003) started with a cross-sectional survey of 1.163 7th/ 8th graders from different school types (Hauptschule, Realschule, and Gymnasium) in the cities of Nuremberg and Erlangen. This survey served as a screening instrument for a longitudinal study with a sample of 102 boys divided into 4 subgroups (aggressive bullies, average students, socially competent students, and victims) that were investigated again after two years. Data for this smaller sample also include structured observations of behaviour, experiments, tests and evaluations by teachers. Lösel, Bliesener & Bender (2007) report that serious forms of self-reported aggression displayed high sta-

bility over time. Consumption of violent media content and an aggressive-impulsive response repertoire were significant predictors of delinquency.

Other longitudinal studies also integrate elements of self-reported delinquency, for example the project "Wege aus schwerer Jugendkriminalität" ("Pathways out of serious juvenile delinquency") at the university of Tübingen. This study analyses the development of 56 juveniles who had received prison sentences of at least 10 months and were under probation (Stelly & Thomas, 2007). Self-report data are collected via semi-structured interviews.

2.3 Delinquency studies with special populations

Beside these SRD studies in (age-selective) general populations, there are a number of German self-report studies addressing special populations. The reasons for limiting sampling to specific groups are manifold. They include easy access to the respective groups, the use of self-reports as an educational tool, research questions applying only to the respective populations, and the use of self-reported delinquency measures in research contexts where questions of victimization are central, but victim surveys appear not to be feasible. Examples will be given for these types; again, this cannot be a comprehensive presentation.

Example 1: SRD studies with university students: At a number of German universities, especially at law faculties (where criminological departments are usually located), SRD studies have been conducted with students, often with freshmen. Access to subjects is easy, and results and method can be made topics of lectures. At Giessen University, delinquency studies among law freshmen have been continuously conducted since 1976 (cf. Görgen, Kreuzer & Klein, 1995; Kreuzer, Görgen, Krüger, Münch & Schneider, 1993; Wittich, Görgen & Kreuzer, 1998). Studies conducted at different German law faculties between 1973 and 2005 (cf. Schwind, 2007; Schwind, Freier & Ballering, 2002) point at a long-time decline in self-reported delinquency (with physical assault going down from 39% to 23% and theft from 43% to 20%).

Example 2: SRD studies with opioid addicts: Self-report approaches have been used in the context of the recent – federally funded - German model project for heroin assisted treatment of opioid dependent patients⁷. Evaluation of this project included two criminological studies, one using a quantitative SRD approach (Löbmann, 2003; 2006), the other based on in-depth interviews with addicts (cf. Köllisch, 2007; Köllisch & Kreuzer, 2006). Heroin treatment proved superior to methadone treatment with regard to offences committed by addicts in both groups; reductions were strongest for theft and drug trafficking. Survey findings paralleled trends in recorded offences.

Example 3: SRD studies with incarcerated juvenile / young adult offenders: The Hanover prison study (cf. Greve & Enzmann, 2003; Windzio, 2006) has been sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation (1997-2003) and the German Research Foundation (2004 to date). This longitudinal study focuses on about 2.400 first-time incarcerated German males aged 14-24 in five correctional institutions in Germany. Self-reported delinquency is measured in face-to-face and telephone interviews during incarceration and after release. Panel attrition is high so that only for a part of the sample the full range of interviews can be realized. Serious offenders show higher rates of non-response.

⁷ Self-report studies with opiate addicts have been conducted much earlier in German research on drug-related crime (cf. Kreuzer, Römer-Klees & Schneider, 1991).

Example 4: SRD studies with nurses: In some areas of basically victimological research, victim surveys are not feasible or severely limited with regard to data quality. In recent years, SRD studies with nurses have been conducted in research on elder abuse and neglect (cf. Görden, 2006, and Rabold & Görden, 2007, for SRD studies with nurses in residential and domestic care).

2.4 German SRD research: Summary and further trends

Though Germany can look back at a rather long tradition of research and a multitude of studies, SRD research is still missing institutionalization. This has implications for interpretations of findings as well as for their political impact. Often, studies and findings are not comparable with regard to the samples and to the methods and instruments used. Most of German SRD studies are limited in their geographical scope.

