

DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN POLICE AND SELF-REPORT DATA FOR DUTCH RACIAL MINORITIES

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This paper discusses the validity of self-report data. It appears that self-report data are not equally valid among all ethnic groups. Rather large differences are apparent in the tendency of boys with official police contacts to admit delinquent activities. Youngsters from Morocco and Turkey were much more reticent about admitting delinquent activities than those born in The Netherlands or coming from Surinam. These differences in willingness to admit delinquent behaviour are related to social control variables, the number of police contacts, and knowledge of the Dutch language. A problem for etiological research is reported: variables which are considered to cause delinquency are also related to the tendency to admit involvement in criminality. Overall, arrest data probably provide the best indicator for comparing criminal involvement between ethnic groups.

Introduction: Self-Report Delinquency Studies

The validity problems of data obtained by interviews or questionnaires are well known. Respondents seem to have difficulty in answering questions on many topics: frequency of visits to the doctor, illnesses, income, receiving welfare money, having debts, or having money. The problem is that on many of these subjects the validity of the answers is related to the subject of enquiry. For example, people with high incomes tend to mention correctly the amount of their savings but to be inaccurate about their loans. Likewise, accuracy in mentioning illnesses is dependent on the type of illness: asthma is practically always mentioned, but sexual diseases are not (Cannell and Kahn 1985).

The basis of self-report delinquency studies is the assumption that the persons who are being interviewed (generally juveniles) are prepared to answer questions correctly on such sensitive matters as their delinquent activities. Criminologists can test this assumption by checking self-report answers with information in police records. Overall, 'concurrent' studies on the validity of self-report measures confirm this assumption; many such studies find that about 10–20 per cent of respondents do not admit delinquent behaviour, which seems an acceptable error level.¹ As a result some researchers using self-report instruments do not check the validity of their results but refer to the literature (Huizinga and Elliott 1986).

A problem seems to appear, however, for researchers interested in measuring involvement in delinquent behaviour among various ethnic groups. Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis (1981) and Huizinga and Elliott (1984, 1986) both found (for the US) that validity was lower for blacks than for whites. Elliott (1982) suggested that this

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¹ For a review of the literature see Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weiss 1981; Elliott and Ageton 1980; Huizinga and Elliott 1984, 1986.

could be because blacks are more often unjustly arrested; considering themselves innocent, they will tend not to mention the 'delinquent' behaviour that has made them known to the police. Another possibility is that interviewer effects are responsible for differential validity. Teilmann (1976) found that black respondents were less inclined to mention delinquent activity to white interviewers than to black interviewers. However, the results obtained by Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis (1981), who allocated black and white, male and female interviewers to respondents randomly, make it unlikely that interviewer effects can account for the differences in validity between blacks and whites.

Factors other than ethnic group may also affect the validity of self-report data. Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis (1981) found that validity is related to respondents' achievements at school. Kleck (1982) mentions four studies (out of five) in which self-report results were less valid for respondents of low socio-economic status (SES), although Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis (1981) found no relation between SES and the tendency to report delinquent behaviour. Another factor related to validity is the severity of the crime (or the frequency of the delinquent activities), but findings are not consistent with respect to the direction of the relation. Wyner (1980) and Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis (1981) found that results are less valid for respondents who commit serious offences than for those who commit trivial acts, but Petersilia (1978) concluded the opposite: more serious acts are more often mentioned by respondents in interviews than less serious violations.² Sarnecki (1988) concluded that highly delinquent respondents are more willing than less delinquent respondents to admit that they committed crimes. Their problem is not that they want to conceal anything but that they may have trouble in mentioning every crime when they committed so many.³ This is in accordance with Yavuzer's findings (1988). He compared two groups of Turkish boys: a group of 214 delinquent boys from three borstals and 150 boys of the same age from the slum areas in the same cities as the borstals. The delinquent boys scored lower on the lie scale—i.e. they were less inclined to present themselves in a favourable way (at least in a research situation). These findings are consistent with Petersilia (1978), which likewise showed that respondents who commit many offences report these acts in interviews more often than non-delinquent respondents.

