Youth Gangs and Troublesome Youth Groups in the United States and the Netherlands
A Cross-National Comparison

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ABSTRACT

A minority of adolescents are part of street-oriented groups in which illegal behaviour is common, groups that can be referred to as ‘youth gangs’ or ‘troublesome youth groups’. Such groups are a well-known phenomenon in the United States and recently have been reported in a number of European nations. Relatively few researchers, however, have endeavoured to explore such youth gangs from a comparative perspective. In this article, we examine characteristics of American and Dutch gangs and gang members. These cross-national comparisons are based on two school samples of 11–16-year-old youths in the USA (N = 5935) and the Netherlands (N = 1978). The students completed anonymous, self-administered questionnaires containing similar questions, which allow for comparison of Dutch and American adolescent experiences with youth gangs.

KEY WORDS

Comparative Research / Delinquent Peers / Gangs / Juvenile Delinquency / Youth Groups.
Introduction

Gang research in the United States of America has a long history, one that experienced a resurgence of interest in the 1990s. No comparable history of gang research exists elsewhere, although assessments of youth gangs outside the USA have appeared periodically (see, for example, Covey et al. 1997; Covey 2003; Klein 2001, 2002). In 1998, a group of European and American researchers convened the first meeting of what has become known as the Eurogang Program of Research, a multinational collaborative effort that seeks to understand gangs and troublesome youth groups. Between 2001 and 2003, this group of researchers developed instruments for use in the comparative study of youth groups. The research reported here informed some of the decisions of that group and represents a small part of this larger effort.

Gang research has been quite parochial, focusing on one gang (sometimes case studies of only a few gang members), gangs in one city or, at best, gangs in several cities. Thus, much of what is known about youth gangs is piecemeal and relies primarily upon information gleaned from almost 100 years of gang research in the USA. As the world becomes increasingly ‘one world’, cultures, languages, economies, religions, as well as criminal activities, transcend national boundaries. Although youth gangs have traditionally been viewed as an American phenomenon, the past decade has witnessed the emergence of considerable ‘gang-like’ behaviour in Europe, Australia, South and Central America, Africa and Asia (for a review of this literature, consult Covey 2003 or Klein 2002). To what extent are these ‘emerging’ youth gangs around the world similar to those found in the USA? This is a simple question, but it is nonetheless an interesting and intriguing one. Oddly enough though, it is also a question that is virtually impossible to address. There is simply a paucity of data with which to answer the question. There is even an absence of data within the USA adequately to address the issue of the nature and extent of youth gangs within the USA. The annual surveys of law enforcement agencies by the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) provide the closest thing to a national assessment of youth gangs in the USA (see, for example, Egley et al. 2004).

Our goal in this article is to continue the work of Huizinga and Schumann (2001) in assessing the extent to which youth gangs in the USA are similar to troublesome youth groups found in other nations. We draw upon data from two school-based surveys of young adolescents – one in the USA and the other in the Netherlands. This research was not conceived as a collaborative effort and therefore we do not have identical measures for a number of our core concepts, but the two studies do share similar
measures and procedures that allow for cross-national comparisons. Our objectives are modest yet groundbreaking. We add to the growing knowledge of youth gangs by addressing the following five questions using two school surveys of youth – one in the United States and the other in the Netherlands:

1. How prevalent is membership in gangs and troublesome youth groups?
2. What are the demographic characteristics of members?
3. What risk factors are associated with membership?
4. Are the illegal activities of Dutch and American gang-involved youth similar?
5. To what extent are Dutch and American gangs and troublesome youth groups similar?

Prior to discussion of the research and results, however, we will provide a cursory overview of the key issues that we will explore.

**Definitional issues**

The term ‘gang’ evokes considerable reaction regardless of locale or audience. Movies, music (especially rap) and other forms of the mass media have exported gang culture and concern about gangs throughout much of the industrialized world. ‘Drive-by’, ‘wannabe’ and ‘colours’ are but some of the terms that have been part of this diffusion of gang culture. With the diffusion has come a moral panic in some areas (McCorkle and Miethe 1998; St Cyr 2003) and concern about formally acknowledging a gang presence in others (Huff 1990).

In spite of the apparent spread of gangs during the past 15 years, there is still considerable debate about what constitutes a gang, with different agencies and different researchers utilizing different criteria (for further discussion of definitional issues, consult Ball and Curry 1995; Curry and Decker 2003; Esbensen et al. 2001; Klein 1995). A common understanding of the meaning of what constitutes a gang is even more complicated within a cross-national perspective. One reason for this is that wordings and terms used for gangs have different meanings and emotional loadings in different languages. Another reason is that many non-Americans compare their youth groups with stereotypes or ideal types of a highly organized Chicago-style gang or the Bloods and Crips of Los Angeles. Within this framework, they usually conclude that no such gangs exist in their country. Interestingly, research by Maxson and Klein (1995), among others, has documented that the majority of American youth gangs do not match this stereotypical picture. Klein (2001) has referred to this false impression as the ‘Eurogang paradox’. To resolve this paradox, members of the Eurogang Program of Research engaged in numerous
discussions and ultimately developed a definition that allows for classification of youth groups as youth gangs: a gang, or troublesome youth group, is ‘any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity’. In some languages and/or national contexts, the word ‘gang’ either cannot be translated or carries with it such emotionally charged meaning that it cannot be meaningfully used; consensus was reached to describe such groups as ‘troublesome youth groups’. In this article, we generally use the word ‘gang’, but it can be replaced by the term ‘troublesome youth group’.

