ABSTRACT. This article first discusses various dimensions of the social integration of minorities into society. The Netherlands is taken as an example, although research from other countries (such as the US and Sweden) is also taken into consideration. Useful concepts in this regard include the level to which these groups have social, informative and cultural capital that can help them to integrate into the dominant society. The second part considers the theoretical links between integration and criminal behaviour. The author assumes that the fundamental causal processes that lead to the development of criminality and other negative behaviour are independent of country of origin, ethnic group or the country of residence. In other words – that these processes, as they emerge in social control theory, have a universal character. In the second place, she assumes that differences in crime between ethnic groups are linked to group differences in socio-economic integration in the host country and in culture-related variables. Furthermore, there are also differences in the criminality of allochtonous youth within ethnic groups. These are similarly assumed to be linked to differences in commitment to social institutions such as family and school and to differences in accepting specific Western norms and values.

KEY WORDS: antisocial behaviour, ethnic minorities, integration policies, neighbourhoods, social control theory

INTRODUCTION

This article contains both a scientific and a policy perspective. I was not driven solely by scholarly curiosity, but also by the hope that, in the future, we will find better ways of integrating ethnic minorities in the Netherlands, of avoiding ethnic tensions and conflicts, of reducing the over-representation of some groups in criminal statistics, and of increasing equality before the law. The basic hypothesis of the research is that a lack of economic and social integration of ethnic minorities in our society can lead to criminal and antisocial behaviour. The article poses a number of questions relating to this fundamental hypothesis.

The first part of this article deals with the various dimensions of social integration into Dutch society, some of which are connected to characteristics of this society while others relate to the features of various ethnic
groups. Attention is given to group differences in integration processes. Useful concepts in this regard include the level to which these groups have social, informative and cultural capital that can help them to integrate into the dominant society. The second part considers the theoretical links between integration and criminal behaviour. I have attempted to develop a theoretical framework that could explain the different levels of involvement in crime between various ethnic groups and between individual juveniles in these groups. This framework draws on the separate theoretical perspectives that we hope to connect: social control theory, specific aspects of strain theory, new developments in the ecological approach to crime and the possible impact of cultural and individual variables.

**ETHNIC GROUPS**

What should we understand by the term ‘ethnic minorities’? According to a definition of the UN Sub-committee for the Protection of Ethnic Minorities in 1952, minorities are “non-dominant population groups with stable ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics and traditions that distinguish them from the rest of the population and that they wish to retain”. Another definition, also 50 years old (Wirth 1945), gives a stricter interpretation by referring to discrimination. According to this definition, a minority is “a group of people who, on the grounds of their physical or cultural characteristics in comparison to others in society, are subject to differentiating, unequal treatment and who thus regard themselves as the subject of collective discrimination”. Wirth proposes that the existence of a minority group in a society implies the existence of a corresponding dominant group possessing higher social status and more privileges. The status of minority entails exclusion from full participation in society (quoted in Yinger 1994).

The majority of Western countries have a number of ethnic minorities in their territories, including the following groups. Firstly, a number of relatively new nations such as the American continent, Australia and New Zealand have minorities descended from the original population within their borders. Furthermore, Western countries have always been in need of cheap labour and some ethnic groups are descendants from slaves imported for this purpose in the past. But by far the largest category of migrants comprises labour immigrants. Some groups were — and are still — recruited to meet the lack of (un)skilled labour, even today. Since 1950, 18 million immigrants have entered the United States, the majority of which have a non-European background. Around 15 million migrants came to Western Europe, most of whom were immigrant workers (Yinger 1994).
Southern Europeans were recruited by Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands. In the 1960s and 1970s, Turkish and Moroccan workers were brought in to work in such countries as Germany and the Netherlands. The majority of these immigrants have retained their original nationality.

Another important category concerns migrants from areas colonised in former times that move to the mother country generally in search of work and a better future. These groups (West Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in England and Surinamese in the Netherlands) often have the nationality of the host country. A growing group of immigrants wishes to flee poverty and unemployment. This is the case of the Mexican labourers in California most of whom do not have legal status (Maharidge 1996). In this regard it is important to note that, despite increasingly strict immigration laws, immigration based on economic grounds is still a gradual, continuous process to North America and Europe. This results in an increasing — and nigh impossible to quantify — number of illegal or ‘undocumented’ inhabitants in these parts of the world. In the Netherlands, a statistical method was applied, based on data on all registered arrests of illegal aliens in 1995 in the four major cities, giving a reasonably reliable estimate of the number of illegals staying there (Van der Leun et al. 1998). The illegals appeared to come from 120 different countries, the greatest groups being Moroccans and Turks. The estimate for the four major cities amounted to a minimum of 40,000 illegal aliens, the largest number (18,000) of which lived in Amsterdam. Finally, there are also those who, on political grounds, or because of oppression and war, have fled their country; a number of which return to their homelands once a democratic regime has come into power. In summary, ethnic minority groups can be characterised as follows:

— an ethno-cultural position different from that of the majority of the population;
— a low socio-economic position;
— groups that are too small-scale to have much (political) impact on policy;
— this unfavourable situation can continue for more than one generation.

