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### Risk and needs assessment for juvenile delinquents

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# Chapter 4

## **Ethnic differences in the prevalence and impact of risk factors for recidivism**

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In Revision, *Crime & Delinquency*.

## Abstract

This study examined to what extent the prevalence and importance of risk factors for recidivism differ in various ethnic groups in the Netherlands. The data of 1,136 adolescents who committed a criminal offense were analyzed. The results showed that there are considerable differences in the impact of risk factors on recidivism between ethnic majority youth and the four largest ethnic minority youth groups in the Netherlands. In the case of ethnic majority youth, there was a link between recidivism and risk factors in most domains (family, school, friends, use of free time and mental health), while only a small number of risk factors were linked to recidivism among minority youth. Consequently, interventions aimed at these factors are possibly less effective for minority youth.

## 4.1 Introduction

A great deal of literature is available on ethnic differences in criminality, with a focus on ethnic differences in the prevalence of delinquency (Loeber & Farrington, 2004). For many years there has been an over-representation of ethnic minority youth groups in the criminal justice system, both in the Netherlands (e.g., Bijl, Blom, Oudhof, & Bakker, 2006; De Jonge & Van der Linden, 2007; Jennissen & Blom, 2007; Stevens, Veen, & Vollebergh, 2009) and in other high developed Western countries (e.g., Hagan & Palloni, 1999; Rodney & Tachia, 2004; Sampson, Morenoff, & Raudenbush, 2005). There is, however, much less research on whether delinquency among different ethnic groups has the same causes (Loeber & Farrington, 2004). This knowledge is important in order to be able to prevent juveniles from (re)offending and develop efficacious penal interventions for adolescent offenders from various cultural backgrounds.

In the Netherlands, four 'traditional' ethnic-minority groups are strongly represented in the criminal justice system: Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese and Antillean (Blom & Van der Laan, 2007; De Jonge & Van der Linden, 2007; Jennissen & Blom, 2007; Klooster, Van Hoek, & Van 't Hoff, 1999). Research shows that all groups are significantly more likely than ethnic majority youth to be considered as a suspect in an offense. This applies to both the first and second generations, and to juveniles as well as adults (Jennissen & Blom, 2007; De Jonge & Van der Linden, 2007). Moroccan and Antillean juveniles are particularly notable: in 2005, the number of charges was five times higher for Moroccans and almost six times higher for Antilleans than for native Dutch juveniles (Blom & Van der Laan, 2007; Stevens et al., 2009; Kleijer-Kool, 2006). There is no consensus among researchers regarding the extent to which the differences in official data on criminality are a reflection of actual differences in criminality between ethnic groups, or whether they reflect a difference in the approaches of judicial authorities (Devine, Coolbaugh, & Jenkins, 1998; Lauritsen, 2003; Loeber & Farrington, 2004).

There are two types of explanation for variations in delinquency between ethnic groups. The first explanation is that the risk factors for delinquency *vary* depending on ethnic background, i.e. the risk factors are ethnic-specific (Farrington, Loeber, & Stouthammer-Loeber, 2003). These ethnic specific risk factors include poor integration, lack of engagement with society, and a sense of discrimination (Bijl et al., 2006; Stevens et al., 2009). In addition, there are specific risk factors relating to family functioning. The parents of ethnic minority youth are not able to support and prepare them fully for an integrated life in Dutch society due to their lack of knowledge of the dominant culture (Deković, Pels, & Model, 2006). The parents of ethnic minority youth may also have different values regarding upbringing. This means that young

people experience differences between standards and values within and outside the home, which can lead to more conflicts within the family (Deković & Asscher, 2008). The second explanation is that risk factors for criminality are *the same* for all ethnic groups (generic risk factors). However, because the 'baseline values' vary, criminality also varies (Rowe, Vazsonyi, & Flannery, 1994). This explanation assumes that the over-representation of minority youth in the criminal justice system can be attributed to the existence of certain risk factors that are more common among ethnic minority youth than among ethnic majority youth. Examples are demographic and socioeconomic risk factors that are more common among ethnic minority youth, such as growing up in large families, having parents with a low level of education, and living in deprived areas (Bijl et al., 2006; De Jonge & Van der Linden, 2007; Hulst & Bos, 1993; Jennissen & Blom, 2007).

In sum, ethnic minority youth are exposed more often than ethnic majority youth to specific as well as generic risk factors that increase the likelihood of antisocial behavior. The question remains, however, whether the impact of these factors is the same (Deković & Asscher, 2008). It is often assumed that theories explaining the relation between risk factors and delinquent behavior that are based on research among ethnic-majority youth can be generalised to juveniles from ethnic minority groups, but little research has been done on this to date (Deković, Janssens, & As, 2007). There are indications that the effects of risk factors vary from group to group (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, research has shown that the patterns of links between risk factors in the family and externalising problem behavior in children are different in Caucasian American and African American families: there is a negative link between corporal punishment and problem behavior in middle-class Caucasian American families, but not in African American families (Lansford, Deater-Decker, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004). Other research, however, shows that the processes that contribute to problem behavior are the same for Caucasian American and African American adolescents (Goldstein, Davies-Kean, & Eccles, 2005). Various studies have shown that theoretical models based on research in white Caucasian samples are adequate for predicting antisocial behavior among ethnic majority youth in high developed Western countries, but are less adequate for predicting antisocial behavior among ethnic minority youth in these countries (Chen, Greenberter, Lester, Dong, & Guo, 1998; Deković, Wissink, & Meijer, 2004; Murad, Joung, Lenthe, Bengi-Arsal, & Crijnen, 2003; Stevens, 2004).