Quoting Teilmann (1976), Petersilia offered the following explanation:

The answer may be that most people are not willing to lie about unambiguous facts. However, behaviours which are ambiguous as to their definition of offences, and which are engaged in frequently so that their number is difficult to remember, may well be subject to self-enhancing definitions in threatening situations. The occasions in which a person takes money from someone by force are probably remembered fairly clearly. To fail to report these offences would require a knowing outright lie on the part of the respondents.

She concluded that 'the importance of an event to an individual and its integration with other life events affect his reporting of them' (Petersilia 1978).

² Petersilia's findings are based on prisoners' reports, however, and one should be careful in making comparisons with the population usually interviewed in self-report delinquency, i.e. school-children or random samples of youngsters.

³ This might explain Wyner's (1980) finding of larger discrepancies between self-reports and official data for respondents with many arrests than for those with less arrests. Wyner's population consisted of respondents who had all been arrested at least once, and those who had committed many delinquent activities might have forgotten some of them.

In this paper the concern is with the validity of delinquent behaviour among several ethnic groups. A description of the validity of a self-report instrument for four ethnic groups will be followed by an attempt to explain differences in validity.

Ethnic Minorities in The Netherlands

A few preliminary remarks need to be made about ethnic minorities in The Netherlands. The concept of 'ethnic minority' is usually used to cover those groups 'which are the target of the official Dutch ethnic minority policy' (see e.g. Muus 1987) because relatively serious social problems are associated with them. The government's list of ethnic minorities in this category includes people coming from Mediterranean countries, mostly Turks and Moroccans, who came to The Netherlands to work (migrants or 'guest-workers'); people from Surinam (sometimes called Dutch Guyana), most of whom (approximately 90 per cent) are Dutch citizens; persons from the Dutch Antilles (in South America); refugees (mostly from Vietnam, Turkey, and Poland); and gypsies and caravan dwellers. In 1987, these groups formed 4.8 per cent of the population of The Netherlands as a whole, although the four most populous cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht) have far larger concentrations of ethnic minorities (9-13 per cent). If one counts other groups usually also considered as ethnic minorities although not appearing on the government's list (e.g. the Chinese), ethnic minorities constitute some 6 per cent of the population of The Netherlands.

The three largest ethnic minority groups overall are the Turks (c.161,000), Surinamese (c.150,000), and Moroccans (c.123,000). Most of the persons belonging to these ethnic groups came to The Netherlands during the last thirty years. The Turkish migrants came generally in the 1960s, the Moroccans in the beginning of the 1970s, and the Surinamese at the end of the 1970s. It should be noted that this latter group have diverse ethnic backgrounds. Thus, in the present study, 51 per cent were from Hindu families (originating from Asia), 22 per cent described themselves as being of Creole (African) origin, while 25 per cent claimed other ethnic backgrounds. For this study, however, they are all considered under the single heading of 'Surinamese' (although, in fact, the majority, as explained above, are actually Dutch citizens).

The majority of the younger members of ethnic minority communities appear to have been born outside The Netherlands: in the present study, 87 per cent of the Turkish boys, 95 per cent of the Moroccans, and 97 per cent of the Surinamese. The proportion that had lived in The Netherlands less than five years was relatively large among the Moroccans (28 per cent) and relatively small among the Turks (12 per cent) and Surinamese (11 per cent).

The three groups are of very different socio-economic status. The Turks and Moroccans are mostly unskilled workers who found work in The Netherlands during the boom of the 1960s. Although their intention was to stay temporarily, many of them had their families come over to join them, and it is now generally assumed that most of them will stay in The Netherlands permanently. The problem is that many of the industries in which they found work are today suffering recession. Overall, Turks and Moroccans occupy in many respects an unfavourable position in Dutch society. Unemployment rates are high, the average socio-economic level is low, housing conditions are bad in comparison with those of Dutch citizens, the education level is low,

and illiteracy rates are sometimes relatively high. Coming from Islamic countries, Turks and Moroccans differ from the Dutch in other respects too. For example, they are more religious and have more traditional views of the position of women in society. An additional problem for Turks and Moroccans is the fact that, in special circumstances (for example, after having served a long prison sentence), they can be expelled from The Netherlands and sent back to their own country.⁴

Most of the Surinamese came to The Netherlands just before their country became independent, at a period when economic recession made jobs hard to find in The Netherlands. Coming from a former Dutch colony they share elements of Dutch culture: they speak Dutch, learnt Dutch history and geography at school; and some of them are Christian. In many respects the Surinamese occupy a position in between the (white) Dutch citizens and the other immigrants. They generally speak Dutch rather better than the other immigrants, have a better level of education and housing and, when they do have a job, higher socioeconomic status; even so, they do not attain the Dutch average on any of these factors (see e.g. Junger-Tas 1985). Finally, the Surinamese, having in general Dutch nationality, cannot be expelled from The Netherlands.