The Integration of Ethnic Minorities into the Host Country

There are a number of concepts expressing certain policy requirements and processes with which a person becomes a full citizen of the host country. Assimilation is a term often used in American literature in particular. It

---

1Rotterdam 11,000; The Hague 8,400 and Utrecht 2,600.
means that practically all immigrants belonging to a certain group are fully absorbed into the population of the host country, in the sense that their descendants are no longer identified with their forbears, that they feel full citizens of the host country and that their own culture has practically disappeared and has been absorbed by that of the host country (Glazer 1997; Lucassen 1997). Some feel that a national minorities policy should work towards this goal and that assimilation should be the final result of successful participation in the new society. However, although the majority of immigrants cannot be distinguished from the original population, this is by no means always the case. Some groups such as the Chinese, Japanese, South Koreans and, in certain respects, the Jews, attempt to maintain and defend their own cultural and religious features despite extremely successful economic and, sometimes, political integration.

Another concept is social adaptation, often used in the case of asylum seekers and defined as “an active process that demands the immigrant’s effort and initiative” (Martens 1995). Adaptation places the greatest burden of this process on the shoulders of the immigrant and seems blind to the fact that successful participation in the host country requires an interactive process between the host society and the immigrant.

A third concept is social integration. In this respect, a distinction can be made between various dimensions of integration such as structural integration, socio-cultural integration (Vermeulen and Penninx 1994), and political and legal integration based on the principle of the equality of citizens before the law.

**Structural Integration**

Structural integration refers to the position of ethnic minorities with regard to education, the labour market, income and housing. In all Western countries, radical changes have swept through the labour market, whereby industrial production has been overtaken by a service economy. The requirements of personnel imposed by the labour market in this sector mean not only higher qualifications but greater flexibility, more social and communicative skills and a greater ability to adjust—in areas in which many ethnic youths are poorly skilled. The process of social exclusion is reinforced further by employers’ and personnel recruiters’ discriminatory stereotypes of ethnic staff. Confronted with this restriction of socio-economic integration opportunities, a number of young people from ethnic backgrounds reject some of the fundamental institutions in our society. They drop out of school early, work in irregular—and low-skilled—jobs or resort to crime.
The concept of structural integration fits well into what Entzinger refers to as ‘the Emancipation paradigm’ – a policy model that strives towards the collective strengthening of the economic position of ethnic minorities whereby their separate identity is respected (Entzinger 1996). This could also be called a ‘proportionality model’ because the goal is to arrive at an equal socio-economic position for all citizens, regardless of ethnic background or culture. In practice, this means that accessibility to social institutions should be improved so as to create equality of participation. In order to realise this and to reduce educational disadvantage and discrimination, long-term effort and support for ethnic minorities at national and local level is essential. Until recently, this was the dominant Dutch policy model.

In contrast to this model, however, Entzinger pits the liberal ‘naturalisation paradigm’ that assumes that the State offers all citizens equal access to social and economic resources. The essence of this paradigm is — in contrast to the proportionality model — that society equips all its citizens with the necessary skills to gain access to these resources. Ethnicity and cultural matters are seen as belonging to the private sphere and as such should not be the object of specific policy measures. In this individualistic model, the responsibility for improving the socio-economic situation of ethnic minorities is placed to a greater degree on their shoulders than on the State. In this regard, it closely resembles the Swedish ‘adjustment model’ (Martens 1995). It is this model that is currently replacing the former emancipation model and that will structure future policy in the Netherlands.

**Socio-Cultural Integration**

Socio-cultural integration involves participation in society’s institutions, the development of interpersonal contacts with members outside the group, and the degree to which the behavioural patterns of the host country are adopted. This process similarly implies the level to which the host country accepts the lifestyle and customs of ethnic groups (Lindo 1997). From another angle, Glazer believes that “the goal (of assimilation) is to make newcomers into citizens, to encourage them to take part in politics, to learn English, to break up immigrant colonies and teach them American customs [. . .]. This will lead to making immigrants better Americans” (Glazer 1997, p. 102). However, Glazer also remarks that the Americanisation and assimilation process fully excluded blacks until 1960, with disastrous effects in terms of segregation, employment, education, income and housing.

Socio-cultural integration can be measured by various indicators. Obvious indicators are segregation and language. Others are participation in
creative and social activities with non-group members, including inter-
group friendship and marriage. Another important factor is the level to
which fundamental Western values such as individual autonomy versus
group loyalty, respect for individual human rights, equality of the sexes
and Western views on fundamental values and goals in life, are accepted.
Socio-cultural integration, however, is also highly determined by the ac-
ceptance of minority groups by the host country and by a certain tolerance
for cultural differences. Both in Europe and the United States there are
indications that long-term discrimination and exclusion mechanisms in the
host country can result in a strong emphasis within groups of immigrants
being placed on their difference in terms of religion, culture, education and
language and even in forms of fundamental religious movements and ter-
rorism.

Another response to exclusion and marginalisation can be the develop-
ment of a criminal lifestyle. One illustration of this process is segregation,
which encourages isolation whereby contact with the population of the host
country is minimal. It discourages learning the language of the host coun-
try and thus reduces educational and career opportunities which in turn
reduces interaction with the population and with the culture of the host
country even further.  