Sources of information and gang member characteristics

Varying definitions of youth gangs are not the only reason for divergent estimates of the magnitude of the ‘gang problem’ or for the different descriptions of gang youth that permeate the gang literature. Different sources of information (i.e. police reports, field studies, general surveys of youth) provide different pictures of gang member characteristics. A clear example of this type of ‘methods effect’ is drawn from the American study included in this research. An official with a gang task force reported in an interview that, in his jurisdiction, there were no girls in gangs. Survey results from the school sample in that same city, however, indicated that almost half of the gang members in the city were female and that they were involved in a variety of violent crimes. Not only do the law enforcement official and the survey researcher have a different picture of the extent and nature of the gang problem; they would also have different suggestions for a community response.

Within the American experience, it is well known that varying definitions and sources of information produce different pictures of gangs and gang members. In general, law enforcement data paint a picture of inner-city, minority males, generally from single-parent households (Moore and Cook 1999). Ethnographic studies of older and more homogeneous samples tend to confirm this picture. Surveys involving younger samples, however, call into question the extent to which these stereotypes accurately depict youth gang members. A similar picture of gang members appears to be evolving in Europe, based largely on police accounts and on relatively recent ethnographic studies (Lien 2001; Van Gemert 2001; Tertilt 2001). To what extent, however, are these findings based upon stereotyping or on limited information? In the USA, as survey findings have raised questions about the validity of the stereotypical gang member image, findings based on law enforcement data have begun to reveal a slightly different picture of gangs in America. Results from the National Youth Gang Survey (Egley et al. 2004; Moore and Cook 1999) have revealed the emergence of youth
gangs in small towns and rural areas. The recent NYGC surveys also reveal that the race or ethnicity of gang members is closely tied to the size of the community. Whereas white youths comprised only 11 percent of gang members in large cities (where most gang research has taken place), they accounted for approximately 30 percent of gang members in small cities and rural counties. Most ethnographic studies of gangs have been conducted in socially disorganized communities in Los Angeles and New York – in other words, in urban areas characterized by high concentrations of minority residents. The general surveys of youth conducted in the 1990s examined youth gangs in cities lacking a long tradition of gangs; nonetheless several of these studies were concentrated in high-risk neighbourhoods that (by definition) included disproportionate representations of racial and ethnic minorities (e.g. Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Thornberry et al. 2003). The same appears to be the case with European ethnographers; their studies are based on gangs in Frankfurt, Oslo, Amsterdam, Manchester and other major cities. To date, studies of gang-involved youth in small American and European cities and towns are lacking. Thus it is difficult to ascertain not only the prevalence but also the characteristics of gang youth.

Family characteristics of gang members, such as family structure, parental education and income, also have been revised because the traditional stereotype is too restrictive – gang youth are found in two-parent, single-parent and recombined families. In addition, gang youth are not limited to homes in which parents have low educational achievement or low incomes. Klein (1995: 75–6) summarizes gang characteristics as follows (emphasis added):

> In regard to who joins street gangs, then, first, it is not sufficient to say that gang members come from lower-income areas, from minority populations, or from homes more often characterized by absent parents or reconstituted families. It is not sufficient because most youths from such areas, such groups, and such families do not join gangs.

**Risk factors associated with gang membership**

The use of youth surveys to study gangs is a relatively new phenomenon. It is only since the beginning of the 1990s that general youth surveys became a significant source of information on gangs and gang members (see especially Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Hill et al. 1999; Maxson et al. 1998; Thornberry et al. 1993, 2003). In Europe, there is still no established use of surveys to study gangs or troublesome youth groups, although a few recent survey studies have included items about gangs or youth groups (e.g. Bradshaw 2002; Haaland 2000; Huizinga and Schumann 2001). Although
ethnographic studies offer rich and descriptive accounts of gang members or of particular gangs, youth surveys provide information about the proportion of a population involved in youth gangs and they enable comparisons and generalizations. They inform us about the organizational characteristics of gangs at different sites (Esbensen and Lynskey 2001), about risk factors for gang membership (Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; Hill et al. 1999; Maxson et al. 1998; Thornberry 1998) and about the longitudinal development of gang members and non-gang members (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Hill et al. 1999; Thornberry et al. 2003). They also provide information about the unique contribution of gang membership to delinquent behaviour, apart from the influence of delinquent friends (Battin et al. 1998; Thornberry et al. 1994). The following discussion of ‘risk factors’ associated with gang membership draws upon this emerging field of knowledge based on more general youth surveys.

It is important to keep several methodological distinctions in mind as we review the risk factors associated with gang membership. These surveys are usually based on samples of middle and high school students. This implies that the results are primarily valid for the population of youth. Ethnographies and law enforcement statistics generally include older gang members. Moreover, ethnographic studies often rely on key informants who are core members of gangs, and law enforcement statistics are likely to be based on the most delinquent of gang members. School surveys include more respondents from the periphery of gangs, including ‘wannabes’. Surveys cover the less serious but also more common part of youth involvement in gangs and troublesome youth groups (see also Curry 2000).

Some researchers (for example, Yablonsky 1962) claim that, compared with non-gang youth, gang members are more socially inept, have lower self-esteem and in general have sociopathic characteristics. Moffitt (1993) has stated that youth gang members are likely to be ‘life-course persistent offenders’. To what extent are such depictions accurate? Are gang youth substantively different from non-gang youth? Comparisons between gang and non-gang youth have been reported from Denver (Esbensen et al. 1993), Rochester (Thornberry et al. 2003), Seattle (Hill et al. 1999), San Diego (Maxson et al. 1998), and an 11-city study (Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; Esbensen et al. 2001).

The authors of these different studies used different questions and different sampling methods, which resulted in slightly different findings. In the Seattle study, Hill and colleagues (1999) found that gang youth held more antisocial beliefs, whereas Maxson et al. (1998) found that gang members had more delinquent self-concepts, had greater tendencies to resolve conflicts by threats, and had experienced more critical stressful
events. On a more generic level, both the Seattle and San Diego studies found significant differences between gang and non-gang youth within multiple contexts; that is, individual, school, peer, family and community characteristics.