Hence there are indications that a number of risk factors for delinquency are ethnic-specific and that risk factors do have a different impact in ethnic majority and minority youth. This raises the question as to whether penal interventions are equally effective for ethnic majority and minority youth. The effect of a penal intervention is supposed to be largest if it is geared to risk factors with the strongest link to the de-

velopment and persistence of delinquent behavior (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Deković & Asscher, 2008). If the impact of risk factors varies between ethnic majority and minority youth, it is plausible to suggest that the effectiveness of interventions directed at these risk factors will also vary. To date, there are no data on potential differences in the effectiveness of interventions for ethnic minority and majority groups in the Netherlands (Deković & Asscher, 2008). At international level too, few research is available (Huey & Polo, 2008). Wilson et al. (2003) carried out a meta-analysis to examine whether mainstream programmes for juvenile delinquency are less effective for ethnic minority youth than for ethnic majority youth. The average effect size of these programmes turned out to be larger for majority youth than for minority youth, but the difference was not significant. A point of caution with these results, however, is that the average effect size of the reviewed programmes was rather low, namely  $d = .11$  for minority youth and  $d = .17$  for majority youth. American research has also shown that interventions that are culture-sensitive are more successful in terms of involving ethnic minorities in an intervention and keeping them involved, but these interventions do not lead to greater effectiveness (Kumpfer, Alvarado, Smith, & Bellamy, 2002). Finally, research conducted outside the Netherlands, especially in the United States, is only of limited relevance due to the wide cultural differences between American and Dutch ethnic minorities.

The present study examined to what extent risk factors for recidivism differ between Dutch, Moroccan, Surinamese, Turkish and Antillean juveniles. This knowledge is crucial to obtain more insight into the potential effect of penal interventions in different ethnic groups. In addition, the study examined the extent to which there are differences in delinquent behavior and risks for committing a re-offense. The following research questions are examined in this study:

1. Are there differences between ethnic groups in the level and type of recidivism?
2. Are there ethnic differences in the prevalence and impact of *static* risk factors?
3. Are there ethnic differences in the primary motives for committing offenses?
4. Are there ethnic differences in the prevalence and impact of *dynamic* risk factors?
5. Does Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese and Antillean ethnicity make a unique contribution to the prediction of recidivism after controlling for static and dynamic risk factors?

## 4.2 Method

### 4.2.1 Subjects

The sample included 1,136 adolescents in the age range of 12 to 18 years who have committed a criminal offense and who have been referred to the Council of Child

Care and Protection. The Council of Child Care and Protection gives advice to judicial authorities as to what penalty to impose. The random sample was drawn from the population of adolescents reported to five large branches of the Child Protection Board in 2005. This sample contained juveniles from the following ethnic groups: Dutch ( $n = 542$ ), Moroccan ( $n = 292$ ), Surinamese ( $n = 133$ ), Turkish ( $n = 97$ ) and Antillean ( $n = 72$ ).

#### 4.2.2 Instruments

*Washington State Juvenile Court Pre-Screen Assessment (WSJCPA)*. The WSJCPA is a risk assessment instrument developed and validated in the United States, which estimates the chances of recidivism by juvenile delinquents based on the most important predictors from the criminal and social domain (Barnoski, 2004a). For this study a Dutch translation of the WSJCPA has been used, which was slightly adapted for use in The Netherlands (Van der Put et al., 2009). Items from the criminal domain concern: age at first judicial contact, prior judicial contact, prior community service, prior detention, prior violence offense, prior offense against property, seriousness of the current offense<sup>2</sup>, type of current offense, and settlement current offense. Items from the social domain include problems concerning friends (association with deviant friends, like friends who have had contact with the police before), use of free time (lack of occupation during the day or lack of useful recreation), school (cutting classes, bad results and problematic behavior at school like fighting, intimidation, or other severely disruptive behavior), mental health (both internalizing and externalizing problem behavior), substance abuse (abuse of drugs and alcohol), and family (out-of-home placement, kicked out of home by parents, running away from home, substance abuse by parents, problems with parental rule enforcement, abuse of victim and/or neglect and family members with judicial contact).

*Basisraadsonderzoek (BARO)*. This instrument is a semi-structured questionnaire completed by council researchers in the service of the Council of Child Care and Protection in case that an adolescent is suspected of having committed a criminal offense. The BARO questionnaire serves two purposes: it is used to inform judicial authorities (in other words, to give advice as to what penalty to impose) and it establishes whether the committed offense signals underlying disorders or problems in the adolescent's circumstances (Doreleijers, Bijl, Veldt, & Van der Loosbroek, 1999). The BARO is a global diagnostic instrument that screens, among other things, for underlying mental disorders that may have been established in the past and should be reexamined in additional psychiatric investigation. Validation studies have shown that the BARO enables reliable screenings for the presence of mental disorders (Doreleijers et al., 1999; Spaander, 2003). It contains questions that concern the following domains:

functioning in family situation, leisure activities, school, friends, external factors, development, case history, physical condition, behavior, emotions, and substance abuse.

*Data recidivism.* Recidivism is defined as the occurrence of one or multiple new judicial contact(s) within 2 years. To measure recidivism, data from the Research and Policy database Judicial Documentation (OBJD) of the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Ministry of Justice were used.

#### 4.2.3 *Procedure en analyses*

For this study data that have been collected by council researchers by means of the BARO questionnaire were analyzed. The information from the BARO reports was then used to score the items in the social sections of the WSJCPA. To guarantee interrater reliability, each 10th file in every branch was independently scored by two researchers, and their results were compared afterward. These comparisons show that the interrater reliability was high; the kappas showed a minimum of .85. The criminal section scores were based on information that was retrieved from the OBJD of the WODC.