One of the indicators of socio-cultural integration is inter-ethnic friend-
ship and another concerns the number of mixed marriages. This number
differs strongly per ethnic group. 80% of the Italian migrant workers in
the Netherlands married a Dutch partner, while the majority of Portuguese
labourers sought a partner from their own group. The number of mixed
marriages among the Surinamese is 40% (Van Heelsum 1997) which is
testament to the considerably greater integration into Dutch society of this
group compared to the Turks and Moroccans.

The importance of mixed marriages as a sign of socio-cultural integra-
tion is highlighted by a number of American statistics (Yinger 1994). This
figure is 30–40% for the autotochtonal (native Indian) group and Asian
immigrants while the large group of Latin-American ‘Hispanics’ varies
from 15 to 50% depending on the group. Entering into a mixed marriage
strongly depends upon the structural integration of the group. For exam-
ple, only 13.3% of the first generation of Mexican-American men mar-
rried a non-Mexican woman, while this figure was 23.4% for the second
generation of Mexican men and 30.2% for the third generation. The per-

---

2 According to Glazer, the black ghetto population in the US developed its own lan-
guage which is related to, but differs significantly from the American English spoken by
the members of the dominant society.
percentage was almost twice as high for men with high-status employment (40.4%) than for men with low-status employment (21.4%) (Mittelbach and Moore 1968). The only exception is again the black population with a percentage of mixed marriages varying from 2 to 6% (Yinger 1994; Glazer 1997).

**Political and Legal Integration**

Those emphasising the political and legal dimension state that ethnic minorities are considered second-class citizens by the government and citizens and as objects of discrimination and racism. To improve this situation, they argue for formal legal measures such as race laws, granting equal rights, reconsidering fundamental civil rights (freedom of religion), simplifying naturalisation procedures, granting political rights and special advisory bodies for ethnic minority groups on topics of particular importance to them (Galenkamp and Tempelman 1997).

A number of countries have developed specific laws following the American legal reforms, which have played an exemplary function. There is the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which assures equal rights for citizens; the Immigration Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 making discrimination in housing allocation illegal, and Affirmative Action which gave the black population in particular preferential treatment in the employment market (Glazer 1997). Canada introduced an Equal Opportunities Act which served as the model for a comparable Dutch Bill adopted by Parliament, which became law in 1994. The Dutch General Equal Treatment Act came into force in 1994 (Groenendijk 1998). In addition, Sweden and the Netherlands have granted limited political rights to foreigners resident in those countries for a considerable period, which allows them to take part in local elections. In the Netherlands, naturalisation has also been encouraged by simplifying the procedures and retaining the option of dual nationality.

However, the question is the extent to which these kinds of measures really stimulate integration. Some of these legal measures such as Affirmative Action have clearly resulted in positive advances (Bowen and Bok 1998) although the law provoked considerable resistance and has since been abolished in some American States.

**Group Differences in Successful Integration**

Some researchers feel that integration will occur anyway, regardless of any action taken—or not taken—to accelerate the process. They believe that it
is mainly a question of waiting until the problems of minorities resolve themselves (Glazer 1997; Martens 1995). For instance, Martens states that it takes immigrants in the Swedish welfare state 10 years to integrate into society. And according to Glazer, all groups of immigrants in the US — of which there are great numbers — ultimately become full American citizens in one or two generations, losing their own culture in the process. The only exception in this pattern is the black population, which has not yet become fully integrated.

The latter refers to an important empirical fact, namely the finding that some groups integrate considerably faster than others. Within one generation, they can scarcely be distinguished from the host country population in terms of economic, social and cultural aspects. Other groups are left behind, and live in segregated areas typified by poverty, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse and crime. This is the case for certain groups of Algerians and Moroccans in France, Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands, West Indians in England and blacks in the US. Furthermore, it is these groups that comprise the largest percentage of the prison population (Tonry 1995). Almost all other groups of immigrants have successfully been assimilated into American society (Yinger 1994). This even applies to Mexican Americans, despite their extremely low levels of education and vocational training on entering the country and despite the discrimination to which they are subjected. Nonetheless, they follow the normal integration process according to such indicators as language, training and mixed marriages. The same processes come into play for other Latin-American population groups. Only the black population remains lagging behind and scores exceptionally poor integration ratings.

In Western Europe there are comparable differences in the integration of minority groups. In Switzerland, Belgium and to a lesser extent in the Netherlands, large groups of Southern European workers entered these countries in the 1960s and 1970s and were put to work. Some of them — particularly the Portuguese — later returned to their homeland, but those who remained integrated with the host country society without many difficulties. One of the signs of this smooth integration process is shown by the fact that these groups are no more likely to become involved in crime than their indigenous counterparts (Junger-Tas 1976).

A Dutch study compared the integration of Southern European immigrants in the Netherlands with those of the Turkish group (Lindo 1997). In this regard, it is important to note that their initial respective economic situations were very similar: both groups came to the Netherlands at the start of the 1960s, the Southern European and Turkish fathers had similarly poor educational backgrounds and entered the country as migrant
labourers. The educational level and type of unskilled labour was also the same (Lindo and Penninx 1992). In fact, both groups had a similar position in the economic structure. At the end of the 1960s, both groups were still working as unskilled labourers in traditional industries. In the years that followed, however, a considerable number of Southern European workers improved their position. Some made the switch to the service sector, others improved their skills through re-schooling, and when the traditional industrial sector collapsed, they suffered less than their Turkish counterparts.