In an attempt to examine the unique relationship of gang membership to attitudinal and behavioural characteristics, Esbensen et al. (1993) examined gang youth, serious youthful offenders who were not gang members, and non-delinquent youth. They found that the non-delinquent youth were different from the delinquent and gang youth: non-delinquent youth reported lower levels of commitment to delinquent peers, lower levels of social isolation, lower tolerance for deviance and higher levels of commitment to positive peers.

Using a somewhat different approach, Esbensen et al. (2001) examined differences among gang members. They classified gang members on a continuum, beginning with a broad definition of gang members and steadily restricting the definition until only those youth who claimed to be core members of a delinquent gang that had a certain level of organizational structure were classified as gang members. They found significant attitudinal and behavioural differences between core gang members and those classified as gang members using the broad definition. They did not find any demographic differences among the different gang definitions.

In another report from the Seattle study, Battin-Pearson and colleagues (1998) compared non-gang youth, transient gang youth (members for one year or less) and stable gang youth (members for two or more years). Both the transient and stable gang members differed significantly from the non-gang youth on a variety of attitudinal and behavioural measures. However, few distinctions between the transient and stable gang members were found. The measures on which differences occurred tended to represent individual and peer-level measures (for example, personal attitudes and delinquency of friends).

One consistent finding from research on gangs, as is the case for research on delinquency in general, is the importance of peers during adolescence (Battin-Pearson et al. 1998; Elliott and Menard 1996; Warr and Stafford 1991; Warr 2002). In their comparison of stable and transient gang youth, Battin-Pearson and colleagues reported that the strongest predictors of sustained gang affiliation were a high level of interaction with antisocial peers and a low level of interaction with prosocial peers. Researchers have examined the influence of peers through a variety of measures, including exposure to delinquent peers, attachment to delinquent peers and commitment to delinquent peers. Regardless of how this peer affiliation is measured, the results are the same: association with delinquent
peers is one of the strongest predictors (that is, risk factors) of gang membership.

Gang researchers examine school factors less frequently than other factors; however, they have found that these issues are consistently associated with the risk of joining gangs. Research indicates that gang youth are less committed to school than are non-gang youth (Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; Hill et al. 1999; Maxson et al. 1998). Some gender differences have been reported in regard to this issue. In the Rochester study, expectations for educational attainment were predictive of gang membership for girls but not for boys. In a similar vein, Esbensen and Deschenes (1998) found that commitment to school was lower among gang girls than among non-gang girls. No such differences were found for boys. Studies that examine juveniles’ cultures and ethnic backgrounds also attest to the role of school factors in explaining gang membership (Campbell 1991; Fleisher 1998).

The community is the domain examined most frequently in regard to both the emergence of gangs and the factors associated with joining gangs. Numerous studies indicate that poverty, unemployment, the absence of meaningful jobs and social disorganization contribute to the presence of gangs (Curry and Thomas 1992; Fagan 1990; Hagedorn 1988; Huff 1990; Vigil 1988). There is little disagreement that gangs are more prominent in urban areas and that they are more likely to emerge in economically distressed neighbourhoods. Among the few studies to explore rural and suburban youth gangs, Winfree et al. (1994) studied youth gang members in Las Cruces, New Mexico, and Esbensen and Lynskey (2001) reported on gang youth in rural areas and small cities included in an 11-site study.

The traditional image of American youth gangs, however, is characterized by urban social disorganization and economic marginalization; the housing projects or ‘barrios’ of Los Angeles, Chicago and New York are viewed as the stereotypical homes of youth gang members. The publication of Wilson’s (1987) account of the underclass – those members of society who are truly disadvantaged and affected by changes in social and economic conditions – has renewed interest in the social disorganization perspective advanced by Thrasher (1927) and Shaw and McKay (1942). Los Angeles barrio gangs, according to Vigil (1988) and Moore (1991), are a product of economic restructuring and street socialization. In addition to the pressures of marginal economics, these gang members experience the added burden of having marginal ethnic and personal identities. These juveniles look for identity and stability in the gang and gang subculture. Social structural conditions alone, however, cannot account for the presence of gangs. Fagan (1990: 207) comments that ‘inner-city youths in this study live in areas where social controls have weakened and opportunities
for success in legitimate activities are limited. Nevertheless, participation in gangs is selective, and most youths avoid gang life.’

In the research reported here, we utilize school-based surveys of youth to examine the similarities and differences between gang and non-gang youth in the United States and the Netherlands. Our research seeks to address the five questions posed at the outset of this article. Conceived somewhat differently, our interests are examination of individual-level issues (i.e. the demographic characteristics of gang and non-gang youth, the risk factors associated with gang membership, and the levels of involvement in illegal activity) and group-level factors (i.e. the prevalence of gang membership in a general youth sample and the characteristics of youth gangs in two different national and cultural settings) associated with membership in youth gangs.

Research design

The USA sample

During the Spring of 1995, eighth-grade (median age 14) students in 11 cities – Las Cruces (NM), Omaha (NE), Phoenix (AZ), Philadelphia (PA), Kansas City (MO), Milwaukee (WI), Orlando (FL), Will County (IL), Providence (RI), Pocatello (ID) and Torrance (CA) – completed self-administered questionnaires as part of the National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) programme (Esbensen and Osgood 1999). The final sample consisted of 5935 eighth-grade public school students, representing 42 schools and 315 classrooms. Passive parental consent, in which excluded students were those whose parents did not want their children participating, was used at all sites except one. Participation rates, or the percentage of children providing answers to the questionnaires, varied between 98 percent and 100 percent at the passive consent sites. At the four active consent schools, the participation rates varied from a low of 53 percent to a high of 75 percent (Esbensen et al. 1996). Comparison of school district data indicates that the study sample is representative of eighth-grade students enrolled in public schools in these 11 communities.