Chi-square tests were used to identify differences in the prevalence of risk factors in the various ethnic groups. Pearson correlations were calculated to determine the strength of the relationship between the risk factors and recidivism for the various ethnic groups. To test whether one of the four ethnic groups contributed significantly to the prediction of recidivism, after controlling for all the static and dynamic risk factors, four different hierarchical multiple logistic regression analysis were performed.

## 4.3 Results

### 4.3.1 *Ethnic differences in recidivism*

Table 1 displays the percentage of juvenile re-offenders and the seriousness and type of offense involved, for the different ethnic groups.

Reoffending rates varied widely from group to group: they were relatively high among Moroccan and Surinamese juveniles, but relatively low among Antillean juveniles. The seriousness of the repeat offense also varied. Surinamese reoffended relatively often with a serious offense, Antillean juveniles with a moderately serious offense, and Dutch and Turkish juveniles with a minor offense. Differences in the nature of the repeat offenses were as follows: Dutch and Antillean juveniles reoffended relatively often with a public-order offense, Moroccan juveniles with a non-violent property offense, and Surinamese juveniles with a violent property offense.



*Table 1 Seriousness and type of recidivism for each ethnic group*

	Dutch <i>n</i> = 542	Moroccan <i>n</i> = 292	Surinamese <i>n</i> = 133	Turkish <i>n</i> = 97	Antillean <i>n</i> = 72	$\chi^2(4)$
Total recidivism	45%	59%	59%	51%	33%	27.8***
Seriousness recidivism	( <i>n</i> =243)	( <i>n</i> =172)	( <i>n</i> =79)	( <i>n</i> =49)	( <i>n</i> =24)	
Minor	20%	12%	11%	18%	8%	8.2**
Medium	74%	78%	68%	71%	83%	3.9
Major	6%	11%	20%	10%	8%	14.5***
Type of offense	( <i>n</i> =243)	( <i>n</i> =172)	( <i>n</i> =79)	( <i>n</i> =49)	( <i>n</i> =24)	
Nonviolent property (excl. property damage)	38%	54%	42%	43%	46%	11.0**
Violent property (excl. property damage)	4%	9%	14%	10%	4%	11.3**
Sexual offense	0%	1%	1%	4%	0%	10.3**
Other violence offense	20%	16%	24%	27%	25%	4.5
Public order (property damage, aggression, or disruption of public order)	32%	19%	20%	16%	33%	13.4**

\*  $p < .10$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

#### 4.3.2 Ethnic differences in the prevalence and impact of static risk factors

Table 2 shows the prevalence and impact of static risk factors in the various ethnic groups. The first five columns show the percentages of young people in each ethnic group for whom the risk factor is present (prevalence). The chi-square test was used to determine significant differences in prevalence between the groups (sixth column). The last five columns show the correlations between the risk factors and recidivism in each ethnic group (impact).

Table 2 Percentage of prevalence of static risk factors and correlation between risk factors and recidivism for each ethnic group

Domain	Prevalence					$\chi^2(4)$	Impact				
	D n = 542	M n = 292	S n = 133	T n = 97	A n = 72		D n = 542	M n = 292	S n = 133	T n = 97	A n = 72
Background characteristics											
Boy	79%	89%	77%	93%	81%	22.8***	.24***	.19***	.09	.12	.05
Born in the Netherlands	100%	70%	78%	81%	47%	186.8***	.05	-.03	-.16**	.05	.02
Prior judicial contact(s)	30%	46%	39%	35%	25%	26.5***	.17***	.20***	.04	.30***	.27**
Seriousness previous offense(s)	n = 160	n = 134	n = 52	n = 34	n = 18						
Minor	14%	14%	12%	6%	39%	11.3**	.10**	.08	.03	-.00	.17
Medium	89%	84%	79%	88%	56%	15.3***	.15***	.21**	.02	.31***	.23*
Major	18%	32%	35%	18%	39%	12.6***	.13***	.07	.01	-.00	.17
Type previous offense(s)	n = 160	n = 134	n = 52	n = 34	n = 18						
Nonviolent property	62%	70%	58%	79%	50%	8.4*	.16***	.19***	.04	.19*	.18
Violent property	8%	17%	40%	21%	6%	12.9**	.08*	.13**	-.03	.04	.05
Sexual offense	3%	5%	6%	0%	6%	3.1	.05	.02	.02	-	.17
Other violence	26%	27%	27%	32%	6%	4.7	.11***	.15**	.01	.18*	.17
Public order etc.	44%	34%	27%	32%	28%	10.5*	.06	.11**	.01	.12	.16
Seriousness current offense											
Minor	19%	16%	10%	13%	13%	8.9*	.02	.02	.01	.21**	.37**
Medium	67%	61%	52%	58%	54%	13.5***	-.02	-.08	.12	-.14	.06
Major	14%	24%	38%	29%	33%	48.5***	-.01	.07	-.14	-.01	-.31***
Type of current offense											
Nonviolent property	29%	45%	27%	39%	31%	27.4***	.07	.06	.06	.12	.11
Violent property	8%	15%	35%	20%	13%	71.3***	.04	.01	-.13	-.03	-.09
Sexual offense	2%	5%	4%	7%	18%	41.2***	-.05	.06	.00	-.20**	-.26**
Other violence	20%	18%	20%	16%	17%	2.1	.04	-.06	.10	-.20**	-.16
Public order etc.	35%	21%	21%	22%	26%	26.4***	-.06	.13**	.01	-.03	-.16

\*  $p < .10$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

#### 4.3.2.1 *Background characteristics.*

There were relatively few females in Turkish and Moroccan groups. Gender was significantly linked to recidivism in the Dutch and Moroccan groups: within these two groups, males reoffended significantly more often than females. Relatively many of the juveniles in the Antillean group were born outside the Netherlands, but only in the Surinamese group a significant correlation was found between reoffending and having been born in the Netherlands. Surinamese juveniles born in the Netherlands reoffended more often than Surinamese juveniles born outside the Netherlands.