There are a number of factors that help to explain the relative success of the first generation of Southern Europeans. Firstly, their structural integration process ran more smoothly. Extra training probably led to less unemployment. This was far harder to realise for the Turkish groups because of a constant influx of new immigrants entering the country whilst the flow of Southern European immigration had stopped by this point. Cleaning jobs in the service sector did not mean economic progress but did mean that the Southern Europeans suffered less from unemployment. A second additional factor was that their housing situation was relatively good and, even more importantly, that the group was far less segregated than the Turkish group. A factor that had an impact both structurally and socio-culturally was the high participation in the labour market of first generation Southern European women in comparison to Turkish women, and the smaller size of Southern European families.

From the perspective of cultural integration it should be noted that they had a relatively open attitude to the dominant culture and even took the initiative in many cases to join Dutch socio-cultural organisations. This was not the case in the Turkish group that was characterised by strong internal social cohesion, effective social control mechanisms and an extremely critical view of Dutch culture. Southern European women were also successful in developing contacts with Dutch women both at work and in the community. Independently of the socio-economic situation of their parents or the type of marriage, the second generation Southern Europeans were particularly successful at school. Lindo suggests that this is mainly related to the high level of participation in the labour force by their mothers. Because of their contacts with the Dutch population, the mothers received a great deal of information about the Netherlands in general and the Dutch school system in particular, which equipped them to give their children more support and guidance in their school careers, leisure and sports activities. Without doubt, the equality of the sexes and influence of the mother on the children played an important role in the integration process.
However, it should be observed that the structural and socio-cultural starting point of the groups compared in the study were not as similar as first seemed to be the case. It is clear that, in comparison with the Turkish families, the Southern European families had a more positive attitude to learning new skills, and had more egalitarian views on the position of women – which is why women could play both an economic and parenting role – and were more open to the Dutch culture.

According to Martens (1995), whilst the integration of newcomers is not only completed within 10 years, the Swedish crime figures show that second generation immigrants commit less crime than the first generation\(^3\). In this regard, the great diversity and the specific nature of the immigrants in every European country is a key factor. For example, two thirds of Sweden’s immigrants originate from other Scandinavian and European countries. The minor cultural chasm between these immigrants and the Swedish population — in some ways comparable to that of Southern Europeans in Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands — seems to play a significant part in explaining the favourable and rapid integration process.

**Ethnic Minorities and Crime**

The criminological perspective in this article is essentially based on social control theory. This perspective was chosen based on the assumption that this theoretical perspective offers an adequate framework for researching delinquent behaviour among juveniles from ethnic backgrounds. The assumption is that the fundamental causal processes leading to criminality are independent of the ethnic culture or of the culture of the host country. We return to this explanatory model later. However, we added a number of key dimensions to the social control theory.

In the first place, these include aspects of strain theory that pays specific attention to social and economic structural variables forming the context within which many ethnic youths grow up. In recent research testing the theory, it was found, that structural factors may have a weak direct link to crime but primarily influence parenting skills and potential — in other words, social bonding factors (Sampson and Laub 1993). In addition, Sampson and colleagues (1997) and Wikström (1998) were the main players in breathing new life into the ecological approach of Shaw and McKay

---

and their findings are interesting with regard to the situation of ethnic minorities in so-called ‘concentration areas’. Both dimensions were neglected by classic social control theory and should really be included in an explanatory model that is then put to the test. Finally, specific cultural and individual elements can impede successful integration in society and thus relate to crime. Below, we examine this model in further detail, indicating the extent to which we follow or reject classic strain theory and (sub)cultural theory.

Social Control Theory

Social control theory was developed in the 1950s and 1960s and was then systematised by Travis Hirschi (1969) and later considerably expanded (Sampson and Laub 1993; Samson et al. 1997; Wikström 1998; Sampson et al. 1999). The central question in social control theory is not why people violate rules but rather ‘why do people respect the rules and norms of society?’ The question inevitably implies a vision of the way that people function in society and the motives for human actions. According to Hirschi, every person has needs, desires and aspirations that are in themselves neutral. Everyone wants to have certain material goods, to be recognised by and share status with his equals, and to have a degree of safety. It is the way in which people try to achieve these objectives that can be antisocial. The relationship of the individual to society determines the degree to which he will respect norms and rules (Reckless 1961; Matza 1964). In this perspective, what people can win or lose by respecting the rules is essential.

The nurturing process designed to lead individuals to conform to societal norms is referred to as ‘bonding’ young people to society. In general terms, ‘bonding’ takes place via a two-part approach. Direct external control is exercised by means of consistent, informal social control of the behaviour of young people and negative responses to deviant behaviour. Indirect control operates through rewarding conformist behaviour and by so doing, gives youngsters an incentive to continue such behaviour. Some have referred to this as ‘commitment to conformity’ (Briar and Piliavin 1965). Powerful, internalised social controls are realised by the transferral of norms from both formal and informal social institutions such as the family, school, church, and youth club or sports club. To the extent that parents more emphatically represent conventional culture and the child has internalised these norms, it is protected against involvement in crime.