This sample has the standard limitations associated with school-based surveys: the exclusion of private school students, the exclusion of truants, sick and/or tardy students, and the potential underrepresentation of ‘high-risk’ youth. With this caveat in mind, the current sample comprises nearly all eighth-grade students in attendance on the days that questionnaires were administered in these 11 jurisdictions. The sample includes primarily 13–15-year-old students attending public schools in a broad cross-section
of communities across the continental United States. This is not a random sample and strong generalizations cannot be made about the adolescent population as a whole. However, students from these 11 jurisdictions do represent the following types of communities: large urban areas with a majority of students belonging to a racial or ethnic minority (Philadelphia, Phoenix, Milwaukee, and Kansas City); medium-sized cities (population ranges between 100,000 and 500,000) with considerable racial and/or ethnic heterogeneity (Providence and Orlando); medium-sized cities with a majority of white students but a substantial minority enrolment (Omaha and Torrance); a small city (fewer than 100,000 inhabitants) with an ethnically diverse student population (Las Cruces); a small, racially homogeneous (i.e. white) city (Pocatello); and a rural community in which more than 80 percent of the student population are white (Will County).

Students completed questionnaires (paper and pencil) in their classrooms (approximately 25 students per classroom). At least two researchers administered the surveys. One person read the questionnaire out loud as students followed along and wrote their answers in the questionnaires. A second, and sometimes third, researcher monitored the classroom, enhancing respondent confidentiality and helping students requiring assistance.

**The Dutch sample**

The Dutch data were collected within the framework of the School Project of the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR) ‘School project’, a larger longitudinal study focused on the roles of peer network formation, personal development and school interventions in the development of problem behaviour. Data from the first wave (2002) of the longitudinal study are used in the analyses reported in this article. Two objectives guided the selection of respondents for the sample: obtaining a relatively ‘high-risk’ sample (i.e. with a substantial proportion of youth involved in illegal activities) while also maintaining adequate inclusion of ‘lower-risk’ students to allow for variation in school contexts and student populations. To accomplish this, secondary schools in the city of The Hague with students following lower forms of education were asked to participate in the study, together with secondary schools from smaller cities and villages in the vicinity. The Hague is one of the largest cities in the Netherlands and has clear inner-city problems. The participating schools from this city have ethnically mixed populations. The other participating schools had an ethnically more homogeneous (Dutch) population of students, who mostly followed lower forms of education. This sample is not a random sample, but it is fairly representative of the youth in the south-west region of the Netherlands following lower forms of education (60 percent
of all Dutch youth follow education at this level). At this educational level, youths from lower socioeconomic groups are overrepresented. The participating schools in this study represent a cross-section of school types and organizations in the Netherlands. The sample represents the following types of communities: a medium to large city (about 500,000 inhabitants) with a majority of students belonging to a racial or ethnic minority (The Hague); two smaller- to medium-sized cities (about 120,000 inhabitants) with a majority of Dutch (white) students; and a smaller village (about 30,000 inhabitants) in which most of the student population are Dutch. The community composition of this sample is largely comparable to that of the US sample.

The final sample consisted of 1978 students from the first and third years of secondary education in 12 schools with a total population of 2370 in the first and third years. (On average, young people start secondary school at the age of 12 in the Netherlands, and reach the age of 13 during their first year.) As was the case in the American study, passive parental consent procedures were used (only two parents refused their child’s participation). Thus, virtually all students in attendance on the day of the survey administration completed questionnaires. Owing to some scheduling problems on the part of the school and to some minor computer problems, a small number of students were unintentionally excluded from participation.

The questionnaire was group-administered in the classroom during normal school hours. Respondents received a small reward (a voucher for CDs to the value of €5) to encourage current and future participation. Two or three researchers were present during the administration of the questionnaire to monitor the situation and to answer questions. Computers were used to administer the questionnaire instead of the usual paper and pencil method.

Measures

It is important to state at the outset that this research compares survey responses from young people of similar ages attending schools in the Netherlands and the United States. Although a similar conceptual framework guided the two independent studies, the actual measures used were not identical. This lack of exact comparability is a limitation, but at the same time the use of common concepts does allow for examination of general patterns of relationships between risk factors and gang membership in the two samples.
Gang definition

To establish gang membership in youth surveys can be difficult. Ethnographies are usually restricted to clear cases of gang situations and use rich and varied sources of information. Youth surveys are necessarily based on a limited number of questions. The identification of youth groups as gangs (or troublesome youth groups) is further complicated by definitional and operational problems with the gang concept. In many American surveys, researchers have relied on the self-nomination technique: respondents are simply asked ‘do you belong to a gang?’. To control for overreporting or inclusion of youth groups that do not meet the criteria of ‘youth gangs’, researchers have used follow-up questions. For instance, some researchers have relied on a gang name, whether the gang is involved in delinquent activity, or whether the gang has group characteristics such as leadership and organization. In a 2001 article, Esbensen and colleagues examined the effect of varying definitions and found that the self-report item was in and of itself a robust measure. Each additional criterion led to fewer youths classified as gang members and these youths were increasingly more antisocial in attitudes and behaviour. This procedure appears to work quite well in the American situation where the concept of a gang is familiar to most respondents. In Europe, however, the use of the word ‘gang’ or its synonyms (jeugdbende, bande, etc.) is less widespread and more ambiguous than in the United States. Asking directly if a respondent belongs to a gang might result in less reliable answers than in the USA.

As reported earlier, the Eurogang Program of Research developed a consensus definition of youth gangs: ‘A street gang is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity.’ To measure gang affiliation, a funnelling approach was designed. Respondents are asked a set of questions about formal and informal peer groups, characteristics of these groups and illegal activities within the groups. At the end of these questions, respondents are asked if they would consider their group to be a gang (or its synonym in their own language). This technique offers ‘objective’ criteria for the researcher to define a group as a gang under the Eurogang definition. At the same time, it incorporates the more ‘subjective’ criterion of self-identification of respondents as members of a gang.