The focus of much of German SRD research is on questions associated with social change and social problems in Germany in the last decades. Recently, this includes the process of German re-unification (delinquency in East and West Germany and under conditions of rapid social transformation; cf. Posner, 1997; Heitmeyer et al., 1996; Kreuzer et al., 1993; Mansel & Hurrelmann, 1998; Langner & Sturzbecher, 1997), and the interconnections between delinquency and ethnicity / migration (Babka von Gostomski, 2003a; 2003b). Beside delinquency by ethnic foreigners, Germany has the rather unique phenomenon of migration by so-called resettlers, i.e. people of ethnic German origin, migrating to Germany mostly from the former Soviet-Union and from Eastern and Southeastern Europe, and gaining German citizenship. For both groups, SRD studies point at the significance of cultural factors (norms of masculinity) and experiences of domestic violence (Baier, Pfeiffer & Windzio, 2006).

Few German delinquency studies integrate children as respondents; most of them focus upon substance abuse and school violence. Among the studies applying broader concepts of delinquency to children are surveys by Fuchs, Lamnek, Luedtke & Baur (2005) in Bavarian schools, surveys of 7th graders in Münster / Duisburg (Boers & Reinecke, 2007) and of 4th graders in KFN surveys 2005 (Baier & Windzio, 2006). The lack of German research on delinquency in childhood must be regarded as critical regarding the significance of child delinquency as a risk factor of persistent and severe offending in adolescence and early adulthood (and the lack of sound data on child delinquency in official statistics, cf. Brettfeld, 2006).

Generally, German SRD research has demonstrated that minor forms of delinquency are a normal part of development in adolescence. Juvenile delinquency reaches its peak around age 16 (which is lower than with regard to police recorded crime). Historically, there was a rise of juvenile delinquency in the first half of the 1990ies, with a peak around 1996. According to several repeated studies, juvenile crime and violence have declined thereafter. German research has pointed at a number of risk factors of severe juvenile delinquency. Among them are low social status of family, restricted academic / educational opportunities, school absenteeism, excessive use of audiovisual media, especially violent video and computer games, bad familial climate, strained child-parent relationships, parental violence, and adherence to violence-legitimizing norms of masculinity. Connections between school types and delinquency have often been in the focus of research; this has to be seen with regard to Germany's hierarchically stratified school system. Some studies point at social selectivity of the criminal justice system, claiming that formal social control is stronger for socially disadvantaged youth (cf. Brettfeld & Wetzels, 2003; Mansel & Raitzel, 2003).

Methodological studies on SRD research conducted during the last decade aim at improving self-reports. While some deal with general problems of self-reports like their capacity to produce valid data (Hermann & Weninger, 1999) or to make results comparable over time (Menzel & Peters, 1998), others compare different modes of administration (Naplava & Oberwittler, 2002) or suggest strategies to improve validity of SRD questions (Köllisch, 2002).

Among recent developments in German SRD research is the application of multilevel models, analyzing the influence of individual and community factors (e.g. Oberwittler, 2003; 2004; Oberwittler & Köllisch, 2003) and the integration of delinquency measures in a long-term longitudinal study on early intervention that will include among a multitude of outcome variables (health, school achievement etc.) aspects of recorded and unrecorded crime and delinquency (cf. Maier-Pfeiffer & Pfeiffer, 2006).

Compared to self-report studies in the UK, especially, German SRD research appears rather phenomenon-driven than aiming at progress in criminological theory. Influential concepts and theoretical approaches like self-control theory (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990) and the developmental approaches proposed by Moffitt (1993) or Sampson & Laub (1993) have been used in German SRD research, as well as more specific concepts like "culture of honour" (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996).

With regard to funding, a rather diverse landscape of funding sources characterizes German SRD research. There have been a few studies – like the recent young Muslims survey by Brettfeld & Wetzels (2007) or the not yet finished nationwide KFN delinquency survey in schools, the Federal Ministry of the Interior has provided funds. For other large-scale studies, German Research Foundation has been an important source. But funds also came from other foundations, other ministries, or from municipalities interested in a deeper understanding of the local crime and violence situation. Table 1 (Appendix) gives an overview of the funding sources of large German SRD studies since the early 1990ies.

3 Impact of German self-report studies

Due to the very strong focus of German SRD research on adolescents, questions of impact primarily pose themselves with regard to juvenile crime.