The internalisation of conventional values and norms is not a matter of course, however – a number of conditions must be satisfied. In the family,
this is the positive bond or relationship that develops between children and parents. But another important factor is that parents do understand what is required for their children to function well in society. In addition, they must be able to guide their children in this process — which is referred to as ‘monitoring’. Internal controls that are encouraged along these lines include self control, a positive self image, high frustration tolerance and a sense of responsibility (Reckless 1961). As far as the school and workplace are concerned, it is essentially school achievement and performance that determines involvement in conventional behaviour and plans for the future, and protects against antisocial activities.

In brief, young people who have good relationships with their parents, and succeed at school and work, stand to lose a great deal from involvement in crime and deviant behaviour. Such behaviour is very risky and involves enormous social costs: people could lose the respect of their family, may be rejected by their social environment or no longer be accepted by leisure or sports organisations. All these factors are coupled to a major loss of social status. If bonds with the family are weak and fundamental social sub-systems function poorly (school and workplace), if conventional norm-respecting behaviour yields no incentives in the form of respect, status, income and security, then young people will have scant regard for what society expects of them or for how they are perceived by conventional ‘others’. In such cases, a juvenile will only be motivated by what he sees as his own immediate interests. He will no longer feel bound or restricted by the values and norms of society and will feel free to attain his own goals through other — possibly criminal — means. Classic social control theory (Hirschi 1969) identifies four elements that structure bonds with society.

- Young people’s attachment to significant others. This means that internalising norms, also referred to as a conscience, take place through the bonds that the child has with persons important to him. As Durkheim said “we are moral beings to the extent that we are social beings” (Durkheim 1961). Significant persons are generally and in the first place the parents but could also be others such as a teacher or sports coach or a good friend.

- The commitment of young people to conventional subsystems. According to Hirschi this is the rational component of conformist behaviour. It means that, on the basis of ‘common sense’ considerations someone weighs up the pros and cons of delinquent and other high-risk behaviour. If these systems function well, the individual will receive great in-
The term integration is used in preference to adaptation (Martens 1995). Adaptation suggests that the efforts to function well in the host country must come exclusively from the side of the immigrant while integration also assumes the commitment of the host country.

Adaptation suggests that the efforts to function well in the host country must come exclusively from the side of the immigrant while integration also assumes the commitment of the host country. Ambitions and aspirations also reinforce conformist behaviour and make antisocial conduct increasingly high risk.

- The active functioning of the individual in conventional subsystems (involvement). The idea is that the more time, energy and attention given to this aspect, the less likelihood of considering antisocial behaviour.
- Belief in the moral values and norms and values of society. This belief assumes that the norms and values, although probably shared by most people, are supported to varying degrees. If bonding with the conventional order is weak, individuals will be more likely to turn to antisocial behaviour, regardless of the extent to which they support the values of society (in abstracto).

Social control theory is one of the most empirically tested criminology theories, both in the US and outside and is largely confirmed by the facts. Furthermore, there are indications that the theory also applies to population groups other than white (middle class) juveniles (Junger 1990) which renders it extremely effective for studying youngsters from ethnic minorities.

Although the term ‘social control’ is commonly accepted within the scientific community, it is strongly reminiscent of citizen-citizen control as though the external control mechanism is the pre-eminent tool used by society to ensure that its members behave in accordance with the law. This implication is unfortunate because obeying the law does not precede but greatly depends on the result of successful social, economic and cultural integration in society. By social and economic integration we understand this to be successful participation in economic and social life which means that people are employed, earn sufficient income, enjoy a certain status and take part in social and sports activities in the community. If we want people to follow the law they must derive certain gains from so doing. In other words, norm-conformist behaviour requires certain social and economic incentives that breaching the law cannot offer. Moreover, good integration requires reciprocity: positive social integration can only result from targeted action not only on the part of individual families, but on the part of government and institutions as well.
The Social Context: Strain Theory and the Ecological Approach

A substantial criticism against social control theory is its micro and meso character. The social control theory as developed by Hirschi (1969) is restricted to the immediate environment of the young people and does not include the broader perspective of the socio-economic organisation of society. Thus, the theory takes no account of the given fact that families and children live under extremely disparate social and economic circumstances (Box 1981; Kornhauser 1978). The social class and ethnic structure of society and its geographic distribution are barely involved in considerations.

The strain theory developed by Merton (1957) and further elaborated by Cloward and Ohlin (1960) is based in essence on the idea that, if children are taught that the most important thing in life is social success—expressed in wealth, possessions and social status—and these children are then denied the opportunity of reaching these goals through legally prescribed routes, tensions and frustrations will result in children attempting to reach these goals by any routes open to them, including crime if necessary. Criminality is then seen as a response to frustrated social objectives, assuming that social bonding processes are constant but that strain and stress factors vary. However, this basic idea is not supported by empirical research. Moreover, “people don’t need to be indoctrinated by their culture to want more comfort, more economic security, the recognition of their equals and more control over their lives” (Kornhauser 1978, p. 169). Although it has been shown that socio-structural background factors are crucial, the assumption is, as shown by Laub and Sampson (1993), that they relate to crime in indirect ways, via social bonding processes.