In the light of these distinctions, it is clear that the concept of 'ethnic minorities' in The Netherlands is a general term for very diverse categories, and researchers should be aware of these differences.

Methodology

The data for this paper come from a more comprehensive study designed (among other things) to answer the question of the involvement of different ethnic groups in The Netherlands in delinquent behaviour. For this purpose both self-report delinquency data and official data were assembled. It was decided that the sample of ethnic minority boys should constitute a random sample, but that the indigenous Dutch boys had to form a comparable group in terms of their socio-economic background. Following Albrecht (1984, 1987) and Van der Hoeven (1986), it was hypothesized that differences in delinquency rates would disappear when socio-economic conditions were taken into account.

Approximately 200 boys aged 12-17 were interviewed from each of the three ethnic minority groups (Moroccans 198, Turks 203, Surinamese 206.) For every third minority boy interviewed, an indigenous Dutch boy living in the same street/block and of the same age was interviewed, on the assumption that this method would produce an indigenous sample with a similar socio-economic background to that of the ethnic minorities. The total number of indigenous Dutch youths selected in this way was 204.⁵

⁴ How long a prison sentence has to be in order for offenders to be expelled from The Netherlands is dependent on their official status as defined in their residence permits.

⁵ The geographic distribution of respondents was determined in the following manner. The original sample of Moroccan and Turkish boys came from 33 different places in The Netherlands. For practical reasons, it was decided to exclude those places where the number of Turks/Moroccans was very small. The size of the sample selected in the remaining 16 towns was proportional to the size of the Moroccan and/or Turkish community in the lists of the Aliens Police. The resultant sample was representative for 88% of the Turkish community and 90% of the Moroccans. The procedure used in selecting the Surinamese sample was somewhat different. In order once again to restrict the geographic coverage to manageable proportions, it was decided to restrict the sample to boys born in the 19-

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The interview consisted of a structured questionnaire which included many questions on family, school, and leisure time activities. The self-report delinquency measures were based on nineteen questions about delinquent activities which were asked at the end of the interview (see App. 1). Respondents were requested to specify whether they had 'ever' or during the preceding year ('last year') committed particular delinquent acts, and whether these acts had brought them into contact with the police. Four self-report measures were constructed: delinquency 'ever', delinquency 'last year', police contacts 'ever', and police contacts 'last year'. For the purpose of validation, information on offences known to the police was recorded at the police station ('official police contacts'⁶), and information on subsequent decisions within the judicial process was gathered from the Judicial Documentation Centre.

Validity was operationalized as the discrepancy between information from the police records and self-report information. A discrepancy was noted when a respondent having official police contacts admitted no offence at all during the oral interview. Discrepancy measures were dichotomized: e.g. a boy with official police contacts reports or does not report at least one offence/police contact during the interview. In this way, four discrepancy measures were distinguished: on delinquency 'ever', delinquency 'last year', police contacts 'ever', and police contacts 'last year'. The discrepancy measures and all subsequent analyses were performed on the subsamples with officially registered police contacts (ever, $n = 188$; last year, $n = 94$).

Following Weiss's (1977) claim that a professional, task-oriented interview is probably the most suitable method of conducting interviews, especially in the case of ethnic minorities, and Nederhof's (1985) finding that using this method decreases respondents' tendency to answer questions in a socially desirable way, interviews were carried out by a professional interview bureau.

Results

Overall, more boys had difficulty in admitting police contacts than in admitting delinquent behaviour: 71 per cent of these known to have 'ever' committed delinquent acts admitted having done so, whereas only 30 per cent of those registered as having had official police contacts admitted them (Table 1).