#### 4.3.2.2 *Criminal past*

The percentage of juveniles having prior judicial contacts was highest in the Moroccan group (46%) and lowest in the Antillean group (25%). Among the juveniles who had previously committed offenses, Moroccan and Surinamese juveniles committed a relatively high number of serious offenses, Dutch and Turkish juveniles committed a relatively high number of moderately serious offenses, and Antillean juveniles committed a relatively high number of serious as well as minor offenses. In all groups, the most common previous offense was a nonviolent property offense. A relatively high number of public order offenses were found among Dutch juveniles. Surinamese juveniles committed a relatively high number of property offenses with violence, whereas Moroccan and Turkish juveniles committed a relatively high number of nonviolent property offenses. Most types of former offense were found to be predictors for general recidivism, except for sex offenses. In most cultural groups, a criminal history was an important predictor for recidivism, except for the Surinamese group.

#### 4.3.2.3 *Current offense*

The current offense is relatively often a minor offense among Dutch juveniles and a serious offense among Surinamese and Antillean juveniles. The differences in the type of the current offense are illustrated in Figure 1. In the Dutch group, the majority of current offenses were public order offenses. In the Moroccan, Turkish and Antillean groups the majority of current offenses were nonviolent property offenses, and in the Surinamese group they were property offenses with violence. Notably, a relatively high number of the current offenses in the Antillean group were sex offenses.

#### 4.3.3 *Primary motives for committing offenses*

Table 3 shows the primary motives for committing the current offenses (offense-related factors) of the juveniles who confess the crime and the percentage of adolescents for whom the purpose is present.

Figure 1 Percentage distribution of the type of offenses for each ethnic group

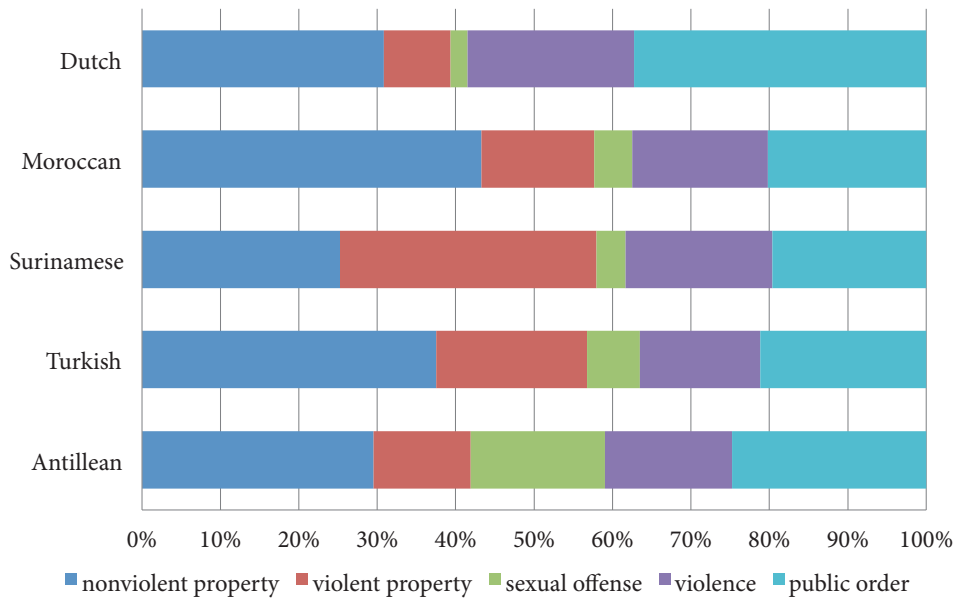


Table 3 The direct motives for committing the current offenses and the percentage of adolescents for whom the motive is present for each ethnic group

	D n = 542	M n = 292	S n = 133	T n = 97	A n = 72	$\chi^2 (4)$
Denial suspect	15%	48%	28%	31%	28%	104.5***
Direct motives confessing suspects	n = 459	n = 151	n = 96	n = 67	n = 52	
Boredom	14%	15%	8%	9%	17%	4.5
Experimental behavior	6%	4%	5%	12%	12%	8.1*
Group behavior	28%	31%	28%	31%	27%	0.9
Influenced by others	29%	24%	21%	19%	21%	5.7
Impact drugs and alcohol	14%	1%	5%	5%	0%	31.5***
Material gain	3%	10%	8%	5%	4%	14.3***
Defend a friend	5%	2%	6%	12%	8%	9.4**
Reaction to the behavior of others	12%	14%	10%	22%	14%	6.0
Agression	11%	6%	18%	6%	15%	11.3**
Impulsive behavior	15%	15%	15%	12%	15%	0.5
Problems moral functioning	7%	13%	14%	6%	19%	12.8**

\*  $p < .10$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

The percentage of juveniles who deny having committed the current offense is highest in the Moroccan group (48%) and lowest in the Dutch group (15%). In all the groups, group behavior and the influence of others were mentioned most often as the primary motive for committing the current offense. Offense-related factors mentioned with a relatively high frequency were the influence of drugs and alcohol in the Dutch group, material gain in the Moroccan group, and aggression and material gain in the Surinamese group. In the Turkish group, the offense-related factors with a relatively high frequency were: standing up for a friend, response to the behavior of others, and experimenting behavior. In the Antillean group, the factors were aggression, experimenting behavior and problems with moral functioning.

Most offense-related factors were not linked to reoffending. The only offense-related factors that were linked to recidivism were: the influence of alcohol/drugs ( $r=.09$ ,  $p=.05$ ) and impulsive behavior ( $r=.10$ ,  $p=.02$ ) for the Dutch group, and group behavior only ( $r=.18$ ,  $p=.04$ ) for the Surinamese group. In the Turkish, Moroccan and Antillean groups there was no significant correlation between the factors and recidivism.