Kornhauser indicated the importance of the ecological approach, stating that in disintegrated neighbourhoods, residents are not capable of realising their shared norms and values because they cannot exercise the social control required to do so. Given that the environment and living conditions of families can have a great impact on the ability of parents to bring up their children, on the successful participation of their children in social institutions and thus on their social bonding with society (Sampson and Laub 1993), the lack of this dimension in classic social control theory is a shortcoming. In this sense, social control theory is far more a sociopsychological than a sociological theory.

Recent research has also thrown more light upon the impact of neighbourhood variables on crime (Sampson et al. 1997). This is based on the concept of ‘collective efficacy’ or social control that connects social cohesion in a neighbourhood, as a function of mutual trust and solidarity,
with the willingness of people to enforce norms of behaviour. Sampson and colleagues analysed the connection between living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with a significant turnover of the population and the amount of violent crime, in 343 districts of Chicago. The research is of immense importance because 8,782 local residents were personally interviewed at home so that the informal social control of children, social cohesion and victim levels in the area could be measured. Neighbourhoods varied in levels of poverty and ethnicity of residents, numbers of immigrants, labour market, age, family structure, family, house ownership and population stability. The research showed that a large number of socioeconomic disadvantages in the area, concentration of minorities and a large turnover of population related negatively to social control in the community and positively to the level of violent crime. Further analyses demonstrated that other social factors such as local services, friendship and family ties bore a negative relation to the levels of violence. The extent of social control exercised (collective efficacy) was, however, the strongest predictor. The survey also showed that social control, far more than ethnicity, is a mediating variable in disadvantage. In a further elaboration of this data, particular attention was given to the way in which social control of children in a neighbourhood takes place (Sampson et al. 1999). The basic starting point is that social control of children is not simply exercised by their parents and within the family but also through what Coleman calls “social capital” (Coleman 1988). This is not a characteristic of individual persons but relates to the social organisation of the neighbourhood that comprises three dimensions.

The first dimension could be referred to as *intergenerational closure*. This means that the parents, apart from numerous contacts with their children, also maintain contact with other parents in the area, particularly with the parents of their children’s friends. The second dimension is *reciprocated exchange* which refers to the content of exchanges between parents (they may give each other material support but also information on child-rearing and so offer each other and their children social support). The third dimension refers to *informal social control and mutual support*. The authors emphasise that this not only involves shared norms relating to acceptable child behaviour but determines willingness to enforce these norms if required. This does not require local residents to have strong personal ties — it is sufficient that people share specific standards regarding local behaviour and a pleasant community and are prepared to take action to maintain these norms and values. It is clear that the ability of communities to realise such quality of life varies. For example, the problem with regard to disadvantaged communities with a concentration of negative
factors means that poverty, minority status and single parenting can lead to isolation. This means that social resources, as described above, remain inaccessible and people’s lives are dominated by (economic) dependence, suspicion, fear of strangers and fear of crime. In such districts, it is extraordinarily difficult to exercise effective social control of children in a collective process. So it should be no surprise that the research discovered considerably more contact and exchange between parents – thus more social control – in stable and affluent areas than in poor, segregated areas.

Although criminological studies have demonstrated that communities differ with regard to crime figures, the question as to whether this is due to a concentration of criminal individuals in certain areas or – at least partly – to factors relating to the community context, has received no clear answer. In an attempt to answer this question, Wikström (1998) researched the association between a number of individual risk factors (lack of parental supervision, lack of school motivation, delinquent friends and a positive attitude towards delinquency), a number of characteristics of the neighbourhood (SES and the presence of subsidised housing) and serious crime (car theft, burglary, strong-arming, serious threats, forced sex and drugs selling). Wikström’s results are shown in Table I. As expected, more youngsters in poor rather than prosperous districts were found to have little parental supervision, delinquent friends, a negative attitude towards school and a positive attitude towards delinquency.

There seems to be a clear link between the number of risk factors and serious criminal behaviour in all neighbourhoods with the exception of one. In disadvantaged districts with subsidised housing, no relationship was found between the number of risk factors and serious delinquency. This means that in these areas, the impact of neighbourhood factors on the behaviour of youngsters is considerably stronger than that of individual risk factors. This influence is particularly strong if there are no, or only one or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual risk factors</th>
<th>Neighbourhood characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1—2</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3—6</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

two, high risk factors. If there is a number of high risk factors, there is no difference in criminality between communities.

The results suggest that there is a number of neighbourhood factors that, if there is sufficient concentration, can have enormous impact on the behaviour of young people. Here, it should be noted that the influence depends on the presence of possible risk factors in the child and in the family. These results are of great importance for research on the high crime figures among ethnic groups, in particular in the light of increasing segregation processes in European cities. A concentration of a run-down area, poverty and lack of prospects results in growing isolation in society (Wilson 1987). Given that people no longer believe in the inherent rightness of the system, central values such as a good education, hard work, ambition, honesty and independence are no longer accepted (Rank and Hirschi 1988). Contacts with young people of ethnic backgrounds bring frustrations, bitterness and anger to the fore. Living on social benefits, antisocial and criminal behaviour are seen as acceptable forms of calculating, profit-seeking behaviour and not as ways of life to be avoided.