As Petersilia (1978) found, the discrepancies on both measures were smaller for the 'ever' measures than for 'last year'. Two possible explanations can be offered for this. First, due to 'backward telescoping' (placing events back in time), some respondents might not mention delinquent activities as having occurred 'last year' while police records indicate otherwise. (Of course, sometimes police records might be wrong on this point.) Another possibility is that respondents may be less willing to mention delinquent acts that occurred not very long ago.

Differences in discrepancy between the different ethnic groups are striking. Overall, Moroccans and Turks are much less likely to mention offences than Surinamese or indigenous Dutch boys are. For example, in the case of 'delinquency ever', the

municipalities with more than 30,000 inhabitants. These represent probably 75% of the Surinamese in The Netherlands, although as there is no registration of ethnicity that figure is merely an estimate. These 19 municipalities were only partly the same as those from which the Moroccans and Turks were drawn.

⁶ An 'official police contact' means that the police recorded that the boy committed an offence. This does not always result in an official arrest warrant.

TABLE 1 Respondents Known to Police Reporting Delinquent Behaviour or Police Contacts (%)

	Moroccans	Turks	Surinamese	Indigenous Dutch	Total
<i>Reported 'ever'</i>					
Sample size	65	(46)	(47)	(30)	(188)
Delinquency ^a	63	57	87	87	71
Police contacts ^b	32	13	36	43	30
<i>Reported 'last year'</i>					
Sample size	(39)	(22)	(20)	(13)	(94)
Delinquency ^c	49	36	90	92	61
Police contacts ^d	28	9	20	38	23

Note: Selection on boys with officially registered police contacts.

^a $\chi^2 = 16.3$; $df = 3$; $p < 0.001$.

^b $\chi^2 = 9.8$; $df = 3$; $p = 0.02$.

^c $\chi^2 = 20.4$; $df = 3$; $p < 0.0001$.

^d $\chi^2 = 4.8$; $df = 3$; $p = 0.19$.

discrepancy for Moroccans and Turks is respectively 63 per cent and 56 per cent, while for the indigenous Dutch and the Surinamese it is 87 per cent. Differences are found on all discrepancy scales except 'police contacts last year'. This suggests that self-report police contacts might be a better measure of differences in involvement in delinquent activities between the four ethnic groups than self-report delinquency measures. However, in view of the relatively low validity of the police contact scales, they hardly constitute a substitute for the delinquency scales. On the basis of these results it is concluded that delinquency self-report measures are less valid for Turks and Moroccans than for Surinamese and indigenous Dutch boys.

While these results seem similar to those of Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis (1981), and Huizinga and Elliott (1984, 1986), who found that validity differed according to the ethnic group of the respondents, there is one difference worth noting: both studies were concerned with differences in validity between blacks and whites, and found self-reporting to be less valid for blacks. In The Netherlands the Surinamese boys are often 'black' or 'coloured', but they do not differ from the indigenous (= white) boys on the discrepancy measures. The groups with low validity are the Turks and Moroccans. The differences in validity therefore seem to follow cultural lines—Islamic versus non-Islamic—rather than ethnic lines, although there could be other factors particular to the immigrant situation of the Turks and Moroccans that explain their relatively low validity on the self-report delinquency scales.

As mentioned above, Elliott (1982) suggested that racial discrimination on the part of the police might also explain the differences in validity between ethnic groups. This seems unlikely in the Dutch context as it seems implausible that the police would discriminate against Turks and Moroccans but not against Surinamese.

I have argued elsewhere that arrest data probably offer the researcher an adequate measure of crime involvement in The Netherlands: racial discrimination does not seem to influence the construction of such data, even though at later stages in the judicial system there appears to be some evidence of racial discrimination (Junger 1988), and

data originating from later stages in the judicial process should therefore be treated with some caution. Similar conclusions have been reached by several American researchers (see e.g. Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis 1979; Gove, Hughe, and Geerken 1985; Petersilia 1985).

An attempt was made to find an explanation for the occurrence of discrepancies. To do this, seven independent variables which might be related to the occurrence of discrepancies were selected (mainly on the basis of the literature; see e.g. Petersilia 1978; Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weiss 1981). The hypothesis was that after controlling for these variables the influence of the variable 'ethnic group' would vanish.