#### 4.3.4 *Ethnic differences in the prevalence and impact of dynamic risk factors*

Table 4 shows the prevalence and impact of the dynamic risk factors in the various ethnic groups. The first five columns contain the percentages of juveniles for whom the risk factor is present in each ethnic group (prevalence). The chi-square test was used to determine significant differences in prevalence between the groups (sixth column). The last five columns show the correlations between the risk factors and recidivism in each ethnic group (impact). In all groups there was a relatively high incidence of problems in the domains of school, friends and use of free time. Differences were especially evident in the domains of alcohol/drugs, mental health and the family. Mental health problems were relatively common among Dutch juveniles. There were a relatively high number of problems with alcohol and/or drugs among Dutch, Surinamese and Antillean juveniles. Among Surinamese and Antillean juveniles there was a relatively high occurrence of accumulations of problems in the family domain, including divorced parents, no father in the family, out-of-home placement, running away from home, neglect and abuse, parental contact with the law, and problems with parental authority. Turkish and Moroccan juveniles had relatively few problems in the family domain.

Table 4 Percentage prevalence of dynamic risk factors and correlation between risk factors and recidivism for each ethnic group

Domain	Prevalence					$\chi^2(4)$	Impact				
	D n = 542	M n = 292	S n = 133	T n = 97	A n = 72		D n = 542	M n = 292	S n = 133	T n = 97	A n = 72
School	45%	47%	51%	44%	51%	2.5	.09**	.12**	-.01	.10	.16
Use of free time	30%	36%	38%	31%	43%	8.0*	.17***	.11*	.17*	.08	.28**
Friends	25%	36%	35%	34%	31%	14.8***	.13***	.21***	.09	.01	.04
Mental health	33%	8%	11%	18%	22%	84.5***	.13***	.04	-.04	.02	.05
Alcohol/drugs	10%	3%	11%	3%	8%	17.1***	.07	-.03	.05	-.06	.00
Total number of risk factors (average)	2.2	2.1	2.6	1.9	2.3		.21***	.14**	.05	.18**	.14
Family											
Divorced parents	49%	18%	81%	29%	82%	199.5***	.11***	.03	-.11	.02	.08
No father in the family	27%	19%	67%	19%	66%	152.6***	.05	.02	-.11	.10	-.01
Out-of-home placement	8%	3%	20%	1%	13%	42.4***	.05	.04	-.06	-.11	-.09
Runaway from home	9%	5%	14%	4%	11%	14.4***	.07	.01	-.08	-.00	.13
Victim of neglect	8%	4%	11%	5%	8%	9.7**	.09**	-.05	.00	-.05	-.11
Victim of abuse	16%	13%	29%	16%	21%	19.7***	-.05	-.02	.03	-.03	.15
Sibling with judicial contact	11%	34%	26%	17%	17%	66.3***	-.03	.09	-.08	.05	-.16
Parent(s) with judicial contact	9%	5%	18%	6%	17%	26.6***	.10**	.01	.11	.25**	-.09
Substance abuse by parents	10%	4%	7%	2%	6%	14.7***	-.00	.05	.10	-.00	-.17
Parental rule enforcement	37%	31%	51%	30%	47%	21.0***	.11***	.08	-.01	-.02	.13
Three or more risk factors in the family domain	27%	26%	51%	21%	46%	45.3***	.09**	.04	-.01	.10	-.11

\*  $p < .10$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

Apart from differences in prevalence, there were differences in the impact of dynamic risk factors on recidivism. For Dutch adolescents, most of the dynamic risk factors were significantly linked to recidivism; problems with use of free time, school, friends and mental health were all significant predictors for recidivism. Most of the risk factors in the family domain were also predictors for recidivism for Dutch adolescents, including divorced parents, neglect, problems with parental authority and parental contact with the law. With regard to the other ethnic groups, there were considerably fewer significant relations between risk factors and recidivism: among Moroccan juveniles there were significant correlations between recidivism and problems at school, friends and use of free time. In the Surinamese and Antillean groups, only a significant correlation was found between recidivism and problems relating to use of free time. In the Antillean group there was also a strong correlation between recidivism and problems at school, but it was not significant (Antillean juveniles constitute the smallest group, so the statistical power to show an effect is relatively low). In the Turkish group there was no significant link between recidivism and the various risk factors, but this group was also rather small. In the Turkish group, however, a significant correlation was found between recidivism and the total number of risk factors. The strength of the correlations between recidivism and risk factors are illustrated in Figure 2, in which negative correlations are shown as 0.