Individual Factors

It was argued earlier that social bonding and integration must be learnt and are influenced by important structural background and community factors. However, this also applies to the individual children and young people exposed to the socialisation processes of family, school and peer group. They are not clean slates, bringing with them a range of individual and situational characteristics. During the last 10 to 15 years, much research has been conducted into the influence of individual and family factors that can form a risk to the development of delinquent and problem behaviour (Loeber and Dishon 1983; Farrington 1986, 1987, 1988; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 1986; Farrington and West 1990; Hirschi 1994). In this respect, a key question is just how far we can explain later unfavourable results directly because of individual high risk factors or the intervention of social bonding processes.

A number of individual high-risk factors are entirely or partially innate such as temperament, impulsiveness, intelligence and hyperactivity (ADHD). Moreover, some factors such as aggressive behaviour and antisocial behaviour at an early age are very stable qualities that have great impact on later behaviour (Olweus 1979; Huesmann et al. 1984; Loeber 1991). These factors can result in behavioural problems in the family and to learning problems and problem behaviour at school (Barnum 1987). This disturbs the bonding or integration process made explicit in social control
theory which could lead to antisocial behaviour and various types of high-risk behaviour. Although the scientific community agrees that inherited factors bear a weak relationship to delinquency at best (Rutter and Giller 1983; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 1986), antisocial behaviour at school can, for example, mean that children are rejected at school with a poor school career as a result. This failure makes them susceptible to associating with other marginalised and deviant friends as well as psychosocial disturbances such as depression (Patterson 1994).

It is certainly not the case that all children suffering from behavioural problems will later develop delinquent behaviour. The majority of children ‘grow out of it’ on reaching adulthood. However, certain unfavourable circumstances can be identified such as when children exhibit problem behaviour on more fronts, both at home and school – when the problem behaviour is frequent and intense and when children exhibit various types of antisocial behaviour – such as theft and aggression (Loeber 1987, 1991). Where individual and situational variables are concerned, we assume that these influence, and are influenced by, social bonding processes in the family and with school, friends and leisure activities. It is also possible that these factors have a direct impact on antisocial and problem behaviour.

The Cultural Dimension

Up to now, criminological factors have been discussed that are unrelated to specific ethnic cultures, and may form a universal framework. Finally, we shall now discuss a number of (sub)cultural theories that pay attention to the differences between ethnic groups.

The (sub)cultural theories assume that in our highly differentiated and heterogeneous society many conflicting subcultures exist, each with their own value systems. In some cases, that system will contain values regarded as criminal by the ‘dominant’ culture. However, the members do act in accordance with the values and norms of their own subculture (Sellin 1938). These theoreticians assume that man is so elastic and flexible that culture can make ‘everything out of him’. Later, Sutherland and Cressey (1955) also assumed that crime is the result of conflicts of values, not of interests. Young people supposedly develop into delinquents through many repeated and intensive interactions and integration in groups with a delinquent value system. But this approach seems too simplistic.

Although empirical research has shown that delinquent peers play a considerable role in causing criminal behaviour, this is not the only, and probably not the key explanatory factor. In this regard, Kornhauser points
out that this way of thinking does not distinguish between culture and social structure: conflicts are not created by clashes between cultures but by the differential distribution of such things as power and wealth over different social positions (Kornhauser 1978, p. 37). However, it is true that culture-related variables can have an indirect impact on the development of crime because their influence on the socialisation process can increase problems in the social integration of young people into the community.

From this perspective, important values include traditionalism – for example in religious beliefs – versus modernism, respect for authority versus democratic decisions, individualisation versus group loyalty, views on achievement at school and at work, ambitions and aspirations, discipline and postponing immediate gratification, views on marriage and the role of women in public life. In this respect, the assumption is that differences in social and economic participation and in culture-linked variables between the host country and migrant groups and within these groups, may contribute in explaining differences in criminal participation.

Cultural views are of course not static, they change under the influence of the environment and living conditions. Pels (1998), for example, indicates differences in opinions on parenting between first generation Moroccan mothers and those of younger generations which make her somewhat optimistic with regard to future developments. However, her study does not explain the lack of supervision and control of young children and of adolescents (Junger and Steehouwer 1990; Van der Hoek 1994). With respect to the development of criminal behaviour, supervision is extremely important parenting behaviour (Hirschi 1969; Rutter and Giller 1983; Riley and Shaw 1985; Farrington 1986; Junger-Tas 1988).