Six of the variables may be considered 'background' variables. Three may be regarded as measures of the social bond to conventional institutions like the family and the school (see Hirschi 1969):

1. *School success*. Whether respondents had bad grades and had to repeat classes.
2. *Attitudes towards delinquent behaviour*. The strength of the bond to conventional attitudes rejecting delinquent activities.
3. *Traditionalism*: In the (Dutch) social science literature, people from Islamic countries are generally considered much more traditional than those from West European countries. Factors cited include religiosity, paternal authority, and the position of women. In this study traditionalism was measured by asking questions about women's role in society.⁷ The assumption was that strong bonds to the parental (Islamic) culture would lead to a high score on the traditionalism scale.

Two variables (one of them further subdivided, to give a total of three variables) related to the fact that ethnic minorities in The Netherlands might have special problems in answering a self-report interview:

4. *Language problems*. Respondents were asked to indicate their knowledge of the Dutch language.
5. *Fear of expulsion*. Respondents might be inhibited in admitting crimes from fear that (a) the police or (b) their parents would send them back to the home country.⁸

The final variable expected to be related to the likelihood of discrepancy was:

6. *Criminal record*: number of officially recorded crimes known to the police.

A step-wise regression analysis was performed, such that variables found to have no significant relation with the occurrence of discrepancies were not used in subsequent stages.⁹ Variables were then introduced as shown in Table 2: first the background variables, then 'number of officially recorded crimes', and finally the ethnic group.¹⁰ Subsequent analyses were performed on that part of the sample which was found to

⁷ The question being: 'Do your parents think that girls of 12 years or older should go to school, or should they stay at home to help in the household?'; 'What do you think about it?' 'Do your parents think that girls should be allowed to go out with boy-friends if they wish to?'; 'What do you think about it?'

⁸ On this variable, Dutch boys were given code 2 (namely, not afraid of expulsion), because otherwise it would have been impossible to perform the regression analyses for the four ethnic groups. Cross-table analysis on ethnic minority boys (i.e. without the Dutch boys) confirms the results presented in the regression analyses.

⁹ This was checked by cross-table analysis ($p > 0.05$).

¹⁰ 'Ethnic group' was employed as a categorical variable in the regression analysis by using CANALS, which computes new category scores which have a maximal correlation with another variable (see van der Burg and de Leeuw 1983). In our case, the variable ethnic group was related to the variable response error 'delinquency last year' and to response error 'police contacts last year', and was thus rescaled twice for the regression analyses predicting these response error measures.

TABLE 2 *Step-wise Regression Analysis Predicting Discrepancies between Self-Report and Official Data*

Variables added	Multiple R	Multiple R ²	Multiple R ² adj. ^a	Increase R ²	Beta	Corr.	T	Sign T
<i>Dependent variable: delinquency</i>								
1. Attitudes	0.40	0.16	0.15	0.16	0.30	0.40	2.98	0.004
2. Knowledge of Dutch	0.58	0.33	0.32	0.17	0.29	0.46	2.92	0.005
3. Fear of police	0.59	0.35	0.33	0.02	0.40	0.09	2.57	0.01
4. Fear of parents	0.62	0.38	0.35	0.03	-0.29	-0.02	-1.83	0.07
5. Traditionalism	0.65	0.42	0.38	0.04	0.19	0.40	2.11	0.04
6. Number of official police contacts	0.62	0.42	0.38	0.001	0.03	-0.16	0.33	0.74
7. Ethnic group	0.65	0.43	0.38	0.007	-0.11	-0.47	-0.97	0.34
<i>Dependent variable: police contacts</i>								
1. Attitudes	0.22	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.19	0.21	1.93	0.056
2. Knowledge of Dutch	0.27	0.07	0.05	0.02	0.07	0.12	0.73	0.47
3. Fear of police	0.45	0.21	0.18	0.13	0.39	0.30	2.15	0.03
4. Fear of parents	0.46	0.21	0.18	0.006	-0.08	0.21	-0.47	0.64
5. Number of official police contacts	0.50	0.25	0.21	0.04	-0.20	-0.35	-1.96	0.05
6. Ethnic group	0.52	0.27	0.21	0.01	-0.13	-0.27	-1.21	0.23

Note: Sample size=90, missing cases=4. For the codes of the variables see App 2.

$$^a R^2 \text{ adjusted} = R^2 - \frac{p(1-R^2)}{N-p-1}, \text{ with } p = \text{number of independent variables.}$$

have had official contacts with the police during the preceding year. The regression analysis for the 'ever' measures is not presented here as the results are broadly similar.¹¹ The findings are summarized below.