Impact on media: With regard to media coverage of crime and delinquency, the visible influence of SRD studies is rather low (cf. Pfeiffer, 2004; Reuband, 2004; Walter, 2000; 2003). As in other countries, German media mainly work according to the principle that "good news is no news". Consequently, media coverage of crime is strongly characterized

- a) by reporting on high profile cases; i.e. focussing on young serial offenders, instances of brutal and reckless offending etc.;
- b) by an underlying "things are always getting worse" message; i.e. conveying the information that crime in general and juvenile crime in particular show trends towards increasing prevalence, incidence, and severity; with regard to violence in schools, for example, the message of a qualitative step into hitherto unknown brutality has been conveyed by media reports again and again;
- c) by relying rather on official data (especially police data) than on results of SRD research.

Of course, media coverage of crime is not a homogeneous phenomenon, and there are significant differences between quality papers (like weekly "DIE ZEIT") and other print and audiovisual media. Conveying complex relationships between delinquency, reporting behaviour and official recording of crime to the public is a task that requires the will to do so but also needs space / time and an audience willing and able to delve into these complexities.

Impact on crime-related policies: Estimating the impact of German SRD research on crime-related policies appears a complicated task. As crime policies typically are multi-determined phenomena, influences of delinquency studies are difficult to quantify, to distinguish from other influences and from mere congruence of developments. SRD research has the potential to serve as a "sobering agent" in German crime policies. Whether it already manages to do so, cannot be answered by a simple "yes" or "no".

Critics (e.g. Feltes, 2006; Pfeiffer, 2004; Walter, 2003) argue that

- there is a far reaching immunity of politics and of media crime coverage against insights produced by criminological research in general and SRD studies in particular
- crime policies as a whole are characterized by rising punitiveness and by giving priority to security at the expense of liberty
- politics strategically use findings of criminological research to back pre-existing positions and disregard them if they are not useful in that sense.

Current German political discussions on

- lowering the minimum age for criminal sanctions (now: age 14),
- exclusively applying adult criminal law to young adults (currently: possibility to sanction 18-20 year olds according to juvenile law), and
- extending maximum prison sentences for juveniles to 15 years (now: 10 years)

are based upon perceptions of juvenile crime as rising, brutalizing and as a genuine threat to public safety (or at least use such perceptions to back their position) – i.e. perceptions that are much closer to media constructions of juvenile crime and delinquency than to findings of SRD research.

On the other hand, the view that politicians are plainly ignorant of criminological research appears too simple. In the long run, there is a stable trend towards non-custodial sentences in juvenile justice in Germany. Though SRD studies may not have been able to change crime policies as a whole, several specific impacts can be established:

- Up to now, two "Periodic Security Reports" have been issued by the German government in 2001 and 2006, both written by researchers and both giving ample space to results of self-reported delinquency studies (Bundesministerium des Inneren / Bundesministerium der Justiz, 2001; 2006).
- The fact that the German Ministry of the Interior has recently funded an almost nation-wide SRD study among 4th and 9th graders can be seen as a strong indicator that SRD data are being regarded as an important basis for political decisions.
- Backed by SRD studies (e.g. Baier & Pfeiffer, 2007), school absenteeism is growingly being regarded as a serious problem and as an indicator of developmental problems. Interventions include schools, parents, police and courts and aim at breaking the mutually reinforcing effects of lack of supervision, opportunities for delinquent behaviour, and deficient educational and vocational perspectives (cf. Linssen, 2005).

- Current discussions about the future of the German school system partly take their arguments from findings relating to the distribution of delinquency in different types of schools (pointing at connections between early segregation of children into different school types and resultant concentration and accumulation of problems in Hauptschulen; cf. Baier & Pfeiffer, 2007)
- Criminological research in the context of heroin assisted treatment of opioid addicts has proven influential. Though it is still a matter of political controversy whether state administration of heroin to a small group of addicts that cannot be reached by therapeutic approaches will become a standard procedure, it has become a pragmatic alternative for many (local) political actors, and attitudes on this topic tend to cross political party lines. The strongest argument in favour of heroin administration has been its superior effect on frequency and severity of crime demonstrated by SRD research.

With regard to results of SRD research, institutions of the criminal justice system may sometimes experience a kind of ambivalence: successfully fighting and preventing crime is their core job, but at the same time declining juvenile crime rates – as suggested by some self-reports - might entail discussions about necessity and inevitability of the level of resources currently allocated to them. Here, open discussions about a changing “crime landscape” (international terrorism, internet-related crime – to mention just a few keywords), innovations in policing styles (especially the growing emphasis on prevention) and their implications for future crime policies are highly needed.

