

Juvenile Offending

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Frank M. Weerman

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ABSTRACT

Police statistics and self-report studies on juvenile offending in the Netherlands show nothing startling compared with other Western countries, although levels are somewhat above the means. Official figures reveal a steady increase from the 1960s, especially for violent offenses, a development in line with the general trend in Europe. Self-reports reveal no dramatic changes since the 1990s, although some studies suggest a recent increase. Much youth offending takes place in company, sometimes in the form of troublesome youth groups. These groups are rarely territorial and are less hierarchical and organized than are gangs in the United States. Offending is often an illegal alternative to get income, respect, and status for marginalized or stigmatized youths. Studies on the etiology of youth crime report risk factors and correlates in line with findings throughout the world. Dutch research on juvenile offending is well developed, but some areas need more attention.

In the Netherlands, as elsewhere, rule breaking and doing forbidden things are not atypical adolescent behavior. **Self-report studies reveal that the majority of young people break the law at one time or another** (Junger-Tas, Haen Marshall, et al. 2003). This is usually relatively harmless, although it can be very troublesome to parents and adults and can be a nuisance. A small but significant part of the juvenile population is involved in more serious crimes. A few percent of the Dutch juveniles report using weapons and committing crimes such as burglaries or robberies. More than 4,000 juveniles end up each year in closed juvenile justice institutions because of their delinquent behavior (see Wittebrood 2003*a*; van der Laan, forthcoming). So, there are two faces of juvenile offending in the Netherlands, relatively minor offending that is not uncommon and more serious delinquency that is less common but not rare.

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Offending was not always so widespread. The level of recorded youth crime—and of crime in general—was very low during the 1950s. Since the beginning of the 1960s, the proportion of juveniles interrogated by the police has risen steadily. This mirrored the general crime figures, but, relatively speaking, juvenile offending increased more. The number of juveniles apprehended by the police appears still to be on the increase, especially recently. However, there are no indications that the Dutch level of youth crime is exceptional when seen in an international perspective (Killias 2003). Self-report studies also do not provide evidence of an exceptional level of delinquent behavior among Dutch youths (Junger-Tas, Haen Marshall, et al. 2003). In addition, self-report studies do not show a substantial increase since the early 1990s. This departs from the trend in the police statistics, although self-report studies report peaks and an increase in some offenses in the past few years.

Youth justice in the Netherlands has been characterized as a hybrid between punitiveness and welfare (Junger-Tas 2004). Central elements are the notions that minors are less responsible for their acts (and children not responsible at all), that juvenile delinquents should be protected from adult criminals, and that judicial reactions should contribute to rehabilitation and reeducation. Judicial decisions should be “in the interest of the child” and are made by specialized youth judges. Important policy developments occurred during the 1980s and 1990s. Many diversion programs were initiated in which juvenile offenders were sanctioned outside the justice system. This started with the HALT (Het ALternatief [the alternative]) sanctions in the 1980s, which have expanded tremendously (Wittebrood 2003*a*; Junger-Tas 2004). These sanctions are given by the police and involve the waiver of further prosecution; they consist of small restorative tasks (a maximum of twenty hours) or financial compensation. Other alternative sanctions were introduced during the 1980s and 1990s, ranging from unpaid community service and compulsory courses to rehabilitation programs and intensive probation supervision. These are ordered by the judge or proposed by the prosecutor and became formal modes of punishment in the Youth Justice Law of 1995.

Dutch government policies on juvenile offending changed during the 1990s. In the beginning of the 1990s, public concern led to special government attention and to the installation of a special Juvenile Crime Committee (known as the van Montfrans Committee). Its report

(Commissie Jeugdcriminaliteit 1993) and follow-up government papers (Ministerie van Justitie et al. 1998; Ministerie van Justitie 2002, 2003) were very influential. The Juvenile Justice Law of 1995 increased the maximum sanctions for juveniles (from six months' detention to one year; for those aged between sixteen and eighteen, the maximum is two years) and expanded possibilities for the waiver of juveniles to adult courts when the offense or the offender is adult in character. The special position of youths in criminal law remains intact, but the traditional Dutch strategy of minimalistic reactions has been abandoned and replaced by quicker and more punitive responses (Wittebrood 2003*a*; van der Laan, forthcoming). Numerous new intervention strategies have been introduced, for example, the Community That Cares program in which various neighborhood institutes are brought together to promote the prevention of problem behavior and crime (Hawkins 1999; Ince et al. 2004). Prevention measures and the treatment of juvenile offenders continue to be regarded as important.

The general political climate in the Netherlands has changed since the early 1990s. The progressive attitude, tolerance, and mild penal policies that characterized the Dutch climate in the 1970s and 1980s were replaced by stricter and more repressive attitudes. Recently, the Netherlands has seen large shifts in political preferences, and two dramatic political assassinations happened (politician Pim Fortuyn and filmmaker Theo van Gogh). Crime in general, and especially youth crime, are regarded by the public as among the most important political problems, along with differences between ethnic groups and problems with the integration of migrants. This shift in political climate is likely to affect future developments with regard to juvenile offending and youth justice.

Juvenile offending has received a great deal of attention from the research community. Many studies have been conducted on youth crime, juvenile offenders, and juvenile justice interventions. A substantial number of articles, books, and special journal issues have been published (e.g., Angenent 1991; Franke, van der Laan, and Nijboer 1995; Baerveldt and Bunkers 1997; van Acker 1998; Knorth et al. 2003). Research on youth offending has traditionally been conducted by researchers in academic criminology departments. In the past, the Criminology Institute of Groningen University was especially active. Recently, much fundamental research on juvenile offending has been conducted at the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and

Law Enforcement (NSCR) in Leiden (see <http://www.nscr.nl>). The government-based research department, the Wetenschappelijk Onderzoeks en Documentatie Centrum (WODC; internationally also known as RDC, the Research and Documentation Center), has published many reports and studies on juvenile offending and youth justice interventions (see <http://www.wodc.nl>). Several commercial research institutes and researchers from police departments in the Netherlands have conducted research on juvenile delinquency.

Systematic empirical research dates back to the 1960s. Many studies were conducted in which classic criminological theories were tested, including Hirschi's social control theory and Sutherland's differential association theory. Most empirical research has been done by criminologists, but researchers in other social science departments, especially sociology and anthropology, have been also active. Many of the latter used qualitative methods to study young offenders from minority groups. Recently, developmental psychologists have also become active (e.g., Koops and Slot 1998; Bongers 2005). They shifted attention to individual and early childhood factors and played an important role in a recent volume on serious and violent delinquency (Loeber, Slot, and Sergeant 2001).

The literature on the context and correlates of juvenile offending is voluminous. To organize this body of research, a distinction is made between qualitative research that is mainly descriptive and ethnographic and quantitative research on the causes and correlates of juvenile offending. Of course, in practice, qualitative and quantitative methods are sometimes combined. Nevertheless, the styles of researchers in the Netherlands with a preference for one method or the other are usually quite different. Qualitative researchers are more interested in obtaining good and realistic descriptions of the lifestyles of young offenders, using in-depth interviews, observations, and ethnographic methods. Quantitative researchers are more focused on significant and generalizable results from large samples from police data, judicial files, and survey data.

This essay offers an overview of Dutch research on juvenile offending (youth crime and delinquency are used as equivalents). I have tried to cover the most important studies and findings from the past twenty-five years and have selected studies that appeared in scientific journals or were published as a book or report by the end of 2005, when this essay was finished. The most important Dutch journals were searched

in detail, as well as academic books and research reports from the WODC and several commercial or government research institutes (if they met reasonable methodological standards). I tried to find as many publications by Dutch researchers in international journals as I could but limited these to reports of studies conducted in the Netherlands.

In this essay, I do not give a detailed description of developments with regard to Dutch youth justice and policies to reduce juvenile offending. Recent developments are addressed thoroughly in an earlier volume of *Crime and Justice* (Junger-Tas 2004) and elsewhere (Wittebrood 2003a; van der Laan, forthcoming). I also excluded the many studies focusing on the effects and consequences of prevention and intervention projects and programs.

While writing this essay, I had two goals in mind. First, I wanted to give an impression of Dutch youth crime itself and to address Dutch findings about juvenile offenders and their backgrounds. The implications of these findings may be interesting and are not restricted to the Netherlands, though many of the underlying reports are not published in English. Second, I wanted to characterize Dutch criminological research on juvenile offending and to identify which aspects have received relatively greater and lesser attention than elsewhere.

Juveniles or youths in this essay are defined as persons between twelve and eighteen years old. However, I mention several studies that focus on or include offending by older youths between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. I do not address studies on the spatial distribution of youth crime, on juvenile sex offenders, and on changes in penal policies that are relevant to juvenile offending.

This essay is organized as follows. In Section I, data on youth crime are presented. The prevalence of juvenile offending is discussed, using different sources of information. Changes over the past decades are addressed, and gender and ethnic differences in delinquency are discussed. Section II addresses studies on characteristics of juvenile offending, on specific offense types, and on offending with others or in groups. Section III addresses the most important qualitative studies. For a large part, these studies focus on ethnic minority youths (and often young adults). Section IV addresses studies on the causes and correlates of juvenile offending. Important studies testing etiological theories and more general or eclectic studies on the correlates of juvenile delinquency are described. More complex studies and analyses about the (causal) role of certain risk factors are highlighted as are

studies that focus on the difference in delinquency between boys and girls. Section V summarizes the preceding sections and discusses the nature of Dutch youth crime and youth crime research. Gaps in knowledge are discussed, and suggestions for future research are offered.

I. Prevalence and Changes

Data are available to characterize the prevalence of delinquent behavior among Dutch youths and changes in the level of youth crime. These data show that levels of juvenile offending in the Netherlands are not especially high, though somewhat above the mean level of other Western countries. Important differences exist between boys and girls and between ethnic groups. Police data indicate a steady increase in juvenile delinquency over the long term, especially in violent offenses, but this is not unique to the Netherlands. Different sources of information provide somewhat different images of changes between categories and recent changes in juvenile offending.

A. Sources

Two sources are used to obtain information about the prevalence and changes in juvenile offending: official statistics on offenses committed by minors and self-report studies. I use both.

Official statistics are an obvious source for answering basic questions about juvenile offending. Such data are kept by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and are published on a regular basis in collaboration with the WODC (e.g., Kruissink and Essers 2001, 2004; van der Heide and Eggink 2003; Blom and Huijbregts 2004; Blom, van der Laan, and Huijbregts 2005). These statistics give information on the number of minors (twelve to seventeen years of age) who come into contact with the police each year for different types of offenses. They are a main source of information about changes in juvenile offending over time, because the statistics have been compiled for decades.

Official data have important drawbacks. Only a small portion of committed offenses are discovered and reflected. Offense categorization by the police is often diffuse and not always reliable. More important, the statistics are not a direct function of the volume of youth crime. They are also dependent on the efforts and priorities of the police, on recording policies, and on changing perceptions of what

constitutes certain offense types. Nevertheless, they offer important information as long as we take methodological problems into account.