Prediction of discrepancy on delinquency

School success was unrelated to the occurrence of discrepancies and consequently was not used in the regression analysis. The findings with regard to the other variables were as follows:

1. Discrepancies occur relatively often when respondents have a strong bond to traditional cultural attitudes condemning delinquent behaviour.
2. Discrepancies are relatively frequent among boys whose knowledge of Dutch is more limited.
3. Respondents' fears that their parents would send them back to the home country was unrelated to the probability of a discrepancy between self-report and official data. Fear of expulsion by the police was related to the likelihood of discrepancy but in the opposite direction to what might be expected: boys expressing this fear admitted delinquent activities more often than boys without these fears. The reason for this is probably that 'fear of deportation' measures something other than what the researcher

¹¹ The results are broadly similar to those for the 'last year' measures, although the multiple correlation is lower ('delinquency ever': $R=0.43$, 'police contacts ever': $R=0.44$). This probably suggests that the influence of random error is larger due to memory problems because of the larger time lapse involved. It could also mean that the independent variables are less suited to predict the 'ever' measures than the 'last year' measures.

meant as it appears that boys expressing such fear also more often reject conventional attitudes ($r = -0.21$, $p < 0.05$) and feel less attached to traditional cultural elements ($r = -0.17$, $p < 0.05$) than boys without these fears. As one would expect on the basis of social control theory that boys with weak bonds to society generally have many police contacts, 'fear of the police' might measure instead 'conflicts with the police'.

4. As hypothesized, the rescaled variable 'ethnic group' does not add explained variance after controlling for the influence of the background variables and the number of police contacts.

Prediction of discrepancy on the 'police contacts'

Discrepancy in the case of police contacts was less strongly predicted than discrepancy in the case of delinquent behaviour ($R = 0.52$, $R^2 = 0.27$). Fewer variables were related, although in the same direction as for self-report delinquency. As with delinquency, boys feeling attached to conventional attitudes and without fear of deportation by the police ('no conflicts with the police') more often denied having police contacts than boys less attached to conventional attitudes and fearing deportation (namely, having conflicts with police).

In addition, highly delinquent boys (with many offences known to the police) tended to admit police contacts more often than less delinquent boys. This seems to be consistent with Petersilia's (1978) assertion that people are less likely to lie about unambiguous facts. By the same line of reasoning it seems plausible that respondents will be more likely to try to conceal one offence than many delinquent acts.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from these results. First, as in previous studies conducted in the United States (Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis 1981; Huizinga and Elliott 1984, 1986), the validity of self-report data was found to differ among several ethnic groups. However, unlike in the previous studies, the differences in validity did not separate ethnic categories (white versus coloured): in The Netherlands discrepancies were less likely to occur with indigenous (white) and Surinamese (partly black or coloured) respondents and more likely with Turkish and Moroccan boys (whose skin colour is usually only slightly darker than the indigenous population). It is therefore suggested that cultural categories (Islamic versus non-Islamic) are more relevant than ethnic group in predicting discrepancies. Another possibility is that factors associated with the immigrant situation are responsible for the relatively large discrepancies noted for the Turkish and Moroccan respondents. The fact that the variable 'knowledge of the Dutch language' is associated with the occurrence of discrepancies seems to underscore this last possibility.

Second, Elliott's (1982) suggestion that racial discrimination could explain the occurrence of differential validity seems unlikely. Third, self-report measures cannot be used to assess differences in crime involvement in these four ethnic groups as differences in validity are too large. Although these differences can be 'explained' using measures of the social bond (and number of registered contacts), it seems likely that arrest data would be a better measure of differences in involvement in relatively serious delinquent activities.