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Appendix

Table 1: Overview of main German SRD studies since 1990

Institution/ Principal investigators/ Study Title	Funding organisation	Date of survey	Main focus of the study	Geographical coverage	Method and response rate	Sample	Measures of delinquency
Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony	Mainly funded by municipalities	1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ fear of crime ■ victimisation (in general, school and family) ■ delinquency ■ drug use 	München Hamburg Kiel Hannover Leipzig Stuttgart Schwäbisch Gmünd Wunstorf Lilienthal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cross-sectional ■ Survey of 9th graders ■ Self-administered questionnaire ■ Response rate: 81.2% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N=16190 ■ 51.7% males, 48.3% females ■ Mean age=15.2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ life time prevalence ■ 12 months prevalence/incidence ■ robbery, blackmail, assault, shoplifting, burglary, harassment, vandalism, threat with weapon, car theft ■ based on Delinquency Scale (Lösel 1975)
Wetzels, Enzmann, Mecklenburg & Pfeiffer (2001) "Schülerbefragung" (Student survey)							
Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony	Mainly funded by municipalities	2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ fear of crime ■ victimisation (in general, school and family) ■ delinquency ■ drug use ■ school absenteeism 	München Hamburg Hannover Leipzig Friesland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cross-sectional ■ Survey of 9th graders ■ Self-administered questionnaire ■ Response rate: 87.7% (of pupils in participating schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N=10460 ■ 50.7 males, 49.3% females ■ Mean age=15.2 (range 13-19) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ life time prevalence ■ 12 months prevalence/incidence ■ robbery, blackmail, assault, shoplifting, burglary, harassment, vandalism, threat with weapon, car theft ■ based on Delinquency Scale (Lösel 1975)
Wilmers, Enzmann, Schäfer, Herbers, Greve & Wetzels (2002) "Schülerbefragung" (Student survey)							

Beyond law enforcement's perspective on crime: German studies on self-reported delinquency

Institution/ Principal investigators/ Study Title	Funding organisation	Date of survey	Main focus of the study	Geographical coverage	Method and response rate	Sample	Measures of delinquency
Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony Baier, Pfeiffer, Windzio & Rabold (2005) "Schülerbefragung" (Student survey)	Mainly funded by municipalities	2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ victimisation (in general, school and family) ▪ delinquency ▪ drug use ▪ truancy 	München Stuttgart Dortmund Kassel Oldenburg Schwäbisch Gmünd Peine (district) Soltau-Fallingb. (district) Wallenhorst/Belm Lehrte (district)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-sectional ▪ Survey of 4th and 9th graders ▪ Self-administered questionnaire ▪ Response rate 9th grade: 73.8% ▪ Response rate 4th grade: 71.4% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey of 9th grade pupils N=14301 ▪ 49.8% males, 50.2% females ▪ Mean age=15.1 ▪ Survey of 4th grade pupils N=5529 ▪ 49.9% males, 50.1% females ▪ Mean age=10.3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Life time prevalence ▪ 12 months prevalence/incidence ▪ robbery, blackmail, assault, shoplifting, break and enter (car or building), vandalism, threat with weapon, car theft, fare dodging, driving without licence, graffiti ▪ 4th grade only school violence (12 months prevalence and incidence): hit or beat sb., tease sb., destroy sb.'s property, . blackmail sb. to give money or other things
Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony Baier, Pfeiffer, Windzio & Rabold (2005) "Schülerbefragung" (Student survey)	Ministry of culture (Thuringia)	2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ victimisation (in general, school and family) ▪ delinquency ▪ drug use ▪ school absenteeism 	Thuringia (federal state)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-sectional ▪ Survey of 4th and 9th graders ▪ Self-administered questionnaire ▪ Response rate 9th grade: 85.1% ▪ Response rate 4th grade: 74.8% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey of 9th grade pupils N=2720 ▪ 47.1% males, 52.9% females ▪ Mean age=14.9 ▪ Survey of 4th grade pupils N=613 ▪ 49.5% males, 50.5% females ▪ Mean age=10.4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Life time prevalence ▪ 12 months prevalence/incidence ▪ robbery, blackmail, assault, shoplifting, . break and enter (car or building), vandalism, threat with weapon, car theft, fare dodging, driving without licence, graffiti