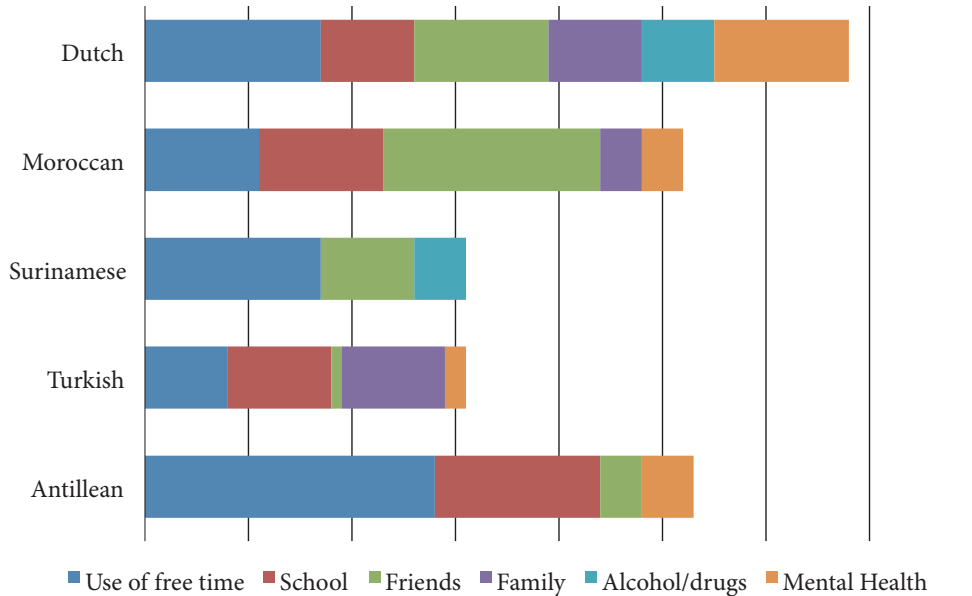
Figure 2 illustrates the relative importance of the different domains in the different ethnic groups. We can see from the figure that most of the risk factors were important in the case of Dutch juveniles. Problems with the use of free time, school and friends were important for Moroccan juveniles, problems with the use of free time and friends were important for Surinamese juveniles, problems with school and the family were important for Turkish juveniles and problems with the use of free time and school for Antillean juveniles.

#### 4.3.5 *Unique contribution of ethnicity to the prediction of recidivism*

To test whether the four ethnic groups contributed significantly to the prediction of recidivism after controlling for all the static and dynamic risk factors, four different hierarchical multiple logistic regression analyses were performed.

Table 5 shows that Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean ethnic background uniquely contributed to the prediction of recidivism, after controlling for all the static and dynamic risk factors.

Figure 2 Correlations between risk factors and recidivism for each ethnic group



Note: The Length of the bars reflect the strength of the correlations

Table 5 Unique contribution of ethnic background to the prediction of recidivism

	Moroccan <i>n</i> = 292 $\chi^2$ (df)	Surinamese <i>n</i> = 133 $\chi^2$ (df)	Turkish <i>n</i> = 97 $\chi^2$ (df)	Antillean <i>n</i> = 72 $\chi^2$ (df)
Static and dynamic risk factors (Block 1)	133.8 (24)***	133.8 (24)***	133.8 (24)***	133.8 (24)***
Ethnicity dummy variable (Block 2)	4.2 (1)**	8.1 (1)***	0.1 (1)	6.9 (1)***
Total model	138.0 (25)***	141.9 (25)***	133.9 (25)***	140.7 (25)***

\*  $p < .10$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

## 4.4 Discussion

This study examined the extent of differences between ethnic majority youth and the four largest groups of ethnic minority youth in the Netherlands with regard to the prevalence and impact of risk factors for recidivism. First, the study investigated potential differences in reoffending rates for each group. Reoffending rates are relatively high among Moroccan and Surinamese juveniles, and relatively low among



Antillean juveniles. This is not entirely what we expected, because according to national figures, recidivism is highest among Antillean and Moroccan juveniles, followed by Surinamese juveniles (Wartna & Tollenaar, 2006). However, the national figures on recidivism relate only to first-generation ethnic immigrants. If we separate the figures in our study for first-generation and second-generation immigrants, the figures for the first generation correspond more closely to the national figures. Our research shows that reoffending rates among the first generation immigrants from Suriname are considerably lower than among the second generation immigrants. In our study, reoffending rates among Antillean juveniles were lower than the national figure. This could be due to the fact that minor delinquents are over-represented in our random sample from the Antillean group. The absolute proportion of Antillean juveniles in the total group of delinquent juveniles is relatively low – approximately 9% in our random sample as well as nationally (Bijl et al., 2006). The likelihood of chance random-sample variations is therefore greatest in the Antillean group.

There are differences in static risk factors in terms of gender, born outside the Netherlands and delinquent behavior. Notably, the number of females in the Surinamese and Antillean groups is relatively high, but there is no link between recidivism and gender in these groups: the reoffending rate among boys is not significantly different from the rate among girls. This is striking, because gender has been shown to be an important risk factor for recidivism: in general, males reoffend at a considerably higher rate than females (Emeka & Sorensen, 2009). A possible explanation for this is the ‘number paradox’, whereby the meaning of a risk factor varies according to how often it occurs (Farrington et al., 2003). The incidence of delinquency among Surinamese and Antillean girls is relatively high. These girls are therefore less deviant, and differences from the delinquency rates among boys are smaller. There is a link between gender and recidivism in the other groups. In the Dutch group gender is even the strongest risk factor of recidivism.

For most groups there is no link between recidivism and having been born within or outside the Netherlands, except for the Surinamese group. Surinamese juveniles born in the Netherlands reoffend more often than those born outside the Netherlands. Research by Junger (1990) showed that only in Surinamese juveniles the country of birth was linked to delinquent behavior, and Surinamese juveniles born in the Netherlands showed more delinquent behavior than Surinamese juveniles born in Suriname. Among Moroccan juveniles there is also a higher reoffending rate among those who were born in the Netherlands, but this difference is not significant. However, previous research has shown that criminality among Moroccan youth increases as they become better integrated (Stevens et al., 2009). American research also found that second-generation and third-generation immigrants are more involved in crime than first-generation immigrants. Second-generation immigrants are often

more aware of social inequality and have a greater desire for luxury goods, hence an increased likelihood of criminal behavior (Tonry, 1997).