Self-report studies are also an important source for information. In the United States, self-report methodologies have been used regularly since the 1950s. In the Netherlands, they were introduced to investigate the dark figure of unreported delinquency among a sample of college students (Buikhuisen, Jongman, and Oving 1969). Since the 1970s, self-reports have been used in numerous studies of juvenile delinquency among secondary school students (among many more, see Junger-Tas 1972; Bruinsma 1985, 1992; Nijboer and Dijksterhuis 1987, 1989; Junger 1990; Ferwerda 1992; Junger-Tas 1992; Junger and Haen Marshall 1997; Rovers 1997; Weerman 1998; Baerveldt et al. 2004; Broekhuizen and Driessen 2005; Harland et al. 2005).

Self-reports are also used in long-term projects in which juvenile offending is monitored. The WODC-monitor started during the late 1980s (the last wave was held in 2004) and has been conducted every two or three years since then (e.g., Junger-Tas and Kruissink 1987; Junger-Tas, Kruissink, and van der Laan 1992; van der Laan et al. 1998; Kruissink and Essers 2001, 2004; Blom and Huijbregts 2004; Blom, van der Laan, and Huijbregts 2005). For this survey, about 1,000 (until 2001) or 1,500 youths (in 2004) representing the Dutch minor population were questioned about their offending behavior during visits at home. In the last wave (in 2004) a stratified sample was drawn, and the results were weighted to get a representative picture of offending among youths in the Netherlands. Another monitor is the Student Study, which has been conducted every two or three years since 1990 (the last wave was held in 2002). The Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP) uses this study to report developments affecting Dutch youths, including their delinquent behavior (Beker, Hoff, and Maas 1998; Wittebrood 2000, 2003*b*). It is administered by teachers in the classroom. The sample is large, about 10,000 respondents, and the results are weighted to obtain representative estimates. The CBS also conducts self-report surveys (CBS Youth Survey) on a regular basis. This is a survey of about 4,000 youths who are questioned at home, most recently in 2003 (Huls et al. 2001; <http://www.cbs.nl>). Results are weighted to correct for deviations from the population in the sample distribution.

Self-report surveys offer information about the so-called dark figure of crime and complement police statistics. Juveniles are generally quite

willing to reveal information about their behavior, as long as the situation feels safe and anonymous. Nevertheless, there has been a debate in the Dutch research community about the validity and reliability of self-reports. On the basis of a test-retest study, Bruinsma (1994) challenged their use because many respondents answered differently during the retest. Hessing and Elffers (1995) used statistical arguments to challenge the validity of this method. Other researchers argue that the self-report method is more reliable and valid than the critics suggest (Nijboer 1995; van der Heijden, Sijtsma, and 't Hart 1995; Swanborn 1996; see also Haen Marshall 1996; Junger-Tas and Haen Marshall 1999).

B. Juvenile Offending

According to the police statistics, nearly 60,000 minor suspects were interrogated by the Dutch police in 2003. Blom and Huijbregts (2004) adjust this figure to 46,000 on the basis of the number of cases officially recorded. This constitutes about 4 percent of the total youth population in that age category. The offenses are most often property crimes (about 45 percent). About 30 percent of these youths were apprehended for vandalism or a public order offense and about 20 percent for a violent offense. Relatively more were apprehended for theft, qualified theft, vandalism, assault, and disturbing the public order. Smaller numbers were apprehended for very serious offenses such as rape (about 200 in 2003), indecent assault (about 500), robberies (2,500 juveniles were held for "theft with violence"), and offenses against life or person, a broad category that includes not only murder but also aggravated assault and attempted murders (about 2,000).

It is difficult to characterize these statistics as "high" or "low." Statistics from the *European Sourcebook* (Killias 2003) indicate how Dutch juvenile offending statistics compare with those from other countries. The sourcebook does not give separate statistics for minors, but calculations can be made of minor offending for countries by the use of data for total offending per 100,000 inhabitants and for the proportion of minor suspects relative to all suspects.

Table 1 shows that the number of apprehended minors per 100,000 inhabitants is higher in the Netherlands than in most other European states, and higher than the mean for all Europe, but is also lower than in several countries, for example, England and Germany. Although we have to keep in mind that countries differ vastly in how minor suspects

TABLE 1
Apprehended Minors per 100,000 Minor Inhabitants, Several European Countries

Country	Publication Data Collection		
	Total Criminal Offenders per 100,000 Inhabitants	Minors among Offenders (%)	Total Minor Offenders per 100,000 Inhabitants
Netherlands	1,691	17.9	303
Austria	2,531	16.0	405
Finland	6,341	11.7	742
France	1,363	21.3	290
Germany	2,754	19.3	532
Ireland	914	1.5	14
Italy	1,385	2.8	39
Norway	1,667	14.8	247
Spain	514	12.6	65
Sweden	782	11.8	92
Switzerland	786	28.8	226
England and Wales	4,060	11.2	455
Europe (mean)	1,385	12.0	166

SOURCE.—Compiled from data for 1999 in Killias (2003).

are dealt with, the type of offenses that are used as indicators, and the minimum age of criminal responsibility, these data suggest that the Netherlands do not stand out in Europe.

Many publications provide self-report statistics about the prevalence of youth offending. The monitors mentioned above, using representative samples, are the most useful. Studies on etiological questions also offer information on the prevalence of delinquency among certain categories of youths. Table 2 presents information from a selection of recent studies in which self-report questions were used. Included in the table are the monitors (WODC-monitor, SCP Student Survey, and CBS Youth Survey) and results from the last waves (and from the WODC-monitor the second-to-last wave also because that wave included questions about more offenses than did the last wave and used a sample of twelve- to seventeen-year-old youths instead of ten to seventeen-year-olds). Also included is information from the International Self Report Delinquency (ISRD) study conducted in 1992 (Terlouw and Bruinsma 1994; Junger-Tas, Haen Marshall, et al. 2003; Barberet et al. 2004); about 1,000 youths in large and middle-large cities were questioned at their home addresses. This is not a representative sample,

TABLE 2
Prevalence Statistics, Selection of Dutch Self-Report Studies

	Publication					
	Kruissink and Essers (2004)	Blom et al. (2005)	Wittebrood (2003 <i>b</i>)	CBS (2004)	Junger-Tas, Haen Marshall, et al. (2003)	Harland et al. (2005)
Data collection	WODC-monitor 2001	WODC-monitor 2004	Student Survey 2002	Youth Survey 2003	ISRD 1992	NSCR School Study 2002
Sample size (N)	± 1,000	± 1,500	± 10,000	± 4,000	± 1,000	± 2,000
Location of data collection	At home	At home	At school	At home	At home	At school
Sampling focus	Representative	Representative	Representative	Representative	Big and medium cities	Low education, most in cities
Age of respondents	12–17	10–17	12–17	12–17	14–21	13–16
Prevalence of “any offense” (%)	37.3	25.8		51.3	56.3	62.6
Fare dodging (%)	21.3		8.7	25.4	21.2	49.3
Shoplifting (%)	8.1	9.3	14.4	9.5	4.3	15.0
Assault/fighting (%)	11.1		9.3	13.3	10.0	21.4
Wounding someone (%)	12.0	8.9		4.9		8.3
Use of knife/weapon (%)	1.3	.5	6.9	1.0	.7	
Graffiti (%)	9.6	10.5	5.8	10.6	3.4	14.9
Vandalism (%)	11.0	6.5		20.0	13.5	9.8
Bike theft (%)	3.0			4.9	5.0	5.8
Burglary (%)	2.9				1.3	.9

although it is broadly representative of youths living in cities. The table also includes data from the first wave of data collection from the NSCR School Study (Harland et al. 2005). In this study, about 2,000 students from lower levels of secondary schools were questioned by researchers in their classrooms. This also is not a representative sample but represents lower-educated adolescents in the province of South Holland containing relatively many respondents from minority groups and big cities. Students with these characteristics have a relatively high risk of being involved in delinquency.

Table 2 gives data for the total prevalence during the last year ("yes" on any of the delinquency items) and for the prevalence of specific offense types. A caveat is that the studies differ vastly in sampling methodology, the number of delinquency items used, and the wordings of the different delinquency items. Nonetheless, table 2 offers a general impression of prevalence statistics found in Dutch self-report studies.

Table 2 shows quite divergent total prevalence percentages; the reason is that different items and different numbers of them are used in these studies. Despite these differences, a large proportion of respondents, in several studies the majority, report at least one offense. Prevalence statistics for specific offenses in the representative samples are not very different from each other, given the varying wordings and methods that are used. Fare dodging seems to be the most common offense, but other minor offenses are also committed by a substantial proportion of the respondents, varying from 5 to 20 percent. These statistics support the impression that lawbreaking is not uncommon among Dutch youths. The table shows that minor offenses are committed by a small but substantial part of the youth population. The most serious offenses appear to be committed by a small proportion of youths, one or a few percent (about 1 percent for weapon use, 1–3 percent for burglary). The Dutch part of the ISRD study departs a little from the representative monitors: the overall prevalence of any delinquency is quite high, but for some particular offenses (e.g., vandalism), prevalence statistics are lower. The NSCR School Study shows higher percentages of offenders than the three representative studies. The reason is that the sampling strategy aimed at including youths with certain characteristics (lower-educated youths in big or medium-sized cities). These characteristics result in a relatively high risk of becoming delinquent. Nonetheless, the relative order of offenses is comparable with those found in the others: minor offenses (especially

fare dodging) are relatively more common among youths, but serious offenses are quite rare.

The ISRD was conducted in several other countries in Europe and in the United States (see Junger-Tas, Haen Marshall, et al. 2003; Barberet et al. 2004), and the project was designed to use similar self-report methodologies in different countries. Although many differences in sampling strategy remained, it can be used to get an impression of the Dutch level of delinquency in comparison to other Western countries. In table 3, results are presented for several countries (largely the same as in table 1) and for the Netherlands.

The findings in table 3 suggest that juvenile offending reported by the respondents in the Dutch sample is neither much lower nor higher than was found in the other samples. This is true for the overall level as well as for specific categories of samples. Unfortunately, the comparison is limited because some samples were country samples, others were at the city level, and some questionnaires were conducted at schools and not at home. There were also small differences in questioning; for example, the English questionnaire did not cover all types of property offenses. A second wave of the ISRD to be held in the near future offers enhanced opportunities for comparison. All the same, table 3 indicates that the self-reported level of delinquency in the Netherlands does not stand out in comparison to other countries, although its figures are not among the lowest. Particularly, property and violent offenses appear relatively highly prevalent, but vandalism and serious offending seem to be relatively less widespread.

C. Changes

Police statistics can be used to get an indication of changes in the volume of juvenile crime, especially long-term changes since these statistics cover several decades. Figure 1 presents long-term changes in youth offenders interrogated by the police from 1960 through 2004. The figure represents changes over the years in the number of apprehended juveniles divided by the total population of juveniles. It is important to make this correction for population size, since this has been fluctuating since 1960.

