

Tomorrow's Criminals

The Development of Child
Delinquency and Effective
Interventions

Rolf Loeber, N. Wim Slot, Peter van der
Laan and Machteld Hoeve

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The Development of Child Delinquency and
Effective Interventions

Edited by

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TOMORROW'S CRIMINALS

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Foreword

It is a pleasure to welcome this book as a great contribution to knowledge about child delinquents (that is, those who commit offences under age 12). This book should enormously increase the visibility and accessibility of Dutch research for an international audience. I am sure that many English-speaking scholars will be very impressed to discover the wide range of interesting studies that have been conducted in the Netherlands. In addition to its major focus on Dutch research, the book also contains some discussions of European research, policy and practice. Almost the only other English-language collection of Dutch criminological research was *Crime and Justice in the Netherlands* (2007) edited by Michael Tonry and Catrien Bijleveld, although there have been special issues of major international journals devoted to Dutch research (for example, *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1992).

Rolf Loeber should be warmly congratulated for his excellent work as a catalyst in bringing together previously isolated Dutch researchers to address key problems in criminological research. A very important product of these efforts was *Serious and Violent Juvenile Delinquency in the Netherlands* (2001), edited by Rolf Loeber, Wim Slot and Joseph Sergeant, a great contribution to knowledge about serious and violent juvenile offenders, which was inspired by the American volume edited by Rolf Loeber and myself (1998). Unfortunately for English-speaking scholars, this volume was published in Dutch, thereby limiting its international visibility and accessibility. Happily, *Tomorrow's Criminals* is published in English and hence can be appreciated more widely. It was inspired by the American volume on *Child Delinquents* edited by Rolf Loeber and myself (2001). All four volumes are based on the work of study groups of scholars who met on several occasions to discuss their chapters. In my opinion, this is the best method for producing a high-quality, path-breaking edited book.

Child delinquents are extremely important, but remarkably neglected in all countries. This is very surprising because it has been known for many years that an early onset of delinquency tends to predict a long and serious criminal career (see, for example, Loeber & Farrington, 2000). Most research on delinquency focuses on the teenage years when it is in full flow, and similarly, most intervention resources are targeted on these years. This book argues convincingly that more research and interventions should be targeted on the pre-teenage years. This argument applies to the Netherlands and many other countries.

Tomorrow's Criminals is squarely in the tradition of developmental criminology, which focuses on the development of delinquency, risk and promotive factors, and the effects of life events on the course of development (for example, Farrington, 2003a). This book provides important new information and analyses on biological, individual, family, peer, school and neighbourhood risk factors. In addition, it contains important

reviews of screening tools and risk-focused prevention methods. All countries should invest in early prevention techniques designed to tackle key risk factors, in order to save children from a life of crime (see Farrington & Welsh, 2007).

In the Netherlands, as in many European countries, evaluation research rarely conforms to the highest standards of methodological quality (for example, Farrington, 2003b). Similarly, cost-benefit analyses of the effectiveness of interventions are generally lacking. These considerations lead to clear-cut research recommendations. Just as more prospective longitudinal studies are needed, so are more randomised experiments to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention and intervention methods (for example, Farrington & Welsh, 2005). And more cost-benefit analyses are needed, since they are especially influential for policymakers. In addition, more research is needed on screening tools to identify children at risk.

Rolf Loeber, Wim Slot, Peter H. van der Laan, and Machteld Hoeve break new ground in presenting Dutch and international research on the explanation and prevention of child delinquency. I hope very much that their book will be widely read and widely cited by the international community of criminological scholars.

David P. Farrington
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Part I

The Problem

Chapter 1

Child Delinquents and Tomorrow's Serious Delinquents: Key Questions Addressed in This Volume

Rolf Loeber, Wim Slot, Peter H. van der Laan and Machteld Hoeve

'Show me the child at seven, and I will tell you what his/her future will be' (Fergusson, Horwood & Ridder, 2005a, 2005b) is a saying that has the appearance of accuracy but remains highly speculative. On the one hand, we know that some young children exhibit problem behaviours at a young age and later begin to commit crime. Thousands of young boys first show their disruptive behaviours and delinquency prior to age 7 and thousands more will have initiated these behaviours by the end of elementary school (*basisschool* in the Netherlands). The extent to which young children with problem behaviours at a young age will become tomorrow's chronic offenders has enormous implications for society. Can the criminal victimisation of thousands of innocent persons be prevented? Is a life of crime with its accompanying risks of poor education, unemployment and unstable survival skills inevitable for children who exhibit problem behaviours at a young age? Or can early criminogenic processes be moulded to produce long-term prosocial rather than delinquent outcomes? This volume addresses these and many other issues that are relevant to preventive interventions and treatment.

Definitions

In this volume two categories of children are of greatest concern: *children who show persistent disruptive behaviour* and *child delinquents* (those children who start delinquency prior to age 12). Table 1.1, see over, provides definitions of these and other key terms used throughout.

The Purpose of this Volume

The primary goal of this volume is to present basic empirical knowledge about the development, causes and consequences of child delinquency and disruptive behaviours in children. The secondary goal is to identify successful preventive interventions and treatments. It also serves as a platform for demonstrating where there are currently critical gaps in this knowledge. The volume is written for informed lay people, scholars and programme staff working with children.

Table 1.1 Key terms used in this volume

<i>Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)</i>	Persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequent and severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).
<i>Child delinquents</i>	Child delinquents are defined as those youth who commit delinquent acts before age 12. Most child delinquents commit minor to moderately serious forms of delinquency and only a minority will commit serious acts. Since Dutch youngsters under age 12 cannot be criminally prosecuted, the term 'child delinquent' or 'very young offender' does not have a legal basis.
<i>Chronic offenders</i>	Chronic offenders are individuals who commit frequent serious offences over long periods of time. Researchers are not in full agreement about the minimum frequency and the time period required which classifies an individual as a chronic offender, and this may also vary depending on whether official records or self-reported delinquency is considered (Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Piquero, Farrington & Blumstein, 2007).
<i>Conduct Disorder (CD)</i>	Repetitive and persistent pattern of behaviour in which the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated and causes significant impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).
<i>Disruptive behaviours</i>	We define 'disruptive behaviours' (sometimes also called 'externalising problem behaviours' or 'problem behaviours') ^a as a persistent pattern of negativistic, disobedient, or hostile behaviour toward peers and adults, and behaviours such as truancy, aggression, running away from home, and underage drinking (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Loeber et al., 2001). Hence, disruptive children are those who show persistent disruptive behaviour. ^b The majority of these behaviours do not concern the breaking of criminal laws and never lead to police contact. However, child problem behaviour is important in that child delinquents often display such behaviour and this can be a stepping-stone to delinquency (Loeber et al., 1993; Loeber & Farrington, 2001).
<i>Externalising problem behaviours</i>	See <i>Disruptive behaviours</i> .
<i>Internalising problem behaviours</i>	Internalising problem behaviours are emotional problems such as anxiety and depression.
<i>Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)</i>	Recurrent pattern of negativistic, defiant, disobedient and hostile behaviour toward authority figures that persists for at least six months (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).
<i>Promotive factors</i>	Factors in the child, family, peer group, school, or neighbourhood associated with: (a) a low probability of disruptive or delinquent behavior in the general population of young people; and/or (b) desistance from disruptive and delinquent behaviour in populations of juvenile with such problem behaviours.