In this article, the Dutch school survey utilized an early version of the funnelling technique developed by the Eurogang Network, defining gang members as youth who belonged to a durable street-oriented youth group and who belonged to a group with a serious level of illegal activity (indicating that illegal activity was part of the group identity). Respondents who answered that they belonged to an informal group of friends that was
not an organized club or organization and also not a subculture were seen as members of a ‘group’. When the majority of the group members were between 12 and 25 years of age, the group was regarded as a ‘youth group’; it was also regarded as ‘durable’ if it had been in existence for three months or more. Groups whose members did not usually meet in schools, homes, churches or other non-public places were seen as ‘street-oriented’. A serious level of illegal activity meant that some or most group members were substantially involved in damaging property, assaults, shoplifting, stealing things worth more than €5, burglary or robbery; either most group members were involved in two or more of these offences, or some group members were involved in four or more offences. Recently, the funnelling procedure that was developed by the Eurogang Network was improved to capture street-orientation and illegality as part of the group identity more directly. The procedure used in this article, however, is quite close to the thoughts and formulations of the definitive instrument. Further, the Dutch data represent the first study to apply survey methods to the subject of gangs and troublesome youth groups in the Netherlands.

In the American study, respondents were asked two filter questions: ‘Have you ever been a gang member?’ and ‘Are you now in a gang?’ This self-identification method, common in American gang research, was followed by a number of questions seeking information about the gang and its members. In this article, we restrict our gang sample to those youths who indicated that they were currently in a gang and that their gang was involved in at least one of the following illegal activities: getting in fights with other gangs; stealing things; robbing other people; stealing cars; selling marijuana; selling other illegal drugs; or damaging property. This is comparable to the way in which illegal activity is measured in the Dutch sample.

**Demographic, attitudinal and behavioural measures**

Both studies collected information on the age, sex and household living arrangements of the youths. In the US sample, respondents described themselves by race/ethnicity, whereas the Dutch respondents classified themselves according to ethnicity/nationality. See Table 1 (p. 19) for a summary of this information.

The attitudinal measures used in these analyses are representative of social control, social learning and self-control theory. In this article, our primary goal is description, not theory testing. We will nonetheless structure our discussion of the measurement and analysis results according to the theoretical groupings. Indicators of self-control theory are parental
monitoring, impulsivity and risk-seeking; social learning theory is represented by peer delinquency, peer pressure and moral attitudes/disengagement; social control theory measures are attachment to parents and school commitment. As stated earlier, it is important to remember that the measures used in the following analyses tap conceptual areas with different operationalizations; that is, the Dutch and American studies used different, though similar, questions to measure respondent attitudes and behaviours. (See the appendix for a description of the Dutch and American scales measuring each of these theoretical concepts.)

We also obtained measures of self-reported delinquency. Students were provided with a list of behaviours and then asked to indicate if they had ever committed the act. If the students answered ‘yes’, they were asked to indicate how many times they had engaged in the behaviour during the previous 12 months or school year. In addition to a general delinquency measure, we created three sub-scales of behaviour: minor offences; property offences; and crimes against the person. To facilitate discussion of the findings from these two projects, we have converted all of the risk factor and behavioural analyses to ratios of non-gang to gang scores.

Results

An overview of the sample characteristics of non-gang and gang members can be found in Table 1. As can be seen, the demographic composition of the two samples is quite similar. The Dutch sample consists of 1978 students, of whom 55 percent are boys; the American sample comprises 5935 students, of whom 48 percent are boys. Almost all respondents in both studies are aged between 12 and 16 years, with mean ages of 14.0 and 13.8, respectively, in the Dutch and American samples. Ethnic minorities are relatively overrepresented. Respondents with a foreign background comprise more than one-third of the Dutch sample, although respondents with Dutch parents are still in the majority (62 percent); Turkish (8 percent), Surinamese (7 percent) and Moroccan (5 percent) respondents are the most common ethnic categories other than Dutch. In the American sample, whites (41 percent), African-Americans (27 percent) and Hispanics (19 percent) are the dominant groups. Most of the youths in each sample reside in a two-parent household (80 percent and 62 percent, respectively, in the Dutch and American samples).

Focusing on the breakdown by gang membership reported in Table 1, we see that the gang youths in both samples share characteristics relative to the non-gang youths. The gang youths tend to be older, male, more likely
to live in a one-parent family and, especially in the US sample, more likely to be in a minority category.

Risk factors

Prior research in the United States has found that a number of risk factors are associated with youths who belong to gangs. Much of that research is cross-sectional, which precludes testing for causality; that is, whether the presence of these risk factors leads to gang joining or whether being in a
gang results in the development of these attributes. Some longitudinal studies (e.g. the Denver, Rochester and Seattle studies), however, have established that these risk factors do precede gang involvement (Esbensen et al. 1993; Hill et al. 1999; Thornberry et al. 2003). Thus, although we cannot address the temporal relationship of risk factors and gang membership in this study, we can examine the extent to which these established risk factors are present in two distinct samples of youths in the Netherlands and the United States.

**Self-control**

Each of the studies included three scales to measure self-control theory (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). Low self-control is viewed as a cause of criminal and analogous behaviours. Gottfredson and Hirschi indicate that low levels of parental monitoring contribute to low levels of self-control. Further, they suggest that individuals with low self-control tend to be more impulsive (i.e. to act on the spur of the moment) and more likely to engage in risky behaviour.