The number of juvenile suspects has increased steadily to a level about two and a half times higher than in the early 1960s. During the 1960s the level was relatively stable, but, especially between 1975 and 1982, a substantial increase occurred. In the 1980s the level remained

TABLE 3
Prevalence Self-Reports 1992, Several European Countries and the United States

Country	Respondents Reporting Any Delinquency (%)	Respondents Reporting Property Offenses (%)	Respondents Reporting Violent Offenses (%)	Respondents Reporting Vandalism (%)	Respondents Reporting Serious Offenses (%)
Netherlands	56.3	28.0	21.2	13.5	9.1
Belgium (Liège)	59.8	27.1	16.8	21.0	11.1
Finland (Helsinki)	67.7	32.9	14.7	16.3	9.0
Germany (Mannheim)	45.3	20.7	11.7	7.3	3.7
Ireland (Belfast)	45.0	29.1	13.1	19.7	13.4
Italy (three cities)	62.3	3.8	12.4	14.3	2.6
Portugal	54.3	21.4	18.1	16.3	9.9
Spain	54.2	19.7	21.8	20.4	10.4
Switzerland	65.4	29.5	16.4	18.2	6.1
United Kingdom: England and Wales	35.1	16.4	13.5	5.2	13.6
United States (Omaha, NE)	59.2	37.6	27.1	15.0	15.3

SOURCE.—Junger-Tas, Marshall, et al. 2003.

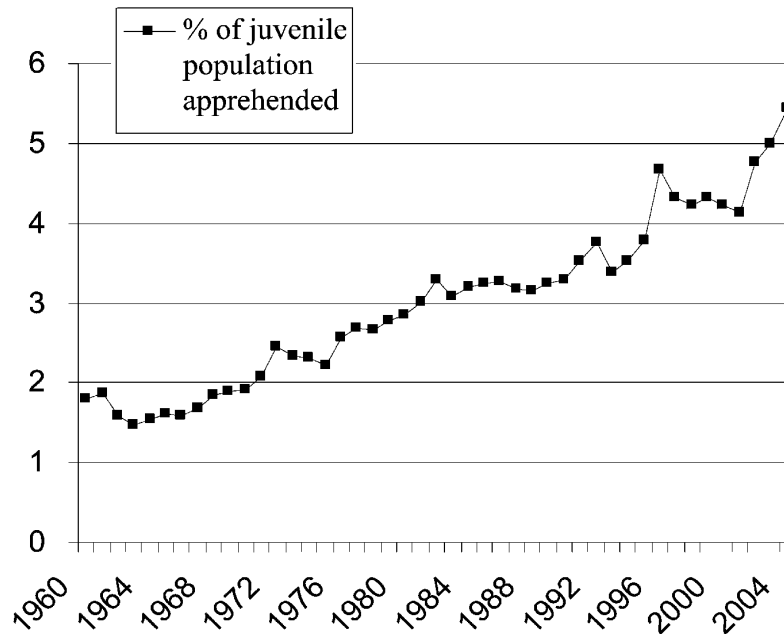


FIG. 1.—Changes between 1960 and 2004 in the proportion of juveniles apprehended and interrogated by the police. Source: Calculated by the author from Dutch police data.

stable, fluctuated in the beginning of the 1990s, and jumped and peaked in 1996. Many authors (e.g., Junger-Tas 2004; van der Laan, forthcoming) attribute this steep rise to the introduction of the new juvenile justice law in 1995 that changed police recording policies. Certain minor offenses, followed by a HALT-sanction (a form of diversion), were held out of the statistics before 1996 but were afterward included. After 1996, the proportion of interrogated juvenile offenders stabilized at a slightly lower level than in 1996 but higher than in the early 1990s.

In the last three years for which information is available (2002–4), there has been a sizable increase in the number of juvenile offenders, to even higher levels than in 1996. It is unclear to what extent this relates to real changes in juvenile offending. The increase may result in part from the introduction of police performance contracts, which led to pressure on the police to “produce” more. That juvenile of-

fending has become a priority in policing may also have contributed to the increase.

The statistics on recorded juvenile offending further show that violent crimes and vandalism–public order offenses increased since the early 1990s, whereas property offenses changed little. In 2002–4, threats, theft with violence (robberies), simple thefts, public order offenses, and vandalism have increased. Many of these changes, however, may be attributed to policy changes (e.g., the increase in “public order” offenses and threats). Nonetheless, the increase in violent offending and robbery among juveniles during the 1990s is marked and seems too large to attribute completely to changes in policy.

The various self-report delinquency monitors also offer information about changes in juvenile offending. This information is a valuable complement to police statistics because self-reports are less influenced by policy changes and recording practices, although results may be influenced by fluctuations in sampling methodology. The Student Survey and the WODC-monitor show a relatively stable level of offending over the past ten to fifteen years, with no spectacular increases or decreases since the beginning of the 1990s (Wittebrood 2003*b*; Kruissink and Essers 2004). In the WODC-monitor, prevalence statistics seem to have increased for some offenses in the second-to-last wave in 2001; in the last wave, the prevalence seemed quite stable for most offenses. The Student Survey reveals that the proportion of students reporting violent offenses has increased somewhat since 1994, but property offending has decreased. The WODC-monitor also shows a somewhat higher prevalence for many offenses in 1996 than in other years, which seems to confirm the peak in the police figures, although less dramatically. Self-report statistics from the CBS (<http://www.cbs.nl>) for the years 1997, 2001, and 2003 show that general prevalence among twelve- to seventeen-year-old respondents was highest in 2001 but decreased somewhat in 2003. The same pattern is found for most specific offenses.

In general, self-report studies suggest that delinquent behavior among young people has not changed since the early 1990s. This differs from the pattern found in the police statistics. However, the monitors also indicate that some offenses, especially violent crimes, were increasing recently, which confirms the recent increases on violent offending found in the police statistics. The WODC-monitor suggests not only that the peak in 1996 was a recording effect but that some-

thing really happened in that year. The CBS self-report statistics for 2001 and 2003, however, depart from police statistics. In general, though, there are multiple indications of a recent increase in (violent) juvenile offending. Further research is needed to determine whether the most recent rise reflects a real increase in youth crime or merely changes in juvenile justice or registration policies. Developments in juvenile offending remain unclear.

D. Gender Differences

Like elsewhere, boys in the Netherlands are more involved in crime than girls, especially with respect to serious, violent, and persistent offending. The most recent police statistics show that 84 percent of offenders questioned were boys (Blom and Huijbregts 2004; van der Laan, forthcoming). Police statistics also suggest that the recidivism rate is higher for boys. There appear, however, to be no differences in the age of first arrest (Mertens, Grapendaal, and Docter-Schamhardt 1998).

The proportion of girls questioned has grown slowly but steadily: from about 10 percent during the 1960s to the beginning of the 1980s to 13 percent in the 1990s to 16 percent in the early years of the twenty-first century. This increase was apparent for property offenses (the proportion of girls changed from 12.5 percent in 1980 to 21 percent in 2003) and for violent offenses (from 4 to 15 percent). Whether this means that girls are catching up (Angenent 1991) or that an important gender gap still remains (Bouw 1995) is a matter of interpretation.

Self-report studies give a different picture. Although these studies confirm that boys are more involved in delinquency than girls, the differences are less marked than in police statistics. How much difference there is depends on the type of offense that is considered. For serious and violent offenses, the differences are substantial. For example, in the WODC-monitor, the Student Survey, and the NSCR School Study, boys report involvement in street fights or injuring about twice as often as girls and vandalism about three times as often. This is a clear difference, but the ratio is less than in the police statistics. For some offenses, however, there seem to be few or no distinctions. In the last wave of the WODC-monitor, the two sexes did not differ substantially on petty offenses such as fare dodging, shoplifting, and graffiti. Similar results were found in the NSCR School Study: girls

and boys were equally involved in graffiti, shoplifting, and fare dodging.

Differences are more noticeable when very serious offenses, such as robberies and burglaries, are considered. In the NSCR School Study, about 1.5 percent of boys admitted such offenses, whereas only a few girls were involved (0.1 percent for burglary, 0.3 percent for robbery). These findings suggest that serious offending among girls is rare, though not absent. In certain cases, girls can be very violent and criminal (see, e.g., the cases described in Mertens, Grapendaal, and Docter-Schamhardt [1998]). However, among girls, serious offending seldom lasts long. A five-year longitudinal study using self-report methods (Nijboer 1997) found that the involvement of girls in serious delinquency usually lasted only one year, significantly shorter than the average for boys. On the basis of police records in two big cities, Mertens, Grapendaal, and Docter-Schamhardt (1998) also report that girls end delinquent behavior earlier than boys do.

E. Offending and Ethnicity

For a long time, police statistics were not very informative about the relationship between ethnicity and juvenile offending. Only the native country of suspects was registered, but not their ethnicity (which is officially forbidden to prevent ethnic discrimination). That was a major problem because many youths are second-generation ethnic minorities: they were born in the Netherlands, but their parents come from abroad. Because of this, studies on ethnicity and crime must use sources of police data other than the official statistics compiled by the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics. However, it was possible with the identification system used by the police (HKS) to estimate involvement in delinquency among different ethnic groups (van der Hoeven 1985; van Hulst and Bos 1994; Korf, Bookelman, and de Haan 2001). Local studies and reviews of these studies (Leuw 1997; Junger, Wittebrood, and Timman 2001; Driessen et al. 2002) show that juveniles from certain ethnic categories are disproportionately represented in youth crime. Moroccan and Antillean youths appear to be overrepresented the most (about three to five times), and Surinamese youths also are overrepresented (about two times). Members of certain relatively recent ethnic minority groups (refugees and asylum seekers) appear to be overrepresented in police data, although there are vast differences between countries (Kromhout and van San 2002). There are also ethnic minorities

in the Netherlands that are not overrepresented. Examples are juveniles originating from eastern Asian countries and Hindustan youths with a Surinamese background.

A recent study explored the relationship between ethnicity and offending in more detail. All data from the HKS system from 2002 were combined with demographic data in the population register obtained via the CBS (Blom et al. 2005). A distinction was made between first-generation ethnic minority youths, second-generation youths with two foreign parents, and second-generation youths with one Dutch parent and one parent from an ethnic minority. This study confirmed the overrepresentation of some minority youths: while 1.3 percent of all Dutch youths were recorded as a suspect, this was true of 3.1 percent of the ethnic minority youths. Moroccan and Antillean youths appeared relatively often as suspects. Both first- and second-generation, but mainly male, Moroccan youths were overrepresented (10.4 percent of the first-generation boys, 7.6 percent with one Moroccan parent, and 11.9 percent with two Moroccan parents). For Antillean youths, both boys and girls were overrepresented, but the first generation more than the second (13.7 percent of the first-generation boys and 4.5 percent of the first-generation girls). Second-generation boys from Turkey and both generations of Surinamese boys were overrepresented to a lesser extent, and high percentages were also found for some other smaller ethnic groups, for example, second-generation youths from Yugoslavia and from some African countries. Youths with Asian, Eastern European, and South or Central American background either were not clearly overrepresented or were underrepresented.