Fourth, results from Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis (1981) suggest that weak social bonds (bad results at school, involvement in serious delinquency) might explain many of the discrepancies. This study suggests, on the contrary, that the bond to society may affect the tendency to give socially desirable answers in the opposite direction: strong social bonds to conventional institutions often lead to denial of offences, while weak bonds mean that youngsters have fewer problems in 'confessing' delinquent acts. The more a person is socially well integrated, the more he might feel obliged to present an image of himself that corresponds to general expectations. Thus it seems logical that the more delinquent boys are the more inclined to admit delinquent activities.

This seems to indicate a problem for etiological research, as factors which social control theory would consider to be *causes* of delinquent behaviour (such as attitudes towards delinquent behaviour and traditionalism) appear to influence the tendency to *admit* delinquent behaviour. An extreme consequence would be that the relation found between the strength of the social bonds and delinquent behaviour might be spurious. In that case, the level of attachment to society would not affect the level of delinquency, but rather the tendency to admit it. Those with weak social bonds might admit delinquent behaviour whereas those with strong social bonds might not. Consequently, studies investigating different ethnic groups should check the social bonds–delinquency relation when delinquency is operationalized as 'having a registered police contact'.

Two cautionary points should be noted. First, it should be emphasized again that these results are based on a subsample of youngsters having official contacts, and generalization to the general population would need to be empirically verified. Second, there is a possibility that the findings result from an interviewer effect. As already mentioned, Teilmann (1976) found that the interviewers' race affected the reporting of delinquency: black respondents reported fewer crimes to white interviewers than to black interviewers. Interviewers were randomly assigned to the respondents, which should have made crime levels equal for all categories of interviewers. As a consequence it was assumed that higher self-reported crime rates meant more valid answers. However, the self-report information was not validated with arrest data (though all respondents were arrested at least once). While earlier studies (Nederhof 1985; Weiss 1977) have suggested that professional interviewers are well suited to interviewing ethnic minorities, which is why a professional interview bureau was used for this study, the possibility that interviewer effects are—partly—responsible for the results obtained cannot be excluded.

Overall the results seems to indicate that, in ethnic minority studies, arrest data are probably better indicators than self-report measures to evaluate crime involvement and should also be used in etiological research. However, future studies should try to check the effect of cultural factors on response in surveys and find out if (and how) they might be avoided.

APPENDIX I DELINQUENCY VARIABLES

Did you ever:

1. Not pay (enough) for public transportation?
2. Steal something worth 10 guilders or less?¹²
3. Steal something worth 10–100 guilders?
4. Steal something worth more than 100 guilders?
5. Steal something at school?

¹² 1 guilder = ±£0.30.

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6. Steal something from a car?
7. Steal a bicycle/motorcycle?
8. Steal something at home?
9. Do some 'joy-riding'?
10. Sell drugs?
11. Buy something which was probably stolen?
13. Threaten to use a knife or a gun to injure someone?
14. Actually beat or hit somebody?
15. Carry a gun?
16. Force a girl to have sex?
17. Destroy something which did not belong to you?
18. Have sex with another man for money?
19. Use hard drugs?

APPENDIX 2 CODES USED FOR VARIABLES INCLUDED IN THE REGRESSION ANALYSES

1. *Attitudes*: From not serious (-3) to very serious (2)
2. *Knowledge of Dutch*: 1, very good; 2, good; 3, average (all Dutch respondents were coded as 'very good')
3. *Fear of deportation*: 1, yes; 2, no.
4. *Fear of parents*: 1, yes; 2, no.
5. *Traditionalism*: From not traditional (-1) to very traditional (4).
6. *Number of official police contacts*: From 1 to *n*.
7. *Ethnic group*: Ethnic group was rescaled twice (via CANALS): first when the variable was related to discrepancies on the delinquency scale and second when it was related to discrepancies on the police contact scale. As a result there are two codes for each ethnic group (see also n. 10):
Discrepancies on the delinquency scale: Morocco -0.4; Turkey -1.2; Surinam 1.3; Netherlands 1.4.
Discrepancies on the police contact scale: Morocco 0.6; Turkey -1.5; Surinam 1.3; Netherlands -0.3.
Discrepancies (dependent variable): 0 no discrepancies; 1 discrepancies.

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