The indicators used in the two studies to measure parental monitoring are quite similar. For instance, Dutch youths responded to the statement ‘My parents know where I go to outside home’, and the American sample to the statement ‘My parents know where I am when I am not at home or at school.’ The other Dutch statements in this scale also measure rule enforcement at home (e.g. ‘At home, I have to do what my parents say’). The American scale does not include this element of parenting. Contrasting gang to non-gang youths, we see from Table 2 that gang youths in both samples reported lower levels of parental monitoring than did non-gang youths. In the Dutch sample, the ratio of 0.88 indicates that Dutch gang youths experienced 12 percent less monitoring than did non-gang youths. Similarly, gang youths in the American sample reported 18 percent less monitoring than did non-gang youths.

The indicators for impulsivity and risk-seeking are more similar in content than was the case for parental monitoring. The American statements are based on the scale developed by Grasmick and his colleagues (1993) to directly test Gottfredson and Hirschi’s self-control theory and the Dutch statements are a modification of those indicators. As such, both scales are quite similar, as indicated by the following two statements: ‘I often do things without thinking first’ (Dutch); ‘I often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think’ (US) (see the appendix for a list of all the scale items). As with parental monitoring, the findings with regard to impulsivity and risk-seeking reveal a significant difference between the gang and non-gang youth in each country. In both samples, gang youths reported...
higher levels of impulsivity and risk-seeking – between 16 and 30 percent more – than did non-gang youths. For instance, the ratios of impulsivity reported by the Dutch and American samples were 1.29 and 1.16, respectively; and for risk-seeking the ratios were 1.30 and 1.25, respectively. Thus, although employing slightly different statements to measure three components of self-control theory, statistically significant differences between non-gang and gang youth were found in each sample.

### Social learning

Each of the two studies also included three scales measuring social learning theory: peer delinquency, peer pressure and moral attitudes. As with the self-control measures, these three indicators of social learning theory differ somewhat in their actual measurement. Peer delinquency, for instance, consisted of respondents indicating how many of their friends had committed delinquent acts during the previous year. The American study listed 16 illegal acts, whereas the Dutch study included six illegal activities. The Dutch study requested respondents to indicate whether none, some or most
of their friends had committed these acts, whereas American youth could indicate whether none, a few, half, most or all of their friends were involved in these illegal activities. In spite of these differences, the results are once again quite similar. The ratios of gang to non-gang reports of friends involved in these activities are 4.37 in the Dutch sample and 1.69 in the American sample. It is likely that the inclusion of some relatively minor illegal acts in the American study (e.g. ‘Skipped school without an excuse’ and ‘Lied, disobeyed, or talked back to adults such as parents, teachers, or others’) contributed to the smaller difference between gang and non-gang youth in that sample. The differences between the gang and non-gang youth appear to be quite robust.

Comparisons of the two remaining social learning measures – peer pressure (e.g. ‘My friends sometimes make me do things I actually don’t want to do’ and ‘If your group of friends was getting you into trouble at home, how likely is it that you would still hang out with them?’) and moral attitudes/disengagement (e.g. ‘It’s OK to steal if you need money’ and ‘It’s okay to steal something if that’s the only way you could ever get it’) – produced ratios indicating that the gang youth expressed more peer pressure to commit delinquent acts and held less conforming attitudes. The gang youth were more likely than the non-gang youth in both samples to indicate that stealing, lying and hitting people were acceptable in a variety of circumstances (e.g. ratios of 1.73 and 1.30 for the Dutch and Americans, respectively).

**Social control**

Two elements of social control theory were included in the two studies: school commitment and attachment to parents (in the American study, independent measures of attachment were obtained for mother and father). As with the indicators of social learning and self-control, the risk factors associated with social control theory distinguish gang from non-gang youth. The gang youth reported lower levels of both commitment to school (0.80 for both the Dutch and US samples) and attachment to parents (0.92 for the Dutch sample and 0.86 for the US sample for both maternal and paternal attachment). The same caveat applies here that was discussed above about the measurement of these concepts. Although the wording of the statements is different for the two samples, the same concept is being measured.

**Self-reported delinquency**

One last area of investigation of non-gang and gang youth is the extent to which these youths were involved in illegal activities. Relying upon self-
reported measures of delinquency, both studies find that, consistent with prior American research, gang youth were much more likely to report involvement in criminal behaviour. Whether we examine minor offending, property offending, crimes against persons or a composite measure of all these sub-scales, the gang youth reported approximately four times the level of offending compared with the non-gang youth. The findings, shown in Table 3, are strikingly similar in these two samples.

### Gang characteristics

We now turn our attention to the gang as the unit of analysis. The gang-involved youth were asked a series of questions to describe their gangs. Table 4 presents these results. A cursory review of the findings reveals that, unlike the analyses focusing on individual gang youth, there were substantial differences between the Dutch and American gangs, at least in terms of what we refer to as gang descriptors. The American gang youth estimated their gangs to be larger (having approximately twice as many members as reported by the Dutch gang youth). The American gangs tended to have more characteristics associated with more formal or organized gangs: more than half of the American gang members described their gang as having colours or symbols (92 percent), some type of initiation rites (80 percent), established leaders (76 percent), specific rules or codes (75 percent) and regular meetings (58 percent). In contrast to this picture, fewer than 40 percent of the Dutch gang members indicated that their

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**Table 3** Self-reported delinquency and gang membership in the Netherlands and the USA: Ratio of gang to non-gang members and raw scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>The USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ratioa Raw scoresb</td>
<td>Ratioa Raw scoresb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor offending</td>
<td>3.56 6.76/1.90</td>
<td>4.05 4.29/1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property offending</td>
<td>6.65 3.99/0.60</td>
<td>4.72 3.07/0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimes against persons</td>
<td>4.11 2.30/0.56</td>
<td>4.26 2.81/0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total delinquency</td>
<td>4.38 14.15/6.40</td>
<td>4.83 3.72/0.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: All comparisons between non-gang and gang youth in each sample were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

a Ratio of gang to non-gang members.
b Raw scores for gang/non-gang members.
gangs had rules (38 percent), constant meeting times (37 percent), leaders (29 percent) and symbols (24 percent) or that they had to do special things to join (21 percent). Two other dimensions, which were tapped with different questions, reflected more similarity than difference: 44 percent of the Dutch and 38 percent of the American gang youth indicated that their gangs had subgroups; 56 percent of the Dutch indicated that boys and girls did not do the same things in the gang, and 53 percent of the Americans said that there were specific roles for girls.