We also observe striking differences between ethnic groups in terms of delinquent behavior. In three groups there is clearly one type of offense with a relatively high incidence. In the Dutch group this is public-order offenses, in the Moroccan group it is non-violent property offenses, and in the Surinamese group it is property offenses with violence. For these groups, the over-representation of a particular type of offense is evident not only with regard to the current offense, but also with regard to previous and repeat offenses. Antillean juveniles engage relatively often in public order offenses and non-violent property offenses. With regard to the current offense, there is an over-representation of sex offenses. The over-representation of Antillean juveniles in sex offenses has also been found in other research (Wijk & Blokland, 2008), but it should be noted that the incidence of sex offenses is very low, which can easily produce a distorted picture in the case of a random-sample variation. Finally, there is a relatively high incidence of property offenses – violent as well as non-violent – among Turkish juveniles. There are few results to compare with these findings because little is known in the literature about the incidence of the various types of offense in different ethnic groups in the Netherlands (Jennissen & Blom, 2007). This is due to a taboo in the Netherlands on the registration of the ethnic origin of delinquents (Bijl et al., 2006). In the registrations on which the statistics on detection, prosecution and trial are based, only the country of birth and nationality have been recorded, which means that it is not possible to distinguish second-generation immigrants from native Dutch immigrants. This is a particular problem with juveniles, as the vast majority of juveniles with a different cultural background were born in the Netherlands. Driesen et al. (2002) provided an overview of studies examining types of offense and ethnic groups, which shows a high incidence of vandalism and destruction among Dutch youths, while property offenses and violence are more common among ethnic minority juvenile offenders. Driesen et al. concluded that, in previous studies, no convincing differences were found between the various young ethnic minority groups with regard to the types of offense. Jennissen & Blom (2007) recently investigated which types of offense have a relatively high incidence in different minority groups, but results of their study relate to juveniles as well as adults, and therefore cannot be compared to our study results. A recent study of Moroccan juveniles taken into police custody showed that Moroccan juveniles committed a relatively high number of property offenses compared to native Dutch juveniles (Stevens et al., 2009).

To gain greater insight into the correlates of differences found between the types of offense, we examined differences between the direct motives for and causes of committing offenses. In the groups that most often committed non-violent property offenses (Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean juveniles), material gain was frequently cited

as the direct motive for committing the offense. The offenses committed most frequently in the Surinamese group were property offenses with violence. In this group, material gain combined with aggression was the most frequently reported cause of committing an offense. The Dutch offender group showed a relatively high incidence of public-order offenses, whereby the influence of alcohol and/or drugs was found to be the direct cause in a relatively high number of cases. It is not entirely clear to what extent the greater desire for material gain can be explained by the fact that the average income of ethnic minority groups is considerably lower than that of native Dutch groups (e.g., Dagevos & Bierings, 2005). Research by Junger, Wittebrood, & Timman (2001) showed that the link between socioeconomic position and delinquent behavior is stronger among Dutch juveniles than among juveniles from ethnic minorities. Stevens et al. (2009) showed that the parents of delinquent Moroccan juveniles had a higher socioeconomic status than the parents of Moroccan juveniles from the general population, whereas the opposite was true for Dutch juveniles. The relation between socioeconomic status and committing property offenses apparently varies among the different cultural groups. Stevens et al. (2009) also found that the differences in socioeconomic status between Dutch and Moroccan juveniles in preventive detention cannot explain the over-representation of Moroccan juveniles in property offenses. In itself, therefore, socioeconomic status does not explain the committing of property offenses within ethnic minority groups, but socioeconomic status must be set against the *desire* for material wealth. The 'strain theory' explains crime in terms of the discrepancy between generally worthwhile goals and the legitimate means of achieving them (Merton, 1968). When people do not have the means to achieve these goals, they might resort to crime. Given that previous research has shown that the socioeconomic status of delinquent Moroccan juveniles is higher than that of non-delinquent juveniles, delinquent juveniles may have an increased desire for material wealth. Furthermore, delinquent Moroccan juveniles are found to be better integrated than non-delinquent Moroccan juveniles, which may indicate that the need for material wealth increases as they become better integrated.

Apart from the differences in static risk factors, differences were also found in the prevalence of dynamic risk factors. Differences were especially evident in the domains of alcohol/drugs, mental health and the family. Mental health problems turned out to be relatively common among Dutch juveniles, alcohol and/or drugs problems among Dutch, Surinamese and Antillean juveniles, and problems in the family domain among Surinamese and Antillean juveniles. The total number of problems is by far the highest among Surinamese and Antillean juveniles, mainly because there are many risk factors relating to their family domain. Relatively few risk factors were found in Moroccan and Turkish juveniles. This also became apparent in recent research by Van der Laan et al. (2009), who studied the prevalence of risk factors among

adolescents who have committed a criminal offense. This could indicate that there are indeed fewer risk factors among Moroccan and Turkish juveniles than among the other groups, but it could also indicate a bias in answering the questions. Various mechanisms can give rise to this bias. First, Moroccan and Turkish parents may have a greater tendency to give socially acceptable answers. This could be related to culturally determined issues regarding shame and/or honour, but also to the fact that they are a minority group in the Netherlands and are therefore anxious not to worsen their position (Ross & Mirowsky, 1984). Previous research has shown that Arab parents find it difficult to acknowledge that a family member has a psychological problem (Eapen & Ghubash, 2004). Moroccan juveniles were found to have a relatively common tendency to 'hide' problems, as shown in research by Stevens et al. (2003). This research showed that teachers identified externalising problems that, according to the juvenile's parents, did not exist. Second, Moroccan and Turkish parents might have a greater ignorance regarding problems. Research has shown that Moroccan parents monitored their children less closely than did Dutch parents (Junger, Terlouw, & Van der Heijden, 1995).

The *impact* of the dynamic risk factors was found to be very different for each of the ethnic groups. In Dutch juveniles, most of the problems were related to recidivism. Problems with use of free time, school, friends and mental health all proved to be predictors for recidivism, as did most of the risk factors in the family domain, including divorced parents, neglect, parental contact with the law, and problems with parental authority. Among ethnic minority groups of juveniles, only a few risk factors were related to recidivism.