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Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony Baier, Pfeiffer, Simonson & Rabold (2009) "Schülerbefragung" (Student survey)	German Ministry of Interior	2007/2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ victimisation (in general, school and family) ▪ delinquency ▪ drug use ▪ truancy ▪ integration of migrants ▪ right-wing extremism / xenophobia 	nationwide representative survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-sectional ▪ Survey of 4th and 9th graders ▪ Self-administered questionnaire ▪ Response rate 9th grade: 88.1% ▪ Response rate and sample description of 4th grade pupils not available at time of publication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey of 9th grade pupils ▪ N=44.610 ▪ 51,3% males, 48,7% females ▪ Mean age= 15.3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ life time prevalence ▪ 12 months prevalence/incidence ▪ robbery, blackmail, (severe) assault, shoplifting, break and enter (car or building), vandalism, threat with weapon, car theft, graffiti, sale of pirate copies, selling drugs, sexual violence
Greifswald University Düinkel, Gebauer & Geng (2007) Mare Balticum Youth Survey	Crime Prevention Council of Mecklenburg- Western Pomerania	1998 2002 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ victimisation ▪ delinquency ▪ drug use ▪ xenophobia 	Greifswald	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-sectional ▪ Survey of 9th graders ▪ Self-administered questionnaire ▪ Complete surveys ▪ Response rate: 86.4 % (1998), 87.9 % (2002), 81.7 % (2006) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1998 ▪ N=1529 ▪ 49.2 % males, 50.8 % females ▪ Mean age=15.0 (age range 13-17) 2002 ▪ N=724 ▪ 49.4 % males, 50.6 % females ▪ Mean age=15.3 (age range 14-18) 2006 ▪ N=832 ▪ 48.2 % males, 51.8 % females ▪ Mean age=15.2 (age range 13-18) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ life time prevalence ▪ 12 months prevalence/incidence ▪ robbery, blackmail, assault, shoplifting, break and enter (car or building), vandalism, threat with weapon, car theft, fare dodging, driving without licence, graffiti, sale of pirate copies, theft, selling drugs, severe harassment, arson

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Bochum University Feltes & Goldberg (2006)		2003/2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ victimisation ▪ delinquency 	Bochum and Herne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-sectional ▪ Survey of 8th graders ▪ Self-administered questionnaire ▪ Complete surveys ▪ Response rate 8th grade: 98.,5% (of pupils in participating schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N=4028 ▪ 49.3% males, 50.7% females ▪ Mean age=13,9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 months prevalence ▪ robbery, coercion, assault, use of weapons, fare dodging, graffiti-spraying, sale of pirate copies, theft, insult, fun fighting / non-hostile fighting
Max-Planck-Institute for Foreign and International Penalty Law Sutterer & Karger (1994)		1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ delinquency 	Mannheim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cross-sectional ▪ face-to-face interviews ▪ Response rate: 45.2% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N=300 ▪ 60.7% males, 39.3% females, ▪ Age range: 14 to 20 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Based on ISRD-Instrument
Max-Planck-Institute for German Foreign and International Penalty Law Oberwittler, Naplava, Blank, Köllisch "Soziale Probleme und Jugenddelinquenz im sozialökologischen Kontext" (Social problems and juvenile delinquency in ecological perspective)	German Research Foundation	1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delinquency ▪ Impact of social context (neighborhoods) on delinquency 	Freiburg, Cologne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cross-sectional ▪ survey of 8th, 9th and 10th graders ▪ Self-administered questionnaire ▪ Response rate (Freiburg): 86.,1% (of pupils in participating schools) ▪ Response rate (Köln): 84.9% (of pupils in participating schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freiburg ▪ N=1.886 ▪ 46.8% males, 52.2% females, Köln ▪ N=3.445 ▪ 46.5% males, 53.0% females, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ life time prevalence ▪ prevalence/incidence last 12 months ▪ sale of pirate copies, graffiti-spraying, vandalism, break and enter (car or building),shoplifting, theft, drug dealing, assault, severe assault, blackmail, robbery, car theft