Blom et al. (2005) conducted multivariate analyses in which the effect of ethnicity was controlled by the background variables of socioeconomic status (SES), gender, age, household composition, and neighborhood. The effects of ethnicity decrease when controlled for by these variables, especially when the SES of parents is taken into account. The amount of variance in whether an individual is a suspect or not, explained by ethnic background, is only 4 percent. However, the effects of ethnicity are still substantial, even when controlled for by different risk factors. The greatest effects were found for having an Antillean (first generation), Moroccan, or Yugoslavian (second generation, two parents) background. In the model that includes most variables, odds ratios were found about 3 and 4, indicating that youths

from these ethnic minorities have a three to four times higher chance of being a suspect, controlling for background demographic variables.

Self-report studies are another possible source for exploring the relationship between ethnicity and juvenile offending. Unfortunately, many studies in the Netherlands long used samples consisting predominantly of ethnically Dutch youths. Recently, sampling strategies focus more often on including juveniles from a foreign ethnic background. In the last waves of the WODC-monitor, for example, a larger number of ethnic minorities was included than before (Kruissink and Essers 2004; Blom, van der Laan, and Huijbregts 2005). This study did not find large differences between Dutch youths and juveniles from ethnic minorities. Junger-Tas, Cruyff, et al. (2003) used data from a youth survey in Rotterdam to compare the delinquency scores of different ethnic categories. This study was conducted in 1997 among more than 4,000 third-grade students from secondary schools, mainly aged fourteen and fifteen. The sample offers a good representation of different ethnic categories and educational levels in Rotterdam. The researchers found that respondents with Antillean and Cape Verdean (a substantial minority group in Rotterdam) backgrounds were more involved in delinquent behavior than were juveniles from other descents. Both the Antillean and Cape Verdean boys and girls had relatively high scores. Among the other ethnic categories, Moroccan and Surinamese juveniles had relatively high scores. Turkish and Dutch juveniles had the lowest. Also in the NSCR School Survey, Antillean juveniles appeared to be relatively more involved in offending than were other juveniles, for both boys and girls (Harland et al. 2005). However, respondents from other ethnic minorities did not report more offenses than Dutch youths, and Turkish and Moroccan respondents (boys as well as girls) reported fewer. The same result was found in a recent survey using a multiethnic sample of almost 700 (mainly twelve-year-old) children in the last year of primary school in Rotterdam (Broekhuizen and Driessen 2005). The Moroccan respondents reported slightly fewer offenses than the other ethnic categories, and the Cape Verdean and Antillean respondents slightly more minor and property offenses, but the differences were small.

Junger, Wittebrood, and Timman (2001) conducted secondary analyses of three self-report studies to explore the overrepresentation of juveniles from ethnic minority groups among serious and violent offenses. They concluded that over the whole range, ethnic minority

youths had (in varying degrees) higher prevalence figures for serious property and violent offenses than Dutch youths. Antillean youths, especially boys and girls, had higher prevalence figures, and in two studies the Moroccan boys had higher rates than the Dutch boys.

A less recent study revealed that there may be problems with the use of self-report methods among certain ethnic minority categories (Junger 1989; Junger and Zeilstra 1989). Researchers compared self-reports with police records. In some cases a discrepancy was found between both sources, most often among Moroccan and Turkish respondents. Involvement of Turkish and Moroccan juveniles was similar to that of Dutch youths when self-report data were used, but they were more involved in delinquency when police records were used. These findings suggest that self-reports from Turkish or Moroccan youths were less reliable than those from other juveniles (at least at the time of that study). This may be why Moroccan youths in several studies report fewer, not more, offenses than other ethnic groups. However, the results reflect a real lower level of delinquency among young Moroccans at school. Older juveniles and youths absent from school may be responsible for their overrepresentation in police statistics.

II. Characteristics of Juvenile Offending

Statistics on juvenile offending do not reveal how these offenses take place. Studies in which certain offenses are described and in which juvenile offending in groups is analyzed give a more complete picture. Categories of offenders can be distinguished on the basis of differential motivations and experience. A large fraction of youth crime takes place in social company, sometimes in the form of troublesome youth groups. These groups sometimes incorporate elements from the American gang culture, but there are major differences between troublesome Dutch youth groups and American gangs.

A. *Specific Offenses*

Several studies have focused on particular offenses (e.g., robberies) or groups of offenses (e.g., violence). Some included juvenile offenders (together with young adults) and are informative about the motivations and backgrounds of young offenders and about their modus operandi.

A few studies in the 1990s focused on robbery (either street robberies or holdups in a store or bank). Kroese and Staring (1993) in-

interviewed young and adult prisoners convicted for robbery. They distinguished three types of robbers: beginners, who usually chose easy objects that pay less; professionals, who chose more difficult but also more rewarding targets; and desperate robbers, who committed a robbery as a way of solving financial problems. Juvenile robbers were typically beginners. Most did not have the experience to be a professional. De Haan (1993) distinguished four types of motivations: to get money to buy drugs; to get money because there are no other means of income; as an instrument to obtain easy or a lot of money; and as recreation, to get excitement and kicks. Those with the last motivation appeared usually to be young, but juveniles were also found in the other categories. These studies suggest that street robberies, especially grabbing bags from old ladies, are looked down on by many offenders. Nevertheless, many young beginners use this technique. Bank robberies are regarded as more honorable and as a way to obtain status.

Gruter and Kruize (1995) focused on young robbers in big cities (fifteen to twenty years old). They analyzed criminal records and conducted interviews. Most respondents told the interviewers that they started offending when they were between ten and fourteen years old. In this period they usually committed petty offenses such as shoplifting and bike theft, but their offending pattern progressed quickly. These robbers were characterized as versatile offenders involved in a wide range of property offenses during their careers. More than half also sold small amounts of drugs, and robberies were sometimes a means of getting investment money. Gruter and Kruize found that there is not always a development from petty offending to robberies; some of the respondents started with robberies and committed simple thefts later on. Young offenders made the step toward robbery when they were mentally ready for it, and some were ready early in life. Some young robbers offended because they had no other means of living, but drug use was seldom the primary reason. The versatile and frequent offenders usually had a mixture of recreational and instrumental motives.

Several studies examined violent behavior in general. This issue has received a lot of attention, following increasing public concern about street violence (often referred to as "senseless violence"). Several theoretical publications and reflections were published on this issue (Franke, Wilterdink, and Brinkgreve 1991; Hoogerwerf 1996; de Haan et al. 1999; van den Brink 2001). A few empirical studies were con-

ducted in which small numbers of violent juveniles were interviewed (Ferwerda and Beke 1995; Bol et al. 1998). These and other studies (e.g., Ferwerda 1992) suggest that violent behavior is sometimes quite normal for juveniles under certain circumstances. One of these circumstances is going out during the weekend, when young people hang out in city centers and sometimes use large amounts of alcohol. For some youths, fighting on the street is part of a good night out, and they use every excuse to do it. This category of violent offenders often become victims of violence themselves (Ferwerda 1992). Although many of these fights result from impulses, often committed under the influence of alcohol, sometimes a certain amount of planning is involved. Some violent offenders said that they were aware of the risks of being apprehended and therefore tried to plan fights at certain locations (Ferwerda and Beke 1995). Others said that violent behavior can be a way to gain dominance over the street (Bol et al. 1998).

B. Kids and Groups

Many juvenile offenses are committed in company (cf. Hakkert 1998; Weerman 2001, 2003). In several studies in the 1990s, researchers collected data on the proportion of co-offending in juvenile crime. Studies based on police records usually find that offenses are committed by two or more persons in the majority of the cases (Ferwerda, Bottenberg, and Beke 1999). Hakkert et al. (1998) used data from the WODC self-report monitor to study co-offending among juvenile offenders. These data confirmed that the majority of juvenile offenses are committed by more than one person (see also Hakkert 1998). Co-offending seems to decrease with age, but there were no obvious differences between boys and girls in their rate of co-offending or the number of accomplices.

The rate of co-offending appears highest for vandalism and public order disturbances, and the average number of co-offenders is highest for these offenses (Hakkert et al. 1998; Ferwerda, Bottenberg, and Beke 1999). Assaults and fighting are relatively more often committed by lone offenders, but when there is group fighting the number of co-fighters is often relatively high (five to ten). Property offenses are most often committed by two to four juvenile offenders. Usually, offending groups are not stable; they change from offense to offense. The findings about co-offending among juveniles in the Netherlands do not

depart much from findings in other countries (see Reiss 1988; Warr 2002).

Several studies have been conducted on troublesome youth groups. The research department of the Hague police used a questionnaire for police workers to make an inventory of youth groups in public areas that caused problems for the police (Gruter, Baas, and Vegter 1996). Three types of troublesome youth groups were distinguished: bothersome groups of youths who hang around and are annoying but do not commit offenses, nuisance (or, better, "light delinquent") groups that commit petty crimes and are threatening toward people on the street, and criminal groups that commit different kinds of light and serious offenses. Beke, van Wijk, and Ferwerda (2000) adopted this strategy to study the prevalence and characteristics of these youth groups in five middle-sized cities. A considerable number (generally ten to twenty) of these groups were present in each city. They were not limited to deteriorated neighborhoods but were present throughout the city, although the most troubled neighborhoods had relatively more nuisance and criminal youth groups. The groups mostly numbered ten to twenty, and very large groups (more than forty) were rare. Beke, van Wijk, and Ferwerda conducted a network analysis using the police files of the members of the youth groups. Many groups consisted of two or more subgroups that differed in severity of offending. Many group members co-offended with juveniles who did not belong to the groups on the street.

Dutch criminologists long disagreed over whether there are youth "gangs" in the Netherlands. Some authors used the label quite easily, without discussing the criteria to call a group a gang (Sansone 1992; Werdmölder 1997). Others emphasized the differences between these "gangs" and gangs in the United States (van Gemert 1995; van Oosterwijk, Gruter, and Versteegh 1995) or assumed that juveniles using gang colors and symbols were merely imitating the American examples (Ferwerda, Versteegh, and Beke 1995). Recently, some authors adopted the definition developed by the Eurogang Program (see van Gemert and Fleisher 2004, 2005; Decker and Weerman 2005; Esbensen and Weerman 2005). According to this definition, groups may be called a gang or a troublesome youth group (depending on the preference of the researcher) when it is a durable street-oriented youth group whose identity includes illegal behavior.

During the 1990s, certain youth groups in the Netherlands (espe-

cially in The Hague) adopted gang clothes and symbols of the American Crips (and their counterparts, the Bloods). They wore blue (or red) colors, used American gang terms, and tried to get a dangerous reputation (van Oosterwijk, Gruter, and Versteegh 1995). This phenomenon was initiated by one delinquent group of Surinamese youths and was later imitated by many other youths from different backgrounds, and also by groups that were not delinquent or dangerous (van Staple 2003). Nowadays, the Crips symbols are not widespread; other examples have taken their place.