Among the ethnic minority groups, the static and dynamic risk factors are least predictive of recidivism for the Surinamese group. Similar results were found by Dekovic et al. (2004), who investigated differences between Dutch, Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese juveniles with regard to the influence of parent-child relationship quality and deviant friends on antisocial behavior. This study also showed that the behavior of the Dutch group was easiest to predict, and the behavior of the Surinamese group was the least easy to predict. Dekovic et al. suggest that the 'extended family' might be a possible explanation for the fact that problems in the family domain are less predictive for the Surinamese group. A large proportion of Surinamese mothers (and also Antillean mothers) are single parents and often receive support from their 'extended family', which consists of grandparents, uncles and aunts, who are often also involved in bringing up the children (Distelbrink, 2000). The influence of the extended family is possibly an important factor for Surinamese as well as Antillean juveniles. In order to gain a better understanding of this, further research on the role of the extended family is needed.

Another explanation for the fact that problems in the family domain are not predic-

tive for the Surinamese and Antillean groups can be sought in the number paradox mentioned above. If a certain risk factor is common and is therefore not regarded as deviant, there is no longer a relation with criminality (Farrington et al., 2003). In general, growing up in a single-parent family is a risk factor for delinquent behavior (Junger, et al., 2001). In the Surinamese and Antillean groups, however, having divorced parents and growing up in a single-parent family is the rule rather than the exception: around 80% of these juveniles have divorced parents, and around 65% grow up without a father in the family. Growing up in a single-parent family is therefore not deviant within these groups, which could explain the absence of the link with recidivism. Research into Surinamese families showed that single-parent families in the Surinamese population are less stigmatised because it is hardly referred to as a special family type. In addition, daughters are implicitly prepared for single motherhood, and mothers can seek support from their network to a higher than average extent (Distelbrink, 1998; Distelbrink & Pels, 2008).

The weak link between problems with regard to friends and delinquent behavior among Surinamese juveniles was previously found in research by Dekovic et al. (2004). It emerged from other research that black adolescents were less geared to peers, experienced less peer pressure and had less need for peer approval than white adolescents (Giordano, Cernkovich, & DeMaris, 1993). These are possible explanations for the low correlation between recidivism and problems regarding friends among Surinamese as well as Antillean juveniles. Research in the Netherlands, on the other hand, has shown that juveniles from ethnic minority groups rely relatively strongly on the support and examples of their peers, because they often have to find their way in Dutch society without support from their parents (Pels & Nijsten, 2003). In answering the first four research questions, it was not necessary to make an adjustment for differences in baseline risk factors across the different ethnic groups. Differences in the relationship between risk factors and recidivism were examined and this is independent of differences in baseline factors (see also Loeber & Farrington, 2004; Rowe, et al., 1994). In answering the last research question, an adjustment was made for risk factors, because in this case the unique contribution of ethnicity to recidivism was examined. Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean ethnicity proved to uniquely contribute to the prediction of recidivism after controlling for all the static and dynamic risk factors that were included in the present study. It is therefore possible that some (cultural) specific risk factors exist for juvenile delinquents with a Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean background that have not been assessed in our study, but could explain the unique contribution of ethnic background to recidivism. The results of current research give rise to a number of important questions. Risk factors and risk assessment play an essential role in effectively reducing recidivism. Both are important in complying with two 'what works' principles: the risk principle

and the needs principle. The risk principle states that the intensity of an intervention should adequately match the risk of re-offending to be effective. The needs principle states that interventions should address the dynamic risk factors that are most strongly linked to recidivism. Given the differences found in this study with regard to the importance of risk factors for recidivism among ethnic groups, the question is to what extent risk assessment can be applied in the same way to the different groups. Given the differences in the importance of risk factors, it is plausible to argue that risk assessment instruments are not equally predictive for all ethnic groups.

In the second place, the question is how effective interventions are within each group. Given the differences in the importance of dynamic risk factors, it is probable that the effectiveness of interventions geared to these factors will vary from one ethnic group to another. In the case of Dutch juveniles, there is a clear link between recidivism and risk factors in most domains (family, school, friends, mental health and use of free time), while only a small number of risk factors are linked to recidivism among minority youth. While most problems in the various domains occur among Surinamese and Antillean juveniles, in particular with regard to the family domain, these problems were found not to be linked to recidivism. Consequently, interventions aimed at these factors are possibly less effective for minority youth. Research on the effectiveness of interventions for various ethnic groups in the Netherlands is therefore important.

Finally, an important question is whether ethnic-specific risk factors exist that play a role in certain ethnic groups, such as the role of the extended family, as was previously mentioned. The importance of these specific risk factors is perhaps greater than that of general risk factors, as is evident in the differences between boys and girls (Van der Put, Deković, et al., 2010). While risk factors in the family, including abuse, parental contact with the law, and alcohol use by parents were found to be important predictors for recidivism among girls, no significant link between these factors and recidivism was found in boys (Van der Put, Deković, et al., 2010). The impact of these girls-specific risk factors proved to be considerably larger than that of generic risk factors that apply to boys as well as girls, such as problems in the domains of school, friends and use of free time.

This study shows considerable differences between ethnic groups in terms of the impact of risk factors on recidivism, pointing to the importance of taking the differences between ethnic groups into account when deciding upon and designing interventions. Promising or effective interventions do not necessarily work for all ethnic groups, given the differences in the impact of risk factors within these groups. Because recidivism is linked to only a small number of dynamic risk factors in ethnic minority groups, additional research is necessary to identify the most important risk factors for each group. This could increase the effectiveness of interventions in

the future. Taking account of diversity is therefore the key when deciding upon and designing interventions.