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Hamburg University Brettfeld & Wetzels (2007) „Muslime in Deutschland“ (Muslims in Germany)	Federal Ministry of the Interior	2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ integration of muslims ■ attitudes of muslims towards their religion, democracy and politically motivated violence ■ SRD: robbery, assault without weapon, threat with weapon, extortion 	Hamburg, Cologne, Augsburg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ cross-sectional ■ survey of 9th and 10th graders ■ Self-administered questionnaire ■ Additional computer-assisted telephone interviews of the muslim population, self-administered questionnaires for students and qualitative interviews of Islamic organisations ■ Response rate: 79.9% (of pupils in participating schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N=2,683 ■ 53.1% males, 49.9% females, ■ Mean age=15.7 	
Münster University / Bielefeld University Boers, Reinecke „Jugendkriminalität in der modernen Stadt“ (Juvenile crime in the modern city)	German Research Foundation	2000-2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ delinquency 	Münster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ longitudinal (7th grade) ■ Self-administered questionnaire ■ Additional official police data ■ Response rate in 2000: 69.0% ■ 56.1% drop outs in comparison to original cohort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7th grade (sample characteristics at t1, status: 2003) ■ N=813 ■ 43% males, 57% females 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ life time prevalence ■ 12 months prevalence/incidence ■ robbery, blackmail, assault, shoplifting, break and enter (car or building), vandalism, car theft, theft, handbag robbery, selling drugs, drug offences

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Münster University / Bielefeld University Boers, Reinecke „Jugendkriminalität in der modernen Stadt“ (Juvenile crime in the modern city)	German Research Foundation	2002-2006	delinquency	Duisburg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Longitudinal ▪ survey of 7th and 9th graders (only 2 measurements 9th grade) ▪ Self-administered questionnaire ▪ Response rate 7th grade in 2002: 60.0% ▪ 48.1% drop outs (status: 2005) in comparison to original cohort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 7th grade (sample characteristics at t1, status: 2005) N=1.715 ▪ 43.8% males, 56.2% females ▪ Mean age=12.9 ▪ 9th grade (sample characteristics at t1): N=1.732 ▪ 46.1% males, 53.9% females ▪ Mean age=15.0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Life time prevalence ▪ 12 months prevalence/incidence ▪ robbery, blackmail, assault, shoplifting, break and enter (car or building), vandalism, car theft, theft, handbag robbery, selling drugs, drug offences

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Schumann et al. (2003) „Berufsbildung, Arbeit und Devianz“ (Vocational education, work, and deviance)	German Research Foundation,	1988/89 1992/93 1995 1997 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ interactions between educational and work biography, delinquency and interventions by the criminal justice system 	Bremen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ longitudinal ■ face-to face interviews, Self-administered questionnaire for delinquency questions ■ Official data on court-recorded crime ■ Response rate first wave (survey of potential graduates): 58.2% ■ 21.5% drop outs in comparison to original cohort (N=424) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N=424 (1992/1993; sample characteristics at t1) ■ 56.6% males, 43.4% females ■ Mean age=16.8 ■ N=333 (2000) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 12 months prevalence/incidence ■ robbery, theft at workplace, handling stolen goods, assault, severe assault, shoplifting, fraud, theft from vehicle, vehicle theft, sale of pirate copies, theft, selling drugs, using goods / devices without owner's permission, driving without licence, illegal possession of firearms, vandalism, forgery of documents, unlawful entry, hit-and-run driving, driving under the influence, illegal arms trade

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Lay, Ihle, Esser & Schmidt (2001) „Risk conditions and developmental patterns of mental disorders from Technology, childhood to early adulthood“	Federal Ministry for Education, Science and German Research Foundation,	1977-1996	delinquency	Mannheim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Longitudinal ▪ Self-administered questionnaire and structured interviews ▪ Survey of parents at age 8, 13, 18 and 25 of their children ▪ Survey of 13, 18 and 25 year-old persons ▪ Additional official police data ▪ 19,5% drop outs in comparison to original cohort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N=321 (sample characteristics at t1) ▪ 55.8% males, 44.2% females 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prevalence/incidence since last survey ▪ prevalence/incidence since last survey ▪ Fare dodging, driving without a licence, evasion of entrance fees (cinema, concert), retaining found/borrowed goods, carrying weapons, forgery, selling stolen goods, burglary (adding and abetting), blackmail, arson, slitting car tyres, damaging fuel tanks, reporting innocent persons to police
Erlangen-Nuremberg-University Lösel & Bliesener (2003)	Federal Criminal Police Office	2003 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Victimisation ▪ Delinquency ▪ Social information processing 	Erlangen, Nuremberg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-sectional (N=1163) combined with longitudinal (N=102), 7th and 8th graders ▪ Self-administered questionnaire ▪ Response rate: approx. 91,5% (of pupils in participating schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N=1163 ▪ 52.8% males, 47.2% females, ▪ Mean age=14.0 ▪ Follow up (20 months later) with 102 males 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 months prevalence/incidence ▪ Delinquency Scale (Lösel 1975), property and violence offences ▪ Teacher reports about physical and verbal aggression and general aggressiveness

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