Van Gemert (1998*a*, 2001) conducted a small case study on three delinquent Crips groups, using information from police records and informants. The youths from two of these gangs committed robberies to prove themselves and to gain status in the group. Group pressure and gang culture stimulated offending in these cases. The role of group processes also emerged from an ethnographic study of a large group of Moroccan boys between the ages of sixteen and twenty (van Gemert and Fleisher 2004, 2005). This was an extremely troublesome group that had conflicts with the neighborhood and in some cases also intimidated police officers. Some persons in this group committed robberies and other offenses. The group did not have special clothes or rules and was not territorial. Group members were egalitarian and said that they did not have a leader and also would not obey others in the group; in practice, some persons clearly had higher status than others. Although this group clearly does not fit stereotypes about gangs, van Gemert and Fleisher conclude that this group is a gang, according to the Eurogang definition.

Esbensen and Weerman (2005) used quantitative survey data to compare troublesome Dutch youth groups with American youth gangs. The results indicated that several percent of the respondents in both countries belonged to a gang or a troublesome youth group. The level of delinquency of Dutch and American members of these groups was remarkably similar: these juveniles committed four to five times more offenses than respondents who were not in a gang or troublesome youth group. The risk factors correlated with membership in a gang or troublesome youth group appeared to be the same in both countries (e.g., weak bonds with parents and school, higher impulsivity, and more risk seeking). But there were large differences between the United States and the Netherlands in the characteristics of these groups. The Dutch groups were smaller and much less organized. Only a minority

of the Dutch youths reported that their group had formal leaders, or special rules, symbols, or clothing; these characteristics were found in a large majority of the American cases.

III. Qualitative Research

Ethnographic research relevant to understanding juvenile offending is usually broad in scope, describing the whole complex of attitudes, ideas, and behavioral patterns of different categories of youths. Some studies aim at giving insight into the culture and lifestyles of youths in general, of which offending may or may not be a part. Many other studies focus on understanding the lives and backgrounds of ethnic minority youths. These lives often include delinquent behavior, but this is usually interpreted in a broader context. It appears that offending can be an alternative life strategy for marginalized or stigmatized youths, an alternative way to earn a living and gain respect and status.

A. Lifestyles and Subcultures

During the 1960s and 1970s, a time when young people developed their own subcultures and sometimes rebelled against society, youth culture and lifestyle became an important field of research (Abma 1986). An early criminological example was the study by Buikhuisen (1965) of a group that was called “nozems” at that time. Buikhuisen and colleagues used interviews with closed and open items, employed psychological instruments, and conducted participant observation in a cafeteria and during New Year’s Eve. One of Buikhuisen’s conclusions was that provocative behaviors he observed should not be seen as rebellious, but as leisure activity.

Miedema et al. (1986), Miedema and Eelman (1987), and Janssen (1988) studied lifestyles of poorly educated youths. Using in-depth interviews, they tried to reconstruct discourses and different types of lifestyles. Their approach was to view delinquency as part of a coherent pattern of attitudes and activities, instead of as an isolated phenomenon. Most of their respondents were “respectable” youths who believed that delinquent behavior was generally inappropriate. In the lifestyles of what the researchers called “cultural rebellions” and of working youths who went out on the weekend, delinquent behavior was incidental and acceptable under certain circumstances. In the lifestyles of

“marginal” youths, lawbreaking was acceptable because they were raised with (or developed) a them-and-us view of society.

B. Ethnic Minority Youths and Young Adults

A substantial number of studies have been conducted on ethnic minority youths (a comprehensive review is found in Driessen et al. [2002]). Many were ethnographic, aimed at gaining insight into lifestyles and circumstances. In varying degrees they were aimed at getting a better understanding of offending by minority youths. Some of these studies date back to the 1970s and 1980s, but most appeared in the past fifteen years. During this period, there was increasing awareness and recognition that juveniles from some ethnic groups were overrepresented in the crime figures.

Buiks (1983) studied a group of addicted young people from Surinam (aged fifteen to thirty, in a deteriorated Rotterdam neighborhood). He interviewed informants and respondents from the area to understand the origins of this marginalized group, their lifestyles, and “ethnic patterns” of thinking and acting. Another book about marginal young Surinamese people (in Amsterdam, mainly aged fourteen to twenty-two) was published by Sansone (1992), based on a long period of fieldwork in youth centers, education centers, and other meeting places. Both Buiks and Sansone view deviant lifestyles among young Surinamese as survival strategies. One is symbolic (being like rasta). But another involves “hosselen” (hustling), doing all kinds of small street jobs and trades to get money, a way of living that is common in Surinam. Many of these “hossels” appear to be illegal or semilegal, for instance, smuggling and trading small amounts of drugs and selling stolen goods. “Hossels” provide a good alternative to regular work and gave the Surinamese of this generation the freedom that they were used to.

Werdmölder (1986, 1990, 1997) studied marginal Moroccan boys in Amsterdam. His research subjects were fourteen to twenty-two years of age, migrated to the Netherlands from Morocco in their childhood, and were often involved in delinquency and aggressive behavior. The group met in a youth center, and Werdmölder worked as a bartender to establish contact. He provides a vivid impression of this group and the development of the group members over several years. He describes a process of isolation and ongoing marginalization that resulted from poor integration and hostile reactions from the neighborhood. A more recent ethnographic study on Moroccan immigrant boys was

conducted by van Gemert (1998*b*) in Rotterdam. He observed and interviewed Moroccan boys and informants in a neighborhood center. His description of Moroccan culture explains the background of certain key elements (especially a lack of norm internalization and an attitude of distrust) in the behavior of Moroccan boys in the Netherlands. In Moroccan families, unwanted behaviors are often prevented by punishment without explanation. Moroccan children learn by "trial and error," and that may explain why they often test the limits of adults and try to find out what they can do without being corrected. Van Gemert also believes that there is a high level of distrust among Moroccan people in the Netherlands, a cultural feature that originally developed in the harsh circumstances of rural life in Morocco. This explains why there is a remarkable lack of coordination and cooperation between young Moroccan offenders, who seem to assume that everyone tries to get the best for himself.

Van San (1998) studied the delinquent behavior of Antillean boys (fourteen to seventeen years old). She interviewed sixty boys (offenders and nonoffenders) and thirty mothers and conducted observations of two Antillean families. The interviews were aimed at understanding the boys' and their mothers' perceptions of the background and causes of their delinquent behavior. The boys said that offending, in particular stealing, was common in the poor Antillean neighborhoods where they grew up and that all of their friends did it. Violence appeared to be legitimated by honor and masculinity, and these legitimations were used by the boys and their mothers. Many Antillean boys seemed to be normalized to react strongly and stab a person with a knife when being challenged or insulted. Van San analyzed the role of one-parent, matrifocal families in which most Antillean boys grew up and concluded that single parenthood in itself is not criminogenic, but, rather, the deprived circumstances of these mothers is. As a result, Antillean boys and their mothers attached a great deal of meaning to status symbols such as expensive clothes and shoes to keep their reputations high.

These influential studies, and other qualitative studies about offending among ethnic minority youths (Kaufman and Verbraeck 1986; Bovenkerk 1992; van Hulst and Bos 1994; Coppes, De Groot, and She-raazi 1997; Kemper 1999), provide insights into the cultural backgrounds of these youths and the meanings of offending for them. In general, these studies suggest that delinquent behavior is often a survival strategy of marginalized or stigmatized groups. For many, of-

fending is an alternative to earning a living and a way to get respect and status. Some authors, however, warn against exclusive ethnic explanations of certain behavior patterns. Miedema (2002), for example, argues that many elements in the behavior of offenders and offending groups in different ethnic categories are manifestations of a wider street or youth culture.

IV. Causes and Correlates

Quantitative studies on juvenile offending usually focus on causes and correlates. Quite a few are informed by particular criminological theories, others using a broader eclectic or multiple risk factor approach. These studies report many risk factors and correlates that match findings in research throughout the world. Some investigate more thoroughly the roles of parents, schools, and peers and analyze interactions among them. Several focus on explanations of gender differences in juvenile offending.

A. Testing Classic Etiological Theories

Several studies have tested or developed etiological theories. They use interviews or questionnaires, employ self-report methodology, and aim at understanding individual differences in offending.

Junger-Tas (Junger-Tas 1972, 1976, 1983; Junger-Tas, Junger, and Barendse-Hoornweg 1985) was among the first to use self-report methods to test theoretical assumptions about juvenile offending. In her studies from the 1970s, interviews with adolescents in a Belgian city were used to test hypotheses from several criminological theories, especially from a control perspective. The studies from the early 1980s were conducted among a large group of Dutch adolescents and aimed at investigating the backgrounds of delinquents and the impact of judicial reactions. In her dissertation from 1972, Junger-Tas used the literature from early control theorists such as Nye and Reckless. Later in her career, she adopted Hirschi's social control theory and became a strong proponent of this theory in the Netherlands. She found many correlations of self-reported delinquent behavior with social control variables such as attachment to parents, supervision of parents, motivation for school, and unconventional attitudes toward delinquent behavior. Poor integration in the family and failure at school were the strongest correlates in these studies. Having delinquent friends and

“negative” leisure activities were strongly related to delinquency, but these variables were interpreted as an effect of poor integration in the family and school. A combined index measured the overall concept of “social integration” and correlated strongly with delinquent behavior; changes in this index were correlated with changes in the frequency of offending (Junger-Tas, Junger, and Barendse-Hoornweg 1985).

During the 1980s, social control theory became quite popular in Dutch criminology and won strong advocates (Junger 1989, 1990; Rutenfrans and Terlouw 1996). The theory was used by policy makers as a foundation for an influential government paper (Commissie Kleine Criminaliteit 1985). Bruinsma (1981) was more critical. On the basis of survey data from secondary school students, he used path analysis to test parts of the theory. He found that attachment to friends had a positive effect on delinquency and also that the explained variance was much higher for respondents from higher social economic backgrounds than for lower-class respondents. Bruinsma concluded that the social control theory did not do well in comparison with other major theories.

Bruinsma (1985) elaborated and tested a version of differential association theory on a sample of high school students (see also Bruinsma 1992). Path analyses resulted in significant effects for most elements of the theory. For example, contacts with deviant parents and friends were related to communication about criminal techniques, to deviant definitions (an index of the acceptability of deviant behavior in general), and to deviant definitions on less adherence to law-conforming norms. This variable was directly related to the frequency of delinquent behavior. Bruinsma controlled his results for gender and social class and also contrasted the results with hypotheses derived from rival theories. He concluded that differential association theory was supported over the other theories. In a secondary analysis of these data, Fiselier and Verschuren (1988) used structural equation modeling (LISREL) further to scrutinize and advance Bruinsma’s model. In general, the model was supported, but it appeared that improvements were possible. One of the modifications was to add a feedback effect of delinquent behavior on contacts with deviant peers; another was to add an extra effect of criminal techniques on delinquency via the perception of criminal opportunities. The authors concluded that their modified model had a better fit to the data than the original one. They interpret their modifications as consistent with differential association theory

and see their model as a better representation of the social learning perspective than Bruinsma's original model.