Although the two samples of gang youth perceived their gangs quite differently, the levels of their involvement in delinquent activity were very similar. As reflected in Table 4, these youth gangs were involved in a variety of illegal activities. Among the Dutch gang youth, almost all of them indicated that at least some of their members committed vandalism (95 percent), assault (95 percent), theft (95 percent), and shoplifting (86 percent); burglary (43 percent) and robbery (45 percent) were less common. The American gang members revealed a similar level of ‘cafeteria-style’ involvement in illegal activity on the part of their gang: gang fights (91 percent), vandalism (80 percent), theft (70 percent), car theft (70 percent) and robbery (61 percent).

**Table 4** Gang characteristics: The Netherlands and the USA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gang size (no.)</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>The USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant meeting times/regular meetings</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules/codes</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have to do something special to join/initiation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established leaders</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbols/colours</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subgroups/Age groups</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific roles for boys/girls</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviours (%)</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>The USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoplifting</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang fights</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car theft</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

At the outset of this article, we posed the following five questions:

1. How prevalent is membership in gangs and troublesome youth groups?
2. What are the demographic characteristics of members?
3. What risk factors are associated with membership?
4. Are the illegal activities of Dutch and American gang-involved youth similar?
5. To what extent are Dutch and American gangs and troublesome youth groups similar?

Utilizing a common definition of youth gang membership – one that required the group to be involved in group-level delinquency – resulted in the classification of 6 percent of the Dutch sample and 8 percent of the American sample as gang members. A prevalence rate of 6 percent in a general sample of Dutch school children – although this sample slightly overrepresented high-risk youths – is surprisingly similar to the American rate. A denial that there are gangs in Europe (until recently, this has been the usual response to enquiries about gangs in most European cities) appears no longer valid. As defined in this research, youth gang membership (belonging to a durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activities is part of their group identity) in the Netherlands is not all that dissimilar from that found in the USA. Referring to these groups as troublesome youth groups rather than gangs may be preferable to some people (e.g. politicians eager to deny the existence of youth gangs), but that does not negate the finding that the risk factors and behaviours associated with membership in these groups are remarkably similar in both the Dutch and US samples.

Equally interesting is the finding that the Dutch and American gang youths ‘look’ alike, especially on risk factors that have been found to be associated with a number of adolescent problem behaviours. In both samples, the gang youths tend to be older and are slightly more likely to be males. Race and/or ethnicity and living arrangements are not significantly different for gang and non-gang youths in the Netherlands but they are for the American youth. The finding that Dutch gang youth are not disproportionately ‘non-Dutch’ is of considerable importance given the tendency in Holland and elsewhere to identify troublesome youth groups as foreigners or immigrants. This suggests that a considerable number of troublesome youths are indeed native Dutch and are either undetected or unacknowledged.

Our analysis of risk factors provided consistent and stable similarities between the Dutch and US samples. In all instances, the responses by the non-gang youths were significantly different from those of the gang youths.
Importantly, the differences (as represented by the ratio of non-gang to gang responses) were of approximately the same magnitude in both samples. Theoretical constructs from self-control, social learning and social control theories distinguish gang from non-gang youths. These findings are quite robust and provide encouragement that criminological constructs measured differently are valid indicators of risk factors for gang affiliation.

The illegal activities of the Dutch and American gang-involved youths are also similar. They are four to six times more likely than non-gang youths to be involved in minor as well as serious forms of delinquency. Interestingly, however, although the individual gang members in the two countries look and act similarly, the gangs are described quite differently. The Dutch gangs appear to be smaller and more loosely organized than the US gangs. Only a minority of the Dutch gang youths indicate that their gang has features such as leadership, gang rules and symbols, whereas these characteristics are reported by a majority of American gang youths. In short, our results suggest that US and Dutch gangs are quite different in their appearance but at the same time their members are remarkably similar in terms of demographics and risk factors.

The research reported in this article, as stated earlier, was not a planned collaborative effort. Thus, the methods and measurement in the two studies were not identical, and the design differences in the two studies introduce three issues that could have affected the results. First, although the two studies incorporated questions that measured the same criminological concepts, the actual questions differed. These differences may have biased the results. Non-identical measures tend to produce slightly different results, which suggests that the results reported here may well underestimate the similarities between gang and non-gang youths in the two countries. This highlights the importance of the recommendations of the Eurogang Program of Research to incorporate a core of identical measures that all researchers will use in the study of youth gangs.

A second concern is raised by the time difference between the two studies: the Dutch study was completed in 2002, seven years after the completion of the US study. Had the gang situation in the USA changed during the course of these seven years? One recent publication reports that the number of communities experiencing gang problems declined during this period and that the number of gangs and gang members also declined slightly between 1996 and 2002 (Egley et al. 2004). This suggests that the prevalence of gangs may be even more similar than the 6 and 8 percent, respectively, reported in these two studies. Although the magnitude of the youth gang problem may vary across time, it is less likely that the characteristics of gangs and gang members would change dramatically in
such a short period. Studies of American youth gangs report considerable stability in the risk factors associated not only with gang membership but also with delinquent activity. Thus, the seven-year difference between the studies may again have underestimated, rather than overstated, similarities.  