Educational research also shows the extent to which the views and behaviour of Turkish and Moroccan parents on the respective role of family and school and the Dutch language, can influence their children’s school career. Factors relating to success in junior school education – followed by secondary education – include the openness of the family to Dutch society, stimulating contacts with Dutch children and speaking the Dutch language, using cultural facilities such as the library, attending a mixed school – rather than a ‘black’ school – and having good contacts with teachers (Crul 2000). This is of equally great importance in the light of the finding that failure at school is a strong predictor of delinquency. Veenman (1996a, b) found that Turkish youth were often not encouraged to learn because it is more important for young Turkish males to find work to support a family than to continue their education. This resulted in a huge
number of early school drop-outs who endured higher rates of unemploy-
ment and some turned to crime to supplement their income. For Moroc-
can youth, the worlds of parents and children are emphatically separate
(Pels 1991; Van der Hoek 1994). Children at primary school spend a great
deal of time with their peers without any adult supervision. As a result,
they have far greater freedom than Dutch children. Moreover, parents feel
that when young men (as opposed to girls) enter puberty, this marks the
factual end of parenting.

The enormous freedom goes hand in hand with a hedonistic youth cul-
ture. Participation in that culture entails considerable financial costs pres-
surising youth to leave school early to generate income either on the black
market or by means of criminal activities. Matza (1964) described this as
a ‘drifting’ process whereby the lack of formal social control of boys – as
opposed to girls – results in truancy, school drop-out, boredom and hang-
ing around with other marginalised youth. Committing ‘minor’ criminal
acts is encouraged and boys quickly learn that there are alternatives to
employment that generate a reasonable income. The immense group pres-
sure to take part in the consumer youth culture facilitates this process
(Elliott and Menard 1996). Motorbike and bicycle theft, fencing stolen
goods, and dealing in drugs are popular criminal activities whereby drug-
dealing in particular guarantees a substantial income. Criminal activi-
ties rival normal employment because they have a higher short-term yield.
The criminal lifestyle will only be abandoned once the cost–benefit bal-
ance is negative, for instance because of repeated detention or when it jeop-
dardises a permanent relationship or future marriage.

In a re-analysis of her original self-report survey among Moroccan,
Turkish, Surinamese and Dutch youth, Junger et al. (forthcoming) re-
searched the extent to which a number of social control variables such as
a certain traditionalism (opinions about the participation of girls in edu-
cation, the degree to which the family speaks Dutch and the question of
whether one expects to return to the homeland) and religiosity (following
dietary rules, compliance with Ramadan and visiting the mosque) are re-
lated to serious and violent behaviour and to police contacts. The analysis
showed that young people in families typified by numerous conflicts and
little supervision and communication, who experience behavioural prob-
lems at school, and who see crime as less serious, are less traditional and
religious and spend a great deal of free time outside the home, commit more
serious crimes than juveniles to whom this does not apply. A striking re-
sult is that the variable ‘ethnic group’ added no explanatory variance to
predicting serious crime.
The question is where do the theoretical notions and concepts and the empirical tests that they gave rise to, actually lead. In other words, how can they form a touchstone for greater understanding of the parenting and societal processes responsible for a disproportionate number of members of ethnic groups becoming the ‘losers’ of our society – as school drop-outs, unemployed, criminals and victims of crimes and physical and mental illnesses. If the government wishes to take more effective action in this area, it is crucial to arrive at a clear understanding, not only of possibly isolated causes explaining why juveniles go off the rails but of the interrelatedness and interactions of these causes. Hence the attempt to arrive at an insightful, clear and integrated theoretical model that builds on the empirically tested theories outlined above and on relevant empirical findings drawn from anthropology, sociology and psychology (see Figure 1).

In the first place, we assume that the fundamental causal processes that lead to the development of criminality and other negative behaviour are independent of country of origin, ethnic group or the country of residence. In other words, we expect that these processes, as they emerge in the social control theory, have a universal character.

In the second place, we assume that differences in crime between ethnic groups is linked to group differences in socio-economic integration in the host country and in culture-related variables. Furthermore, there are also differences in criminality of allochtonous youth within ethnic groups. These are similarly assumed to be linked to differences in commitment to...
social institutions such as family and school and to differences in accepting specific Western norms and values. This means that stronger social bonding and a certain acceptance of Western norms and values will go together with more social integration and less crime, while poor bonding and the rejection or selective acceptance of fundamental Western values such as a combination of school drop-out and the simultaneous wish to participate in the consumer youth culture, will go hand in hand with more delinquency. The area in which juveniles live can play an important role because neighbourhoods differ in social cohesion, thus in the level to which they can exert informal social control on the children and young people living there and similarly in offering them the opportunity of obtaining a legal or illegal income.

Furthermore, based on the research data of Sampson and Laub (1993) and Sampson et al. (1997), we assume that structural social, economic and demographic factors are not directly linked to crime but that this link is indirect and is forged via the nature and scale of social bonding processes.

Finally, we expect that individual and situational factors are directly linked to criminal behaviour and also via the intermediate role of social bonding processes. These hypotheses led to a conceptual model as shown in Figure 1, whereby the arrows indicate the direction of the supposed relationships, as well as possible interactions. In addition to crime, dependent variables include high-risk behaviour such as excessive alcohol consumption, gambling and drug use and falling victim to crimes.

REFERENCES


---

Honorary Doctorate University of Lausanne
University of Leiden, E.M. Meijers Institute
University of Lausanne, School of Forensic Science and Criminology
Parsifalstraat 9
2555 WG The Hague
The Netherlands
E-mail: j.tas@wodc.minjust.nl