In the late 1980s and in the 1990s, the social control perspective continued to be important in theory-driven research. Baerveldt (1990) formulated a modified version for his study of the role of schools in the prevention of crime. Apart from the assumption that social bonds, especially bonds with schools and teachers, are negatively related to delinquency, he assumed that some bonds were related to more delinquency, such as having delinquent peers in one's social network at school. Both assumptions were supported by the results of a survey among secondary school students.

Rutenfrans and Terlouw (1994) adopted Hirschi's theory in its original form in a study of life events, social control, and delinquency. They used data from a study in the city of Utrecht that was primarily designed to track the social and psychological development of youths (the WIL-study; see Meeus and 't Hart 1993). A sample of more than 3,000 youths and young adults were interviewed two times at home, in 1991 and 1994. The sample was not representative of young people in the Netherlands: it was a subsample of a panel for a telephone interview study and consisted almost completely of native Dutch respondents. Effects on delinquency were found for indicators of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief: the elements of social control theory. The absence of delinquency was predicted well by social control variables. However, the predictive value of low-level social control was limited: weak bonds often were not correlated with high levels of delinquency.

Junger and colleagues (Junger and Zeilstra 1989; Junger 1990; Junger and Polder 1992; Junger and Haen Marshall 1997) explored the usefulness of social control theory for explaining differences in delinquency among several ethnic groups. Dutch, Surinamese, Moroccan, and Turkish boys were interviewed. Many indicators for attachment, commitment, and involvement were related to delinquency. In a multivariate analysis, the strongest effects were found for conventional beliefs, the supervision of parents, school conflicts, and unconventional leisure activities. Most of these effects were significant for each of the groups, with relatively small differences in strength. Junger concluded that the theory is valid for different ethnic groups. She also tested assumptions from rival theories and concluded that social control the-

ory was superior as an explanation for delinquency differences within and between ethnic groups.

Weerman (1998) investigated elements from social control theory in a follow-up of a sample of juvenile detainees and secondary school students. Conventional and unconventional social bonds were distinguished, as were different bonding mechanisms and several change mechanisms. Correlations were found between social control variables (family bonds and supervision, school attachments and commitment, and beliefs) and delinquency, and between changes in social bonds and changes in delinquency. A cluster analysis was conducted, using five factors that correlated most strongly with delinquency (see also Weerman 1996). Respondents with an accumulation of weak conventional bonds and strong relationships with delinquent peers were very often serious delinquents, whereas those with a mix of conventional and unconventional bonds were partly minor and partly serious delinquents. Other patterns resulted in either no or only light delinquent behavior.

Luijpers (2000) added elements about identity development to social control theory. He assumed that an increased intention to explore and experiment in early adolescence is related to the beginning of delinquency and that a strengthening of conventional bonds toward the end of adolescence is related to desistance. Data from two studies were used to analyze the usefulness of this approach. The results were mixed: in one study a correlation was found between exploration in adolescence and delinquency, but not in the other.

Recently, Junger-Tas and colleagues used social control theory to analyze differences among ethnic minority youths (Junger-Tas, Cruyff, et al. 2003). Social control variables were combined with information on negative life events, social contexts, and psychological well-being. They used data from a youth survey in Rotterdam (the Rotterdam Jeugdmonitor) to test their theoretical model. In that study, information was gathered for several age groups between one and eighteen years of age to make an inventory of well-being and problem behavior in Rotterdam. The researchers used a subsample of more than 4,000 fourteen- to fifteen-year-old students from thirty-three schools, a representative sample of that age group in the city. Correlates of delinquency were quite similar for six ethnic groups. At the same time, social bonds appeared to be weaker for several ethnic minority groups in comparison with Dutch respondents: they had on average more problematic family situations, less supervision and support, and more prob-

lems at school. The number of negative life events and living in a poor neighborhood were clearly related with ethnicity. These results suggest that social control variables combined with other contextual factors can explain an important part of ethnic differences in delinquency.

Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general (self-control) theory of crime did not receive as much attention in the Netherlands as social control theory did, though it was the subject of two studies that appeared during the 1990s. Junger et al. (1995) investigated the relationship between accidents and delinquency as an indirect test of the theory (which states that low self-control enhances reckless behavior and offending). Rutenfrans and Terlouw (1996) used several other indirect indicators of low self-control, such as frequent dating, low dedication for schoolwork, financial problems, and having one-night stands. Both studies used data from the longitudinal WIL-study. In multivariate analyses, accidents and most of the other indirect indicators of low self-control appeared to have significant effects on delinquent behavior, which was interpreted as important support for the general theory of crime. However, the indirect behavioral indicators of these studies are often regarded as inferior to attitudinal scales (see Pratt and Cullen 2000). In a recent study, conducted in the Netherlands and three other countries, self-control theory was tested using the attitudinal measurement method (Vaszony et al. 2001). This study showed that different dimensions of self-control (especially impulsivity and risk seeking) had effects on different types of deviance and delinquency in samples from all participating countries.

These and other Dutch studies in which constructs from criminological theories are used generally result in the replication of findings from research in other countries (especially the United States). They show that major criminological perspectives are valid not only elsewhere but also in the Netherlands. However, although the number of studies is substantial, etiological research on juvenile offending remains limited. While Hirschi's social control theory (1969) received a lot of attention in empirical research, other important leading theories in criminology were never the subjects of empirical testing in the Netherlands, for example, Akers's social learning theory (1973) and Agnew's general strain theory (1992). And self-control theory, which has been tested repeatedly in the United States (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), was investigated only three times in the Netherlands.

The Dutch debate about etiological theories has been quite vivid.

Apart from empirical research, discussion papers and theoretical discussions have appeared in the literature (e.g., Jongman 1981; Rutenfrans 1983; Bruinsma 1985; van der Hoeven 1987; Angenent 1991; Rovers 1998; Völker and Driessen 2003; see also van der Laan 2004). An important element in the debate is the question of whether and how the integration of influential theories is possible (see de Haan 1998).

B. Other Studies

Many other studies on causes and correlates have been conducted. Some aimed at exploring the relation of delinquency with a list of risk factors, for example, different personality factors (Hauber, Toornvliet, and Willemse 1986) or school factors and truancy (Dijksterhuis and Nijboer 1984). Some aimed at exploring the relationship of offending with psychiatric or developmental psychological factors (Scholte 1993; Doreleijers 1995). Others referred to criminological theories but used them eclectically, combining elements from a wide array of theories (Markus 1995; Hendriks-Elzes 1997). Recently, studies use a risk factor approach or follow the recent expansion of developmental criminology (van der Heiden-Attema and Bol 2000; Bongers 2005; van Dam 2005; see also Loeber and Slot, in this volume).

An interesting large-scale study was conducted at Groningen University during the 1980s and 1990s to increase insights into the role of (secondary) education and delinquency (Nijboer and Dijksterhuis 1989; Ferwerda 1992; Dijksterhuis 1993; Nijboer 1993, 1997). The researchers formulated a theoretical model in which elements from different theories and approaches were combined. A five-year longitudinal study was conducted in which a purposive sample of about 500 respondents were questioned yearly over five years. The data indicated that several family and school factors, peer influences, and two personality indexes (disinhibition and also thrill and adventure seeking) had strong predictive value. Exploratory LISREL analyses suggested that the most important factors were family climate factors, motivation for school work, and misbehavior at school.

As a part of this study, Ferwerda (1992) conducted qualitative interviews with a subsample of high-risk boys. Despite their high-risk characterizations, some respondents had not offended at all, others had committed only petty offenses, and some had developed more serious forms of delinquency. The offenders had a more negative attitude to-

ward school and were more impulsive and thrill seeking. The most serious offenders planned their offenses more carefully, were primarily motivated by prospects for gain, and committed offenses alone or with a trusted companion. Some of the petty offenders desisted, but others were increasingly delinquent. Most of the high-risk boys preferred a conventional future above a criminal one. Only a small proportion were expected to develop a criminal career, in particular those who were instrumental in their offending behavior.

Beke and Kleiman (1993) conducted a survey of adolescents and young adults in which they made a distinction between what they called "hard-core" delinquents and "joiners." These labels have been adopted by policy makers and the Dutch Ministry of Justice, although they are a bit misleading ("hard-core" delinquents committed two or more serious offenses, "joiners" only one or less serious offenses, but both can be in the center or periphery of a group). There were substantial differences between the two categories. On average, the most serious delinquents had the weakest bonds with parents and school and were more oriented toward their peers. They also were less bonded to conventional norms and often believed that violence and other offenses were acceptable. On the basis of interviews with a subsample of offenders, the researchers concluded that serious delinquents were often more instrumental in their offending and more often planned their offenses ahead of time. The less seriously delinquent respondents appeared to commit their offenses more often impulsively.

Several studies were based on delinquent samples or used case files. Ploeg and Scholte (1990; see also Scholte 1993) used a small sample of apprehended youths to test a "psycho-social" model to explain differences in the level of delinquency. They combined insights from criminology and developmental psychology and distinguished risk factors in the domains of family, school, peers, and the personality of the offender (e.g., low self-esteem). Being in a deviant peer group and being raised in a family with poor socialization practices appeared to have the strongest effects on delinquency. Low self-esteem appeared to correlate with vandalism, but high self-esteem with fighting behaviors.

Doreleijers (1995) studied offenders taken into custody from a (child) psychiatric perspective and used information from diagnostic examinations and instruments. He aimed to get insight into disorder prevalence among Dutch detained juvenile offenders, according to the

standard psychiatry manual DSM III. The majority of juvenile detainees were diagnosed as having one or more types of psychiatric disorders, such as attention deficit disorder, antisocial behavior disorders, affective disorders, and drug use. Although these disorders include offending behavior, the study made clear that psychological dysfunctioning was overrepresented among detained juvenile offenders, even though often it was not diagnosed or treated.

Van der Heiden-Attema and Bol (2000) used records and files about juveniles (ten to eighteen years old) investigated by a youth care organization because of personality problems or because of antisocial or delinquent behavior. A large number of risk and protective factors were related to the prevalence and seriousness of offending during a follow-up period of five years. Those juveniles who became delinquents appeared to be exposed to different risk factors than those who developed other problems. The most serious delinquents started earlier and had committed offenses more frequently in the past. But most of the risk factors found for the early starters were not different from the ones for youths who became delinquent later in their lives, though early starters were exposed to them at an earlier stage. Several other studies in which a developmental perspective was used are discussed in Loeber, Slot, and Sergeant (2001).

Many correlates and risk factors are repeatedly found among causes and correlates of juvenile offending, and they are not divergent from what is found in the international research (see, e.g., Hawkins et al. 1998; Loeber, Slot, and Sergeant 2001; Thornberry and Krohn 2003). The most frequently mentioned risk factors are in the area of family (weak bonds with parents, poor supervision, and poor socialization practices), school (especially low school motivation, truancy), and leisure time and peers (deviant peer group, "negative" leisure activities such as hanging round and alcohol or drug use). Personal risk factors were found in some of the studies, such as thrill and adventure seeking. Having unconventional norms and using neutralization techniques were correlated with delinquency. Some risk factors known from international research are relatively underinvestigated in the Netherlands; they include a high level of impulsivity, attention deficit disorder, low intelligence quotient, and being in a gang. But there are no indications that there are different risk factors in the Netherlands than in other Western countries.

In several of the studies a distinction is made between minor of-

fenders and serious delinquents. Several authors observe qualitative differences between the two delinquent categories. In general, they conclude that minor delinquents commit their offenses more or less impulsively and in the company of peers, whereas the more serious offenders operate in a more deliberate and planned fashion. However, it is unknown yet how valid this distinction is, and the possibility of more types of juvenile offenders is relatively unexplored.

C. The Role of Risk Factors

Not all correlates and risk factors have causal influence (cf. Farrington 2000). Many may merely be covariates or effects of delinquency. For example, having nonconventional values and norms and delinquent behavior may be seen as two related phenomena that sometimes are considered as tautological. In his longitudinal data, Nijboer (1997) found indications that the adoption of delinquent norms often follows offending. Engels et al. (2004) investigated causal relationships between attitudes and delinquent behavior using the longitudinal data of the Utrecht WIL-study. They found that attitudes had an effect on later delinquency only for respondents who were not delinquent at the beginning of their adolescence. For those already delinquent, no influence of attitudes was found; delinquency seemed instead to have a further deteriorating effect on moral attitudes.

Dutch researchers are aware of the difference between establishing a correlation or identifying a risk factor and imposing causal influence. They devote more or less effort to evaluating the exact role of different risk factors in the causal process. Particularly, the most important social areas of young people, family, school, and peers, have been subjects of several detailed analyses.

The roles of family and parenting are taken into account in many studies. Multivariate analyses give varying results with regard to the relative contributions of family factors to delinquency, but there is always an effect of one or more family factors. Nijboer (1997) found that structural family factors (broken home, number of children, or family SES) had small effects on delinquency and only through parenting style and the social bonds of juveniles with their parents. The latter variables had an important but indirect effect via school and peer factors. This is in line with international research that finds that structural family factors such as family size and being in a broken home appear to be

less important than parenting style indicators such as low supervision and a lack of warmth in the family (see, e.g., Wells and Rankin 1991).

An interesting study on the role of parents in combination with the role of romantic relationships was recently published by Meeus, Branje, and Overbeek (2004). They used the longitudinal Utrecht WIL-study to analyze whether an intimate partner moderates delinquency or even takes over the role of parents in late adolescence. Among older respondents who did not have a partner at all during a period of six years, having lots of support from parents had an inhibiting effect on delinquency. Among those who did have a partner during the research period, there was no effect from the bond with parents. Instead, support from the partner had a negative effect on delinquency.

Little research in the Netherlands has focused on parenting style and delinquency. The relation between parenting and problem behavior in general has received attention (see Deković 1999). In the Nijmegen study, children and their parents were interviewed to study family and parenting characteristics and the development of behavior from childhood into young adulthood (Gerris et al. 1993). This Nijmegen study, together with the WIL-study from Utrecht, was used in a secondary analysis in Loeber, Slot, and Sergeant (2001). In both studies, the parent-child interaction is studied in more detail than in most criminological research. Elements from the parent-child interaction were clearly correlated with violent behavior (for more details, see Loeber and Slot, in this volume). Hoeve et al. (2004) used the Nijmegen study to study the influence of family factors in childhood on delinquency during young adulthood. They also used data from the Pittsburgh Youth Study to make comparisons between the United States and the Netherlands. Hoeve et al. found that most family and parenting factors did not have long-term effects on delinquency in young adulthood, but the effects of low supervision in the American study and of low order and structure in the household in the Nijmegen study were significant and substantial. In the Nijmegen study, there was also a significant enhancing effect on later delinquency of being in a family with an authoritarian parenting style, although only for girls.

Several Dutch studies focused on the role of school in juvenile offending. One of the main goals of the Groningen longitudinal study was to investigate the potential criminogenic influence of education (Nijboer and Dijksterhuis 1989; Dijksterhuis 1993; Nijboer 1997). Although many school factors were related to delinquency, the role of

school was less important than was expected. The LISREL analyses suggested that the effects of many school factors decreased when other factors were taken into account. School failure was related to offending, but the main reason was that school failure was influenced by inadequate parenting styles that had an (indirect) effect on delinquent behavior. School bonding had no direct effect, but an indirect effect through the motivation for school. And labeling by teachers appeared to be a result of misbehavior at school instead of a causal factor for delinquent behavior. School motivation and misbehavior at school—measured by getting punished by teachers—appeared to have the strongest effects on delinquency.

Baerveldt's study (1990, 1992) investigated the influence of several school factors on juvenile delinquency, not only individual characteristics but also characteristics of the participating schools, such as school atmosphere, quality ambitions, teacher attitudes, and features of the lessons. The analyses showed only weak or no effects of these school characteristics, but the individual bond with school had an important effect. There were almost no added effects of schools on delinquency when individual differences were taken into account. Differences between classes explained a small but significant part of the variance. Baerveldt concluded that the role of school characteristics with regard to juvenile offending is absent or at the most very small.

A number of studies focused on delinquent peers. Bruinsma (1985, 1992) distinguished several aspects of peer influences: frequency of contacts, identification with friends, communication about criminal techniques, and priority of deviant contacts. Most had a separate effect on delinquency. A high frequency of contacts with deviant friends had an indirect effect through the acquisition of positive definitions of deviant behavior and through communication about criminal techniques. Weerman (1998) suggested that the frequency of contacts is especially important. The quality of the bond with friends and the importance attached to the opinion of friends was unrelated to delinquency, but the amount of time spent with friends was highly correlated. However, this was only for those respondents who had delinquent friends. Juveniles who spend a great deal of time with delinquent friends appeared often to be serious offenders.

Broekhuizen and Driessen (2005) found a correlation between frequency of contact and delinquency in their study of twelve-year-old school youths in Rotterdam. They distinguished between contacts with

peers at school, in the family, in leisure organizations, in the neighborhood, and in peer groups on the street. The delinquency of friends in each of these areas was correlated with the individual's delinquent behavior. Each area had its separate effects in a multivariate analysis with these different peer networks together. The effects from neighborhood friends and peer groups are stronger than from peers elsewhere, and a high amount of overlap between different peer networks is related to delinquent behavior.

Baerveldt used social network methods to study the relation between delinquent peers and delinquency (Baerveldt 1990, 1992; Baerveldt, Vermande, and van Rossem 2000; Baerveldt et al. 2004). High school students were asked to select peers from a numbered list of fellow students, and both the respondents and the nominated peers were questioned about offending. This may be more valid than the usual method of asking respondents about their peers, in which friends may be perceived as more similar than they are in reality. Baerveldt suggested that peer networks at school are less homogeneous in their offending behavior than is often thought. In one of the studies, similarity in behavior was not higher for more intimate relations between students but rather somewhat lower than for relatively superficial contacts.

Social network methods are also used in a study (based on data from the NSCR School Study) by Weerman and Smeenk (2005), in combination with the usual method of asking youths about their friends. The association between friends' and the respondent's delinquency was much lower than had been found with the usual method, suggesting that the relation had been overestimated in the past. Many respondents had one or two best friends with delinquency levels that were lower than those of their friends in general. The level of best friends' delinquency levels mattered apart from the general delinquency level of all friends. Another analysis of these data showed that delinquent and non-delinquent students did not exclusively hang out with each other at school (Weerman, Bijleveld, and Averdijk 2005). Visual representations of the school networks showed a mixed picture: apart from a few cliques and groupings of students with similar behavior, nondelinquents, minor delinquents, and serious delinquents have many contacts with each other.

De Kemp et al. (2004) used social network data on high school students who chose each other as best friends to investigate the effects of parenting variables, delinquent best friends, and delinquent behavior.

The investigators used longitudinal data on twelve- to thirteen-year-old students collected in three waves with gaps of half a year. There were clear relationships between delinquent behavior, best friends' delinquency, and three parenting variables: support, monitoring, and psychological (manipulative) control. Structural equation modeling showed significant causal effects of the three parenting variables on subsequent offending. However, the results also suggested that the relationship between best friends' delinquency and that of the respondent was mainly the result of selection processes. Being delinquent had an independent effect on friends' delinquency in a subsequent wave but not the other way around. It is unclear, however, if this is an artifact of the restriction of the sample to mutual friendships: in this analysis, selection effects might be the same as influence effects from the respondent on the best friends' delinquency. More longitudinal research using social network methods is needed to understand the causal effects of delinquent peers in combination with other factors.

D. The Gender Gap

The finding that boys are relatively more often involved in delinquency than girls has long received attention. A number of studies and a special journal issue on the subject appeared during the 1980s (Rutenfrans 1983, 1989; Bontekoe 1984; Bruinsma and Lissenberg 1987). The debate was vivid. Some authors adopted biological views, others stressed the greater significance of social relationships for women, and still others viewed the different crime rates among girls and boys as a result of different gender identities and morals (see Bouw 1991). Some authors adopted social control theory as a general explanation of differences between boys and girls. The discussion paralleled the international debate between those who believe that general theories are valid for both sexes and those who advocate gender-specific theorizing (cf. Moffitt et al. 2001; Lanctôt and Le Blanc 2002).

Several empirical studies have sought to explain differences between boys and girls. In the 1980s, several studies appeared in which correlates of delinquency were compared. Junger-Tas (1983) found that the relation between family integration and delinquency was less strong for girls than for boys. Bruinsma (1985) reported that attachment with peers was more strongly related to delinquency for girls than for boys. Hauber, Toornvliet, and Willemse (1986) found mainly similarities between boys and girls. The results from their multivariate analyses were

comparable for boys and girls, which made them conclude that there is no need for separate explanations of offending for boys and girls. Dijksterhuis and Nijboer (1987) contested this conclusion and stressed the differences in the results of Hauber, Toornvliet, and Willemse. They also presented results from their own study that revealed differences in correlates for boys and girls. For example, conflicts at school are important only for girls, whereas school motivation is the most important school factor for boys, but not for girls.

A few recent Dutch studies on juvenile offending make explicit comparisons between boys and girls with respect to the effects of various variables on delinquency. Junger-Tas, Ribeaud, and Cruyff (2004) used data from the ISRD and from a study in Rotterdam. They found that similar background and social control variables were correlated with delinquency for boys and girls. These factors also partly explained the difference in delinquency levels between boys and girls. However, while direct parental control had the strongest effects in boys, female delinquency seemed to be affected more by family composition and psychological well-being. The authors concluded that direct controls may be more important for boys and emotional controls more important for girls, which parallels conclusions from international research. Van der Rakt, Weerman, and Need (2005) used data from the NSCR School Study. They found some remarkable differences. Bonding with school had the strongest effect for boys, whereas the bond with parents was most important for girls. Moreover, the mean delinquency level in the class social network was significant for girls but not for boys. For boys, the number of chosen friends among students and the number of female friends had stronger effects. The authors suggested that it may be the company of friends in itself that stimulates delinquent behavior through status and ridicule mechanisms in boys (at least at school). For girls, being like other students at school may be more important.

V. Conclusions

I return to the two aims set out in the beginning of this essay. First, I address the question of whether there are distinctive characteristics of juvenile offending in the Netherlands in comparison with other countries. Second, I discuss the nature of Dutch research on juvenile offending.

In general, we have a great deal of information about the prevalence and level of Dutch juvenile offending. Police statistics make clear that about 4 percent of Dutch juveniles are interrogated by the police each year. Statistics from the *European Sourcebook* (Killias 2003) do not indicate that the Netherlands stands out in this respect; the official crime figures for youth crime are slightly higher than in some other countries, but not the highest. Self-report studies show that the majority of Dutch juveniles commit offenses at some point in their adolescence. Percentages for separate minor offenses are typically 5–20 percent, and for separate serious offenses 1–3 percent. Findings from the ISRD study suggest again that the Netherlands does not stand out in comparison with other countries. Most countries have lower levels of self-reported juvenile offending than the Netherlands, but a number of countries have higher levels.

The percentage of juveniles interrogated by the police in the Netherlands has risen steadily since the beginning of the 1960s, with stronger increases at the end of the 1970s and in the mid-1990s. In the last three years for which information is available, the percentage has increased again, and violent offenses especially have become more common. Part of this increase, however, may result from major changes in police strategies and policies, and it is unclear to what extent the increases reflect a real change in juvenile offending. Self-report studies suggest that juvenile offending as a whole did not change dramatically in recent years, but the figures here contradict each other. More research is needed to get a better insight.

The long-term changes in juvenile offending and the more recent increase in violent offending among juveniles are in line with trends in other European countries (Pfeiffer 1998; Killias et al. 2004). This suggests that the increase in juvenile offending in the Netherlands is not specifically Dutch but instead follows a European trend. It is unclear, however, what caused the changes and fluctuations. Research aimed at understanding the mechanisms behind long-term changes in the level of juvenile offending in a country or in Europe is scarce.

Many different risk factors and correlates have been found in a large number of Dutch studies aimed at the causes and the etiology of youth crime. These are not very different from findings in research throughout the world (Hawkins et al. 1998; Loeber et al. 1998; Farrington 2000; Thornberry and Krohn 2003). There are no indications that the mechanisms behind juvenile offending are different in the Netherlands.

It may be possible that certain factors are more important in the Netherlands than in countries in other parts of Europe (Barberet et al. 2004).

As elsewhere, the majority of youth offending takes place in company. There are also troublesome youth groups in many Dutch cities, and in the past some have adopted American gang clothes and symbols. Comparison of troublesome Dutch youth groups with American and European examples of youth gangs suggests that offending behaviors and risk factors are not very different (Klein et al. 2000; Esbensen and Weerman 2005). However, Dutch gangs and troublesome youth groups are rarely territorial and are less hierarchical than elsewhere, especially the United States. Possibly, the Dutch preference for equality and compromise is manifested in an aversion to leadership among offenders in groups.

The first thing that stands out with regard to Dutch research on juvenile offending is that there has been so much. Many efforts have been made to estimate the prevalence of offending among Dutch juveniles, and several monitors have been used to report on trends and changes in youth crime. As far as I know, only the United Kingdom has been monitoring juvenile offending as thoroughly with the use of self-report methodology. The amount of research into the causes and correlates is also high. Dutch researchers have conducted many studies. Usually these have been published in Dutch, but several researchers have found their way into international journals and outlets. Of course, the studies of the past twenty-five years vary greatly in thoroughness and quality (I left out many relatively weak studies). It is also clear, with a few exceptions, that Dutch research has not been at the forefront of the international criminological community for a long time. Nevertheless, most studies meet the standards of good empirical research, and, especially since the 1990s, Dutch research has become more advanced and more internationally oriented. The body of research on juvenile offending in the Netherlands is voluminous and of high quality in comparison with that in most other countries in Europe.

A great deal of attention has been given to differences between ethnic groups. Several qualitative studies have been conducted on groups. A number of quantitative studies compared the effects of variables between different groups. This is understandable in light of the large share of ethnic minorities in the youth population, especially in the cities. Research on the role of ethnicity in youth offending has been

stimulated by increasing recognition during the 1990s, partly led by research findings, that juveniles from some groups were overrepresented in the crime figures.

Many questions remain unanswered. We do not know to what extent ethnic minority youths commit more offenses than youths of Dutch origin, because self-report studies contradict each other on this issue. There is also a lack of consensus about the explanation for the overrepresentation of juvenile offenders among certain groups. Qualitative researchers stress the importance of the marginalized positions of many ethnic minority youths and focus on cultural elements and lifestyles. Quantitative researchers usually adopt a universal explanation of offending and argue that ethnic minority youths are relatively more exposed to certain risk factors or explanatory variables, especially from a social control perspective. What has been lacking is a systematic combination of the findings and perspectives from both qualitative and quantitative researchers. A combination of research methods and data sources would be useful.

There has recently been an increase in interest in group offending. Several studies on co-offending and troublesome youth groups have been conducted, although this research is modest in comparison with the large body of gang research in the United States. Attention to this subject has been fed partly by an influential government paper in which juvenile crime is mentioned as a focus of policy and research (Commissie Jeugdcriminaliteit 1993). Experience with several remarkable examples of troublesome youth groups has led to several publications in this field. For a long time, there was discussion of whether these groups were gangs or not. Recently, some authors adopted the approach suggested by the Eurogang Network (see Decker and Weerman 2005) to call these groups either a troublesome youth group or a gang, as long as they are durable, street-oriented, and involved in illegal activity. This solution might be helpful in future research on the role of these groups in juvenile offending.

There has been much interest in theory testing and theory development. Several studies have been conducted to test or expand classic criminological theories, and theoretical essays have been published regularly. Nevertheless, the attention has been relatively one-sided. Hirschi's social control theory has been the subject of most etiological studies, but other perspectives and theories have been absent or have received much less attention. An important reason for this is that the

theory was an important foundation for a very influential government report about petty crime (Commissie Kleine Criminaliteit 1985). Another factor might have been the popularity of the theory at the WODC, the research institute of the Dutch government that was dominant in Dutch criminology over a long period. But the great amount of attention can also be traced to an influential Dutch researcher, Josine Junger-Tas, who introduced and studied the theory. Her close colleagues have stepped into her footsteps.

Apart from studies aimed at theory testing and development, many others have been conducted on the causes and correlates of juvenile delinquency. Some combined existing theories in more or less eclectic models; others were focused on the establishment of risk factors and correlates. Many distinguish between minor offenders and serious or "hard-core" delinquents. This may reflect a general Dutch attitude to distinguish between those offenders who are really harmful and those who display behavior that is relatively normal for the life periods young people are in. The distinction between the two types of delinquents has not been linked much to the dual taxonomy of Moffitt (1993), in which life course persistent and adolescent-limited offenders are distinguished (but see Donker et al. [2003] and Donker [2004] for a study of young adults using the distinction). An important reason for this is that most studies have been cross-sectional or were only short-term longitudinal, which makes it difficult to reproduce trajectories over time. Further, it is unclear if the distinction between two subcategories is enough, or if more than two types of juvenile offenders should be distinguished, for example, offender groups in the three trajectories distinguished by Loeber (1997) or even more types of offenders. Research on these issues would give a more nuanced understanding of the backgrounds of juvenile offenders in the Netherlands.

Several longitudinal studies have examined the development of juvenile offending in the Netherlands. Most used a limited period of follow-up. Some had several waves. Only a few were aimed at the study of delinquency. Most were conducted for other reasons. Although the existing longitudinal studies have produced interesting findings, they are still limited if we compare them with long-lasting longitudinal studies in the United Kingdom, and especially the United States (see Thornberry and Krohn 2003). The Dutch government has never funded a large research program like the combination of three longitudinal studies (in Seattle, Rochester, NY, and Pittsburgh) in the

United States. Although several longitudinal projects have recently been started, there is no large longitudinal project focused primarily on the development of juvenile offending.

Dutch research has produced a large body of knowledge about the correlates and risk factors for juvenile offending. These factors are comparable to those found elsewhere. However, despite this knowledge, few insights are available with regard to the roles of all these factors. Researchers often seem to be satisfied with a list of correlates, without understanding the larger theoretical framework in which they have a role. Because of this, a lot remains to be learned about the processes by which risk factors are connected to juvenile delinquency.

Despite the fact that there has been a wealth of Dutch research on juvenile offending, much remains to do. First, it would be wise to combine different sources of information on the prevalence and development of youth offending. Police statistics and self-reports depart from each other in their conclusions; it would be wise to link them and discover how each of them is biased. One possibility is to gather police information on respondents in self-report studies and, vice versa, to investigate the self-reports and characteristics of those who are apprehended or detained. Such a combination of methods and sources is especially important to gain more insight into the level of delinquent behavior among ethnic minority youths, about whom diverging findings are reported.

Further, it is very important to continue and intensify studies aimed at understanding delinquent behavior among different categories of youths (ethnic minorities, boys, and girls) and to explain these differences. The efforts that have been made to do this should be applauded, but they are limited in scope and perspective. What is needed is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, using data from different sources and informed by different perspectives, that contrast different explanations with each other. Such a broad strategy is especially important with regard to the subject of delinquency among ethnic minorities. This is an issue that is central to the Dutch political debate at the moment, and opinions and decisions should be informed by valid and reliable research findings.

Dutch research on juvenile offending also needs expansion with regard to the perspectives and theories that are used. As we have seen, several criminological perspectives have not been tested or have received relatively little attention. A few areas of research have long been

neglected in the Netherlands, for example, the role of troublesome youth groups and of personality and biological factors. More research is also needed that goes beyond the establishment of correlates and risk factors to disentangle causal processes and interaction effects. It would be wise to combine such fundamental etiological research with efforts made by colleagues from abroad and aim for comparable methods and measurements. More generally, international comparative research is important for learning more about typically Dutch elements in juvenile offending and their backgrounds and for finding out which factors and processes are universal.

Last but not least, it is important to collect and analyze more long-term longitudinal data about the development of juvenile offending. A study comparable to several influential projects conducted abroad (like those in Seattle, Rochester, and Pittsburgh) would be ideal. But using longitudinal data that have been collected or will be collected to answer important criminological questions is very useful already. These analyses can focus on searching for different trajectories, such as the ones proposed in Moffitt's (1993) and Loeber's (1997) models. It is unclear how valid these models are in the Dutch situation. Furthermore, longitudinal research can shed more light on the causes and contexts of starting a criminal career, the escalation toward more frequent and severe offending, and desistance, or the cessation of offending among juveniles. Such information is crucial to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies.

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