A third and final concern is perhaps the most important and potentially most biasing: the two studies used different definitions of gang membership. The US study utilized self-definition and group-level involvement in illegal activity, whereas the Dutch study relied on the funnelling approach developed by the Eurogang Program of Research, combined with group-level involvement in illegal activity. One potential criticism is that two different types of groups were compared. To address this concern, analyses utilizing different operationalizations of gang membership were conducted. Results from these analyses were remarkably similar to those reported by Esbensen and colleagues (2001): regardless of the criteria used to identify gang youth, the risk factors distinguishing gang and non-gang youths remained statistically significant in all of the analyses; only the magnitude of the differences varied. Therefore, we are quite confident that our findings are not the result of different methodologies and measurement. Nevertheless, the differences and potential biases remain and we encourage future comparative efforts to employ not just similar but identical measures.  

In addition to the methodological issues discussed above, future researchers are encouraged to explore more fully our finding that, whereas gang members appear to be quite similar in the two countries, the gangs differ considerably. These gang differences suggest that structural and cultural features of gang life are not universal and may vary across nations. Are the US gangs larger and more organized owing to the historical tradition of youth gangs in the USA? Are the differences attributable to varying portrayals of gangs in the media in the USA and the Netherlands? One recent study found that American youths accept the social reality represented by the media (St Cyr 2003) and, as such, gang-involved youths were more likely to exaggerate the presence of and problems associated with gangs in the community. The American media rely largely upon law enforcement sources in reporting on youth gangs and consequently promote a picture of organized gangs with leadership, symbols and other structural elements. Conversely, the Dutch media and Dutch law enforcement view youth gangs mainly as loosely organized but, at the same time, dangerous groups of delinquent youths. The question thus remains: are the youths responding to the media presentations of their gangs or are the media accurately reporting the nature and structure of the youth gangs?
Appendix: Scale items and reliability

SELF-CONTROL SCALES

Parental monitoring (Dutch)
At home, I have to do what my parents say.
I know what is and what is not allowed for me at home.
My parents know where I go to outside home.
alpha = 0.40

Parental monitoring (US)
When I go someplace, I leave a note for my parents or call them to tell them
where I am.
My parents know where I am when I am not at home or at school.
I know how to get in touch with my parents if they are not at home.
My parents know who I am with if I am not at home.
alpha = 0.73

Impulsivity (Dutch)
I often do things without thinking first.
I make fun if I can, even if it leads me into trouble.
I say immediately what I think, even when that’s not clever.
I often do what I feel like immediately.
alpha = 0.64

Impulsivity (US)
I often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think.
I don’t devote much thought and effort to preparing for the future.
I often do whatever brings me pleasure here and now, even at the cost of
some distant goal.
I’m more concerned with what happens to me in the short run than in the
long run.
alpha = 0.63

Risk-seeking (Dutch)
I like to do exciting and adventurous things.
I like to try out scary things.
I love doing dangerous things.
I think it’s stupid to do things for fun where you might get hurt.
\[ \text{alpha} = 0.66 \]

*Risk-seeking (US)*

I like to test myself every now and then by doing something a little risky. Sometimes I will take a risk just for the fun of it. I sometimes find it exciting to do things for which I might get in trouble. Excitement and adventure are more important to me than security.
\[ \text{alpha} = 0.82 \]

**SOCIAL LEARNING SCALES**

*Peer delinquency (Dutch)*

Three possible responses (no one, some, most or all)

Do your friends sometimes:
Vandalize stuff on the street (like bicycles, traffic signs, bus stops etc.)?
Hit somebody so hard he or she gets wounded/hurt?
Steal small things from shops (less than 5 euro, like candy, pencils)?
Steal things worth more than 5 euro (like CDs, make-up, bags, jackets, or money)?
Break and enter to steal something?
Rob someone?
\[ \text{alpha} = 0.82 \]

*Peer delinquency (US)*

During the last year, how many of your current friends have done the following:
Skipped school without an excuse?
Lied, disobeyed, or talked back to adults such as parents, teachers, or others?
Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to them?
Stolen something worth less than $50?
Stolen something worth more than $50?
Gone into or tried to go into a building to steal something?
Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle?
Hit someone with the idea of hurting them?
Attacked someone with a weapon?
Used a weapon or force to get money or things from people?
Sold marijuana?
Sold illegal drugs such as heroin, cocaine, crack or LSD?
Used tobacco products?
Used alcohol?
Used marijuana?
Used other illegal drugs such as heroin, cocaine, crack, or LSD?
alpha = 0.93

Peer pressure (Dutch)
My friends sometimes make me do things I actually don’t want to do.
My friends would think it’s stupid when I don’t dare to do something.
My friends laugh at me when I am afraid of something.
alpha = 0.74

Peer pressure (US)
If your group of friends was getting you into trouble at home, how likely is it that you would still hang out with them?
If your group of friends was getting you into trouble at school, how likely is it that you would still hang out with them?
If your group of friends was getting you into trouble with the police, how likely is it that you would still hang out with them?
alpha = 0.84

Moral attitudes/disengagement (Dutch)
It’s OK to do something illegal, as long as you don’t get caught.
It’s OK to lie if that brings you a lot of money.
Breaking and entering in rich people’s houses is not so bad.
It’s OK to steal if you need money.
alpha = 0.68

Moral attitudes/disengagement (US)
It’s okay to lie if it will keep your friends from getting in trouble with parents, teachers, or police.
It’s okay to lie to someone if it will keep you out of trouble with them.
It’s okay to tell a small lie if it doesn’t hurt anyone.
It’s okay to steal something from someone who is rich and can easily replace it.
It’s okay to take little things from a store without paying for them since stores make so much money that it won’t hurt them.
It’s okay to steal something if that’s the only way you could ever get it.
It’s okay to get into a physical fight with someone if they hit you first.
It’s okay to get in a physical fight with someone if you have to stand up for or protect your rights.
It’s okay to get in a physical fight with someone if they are threatening to hurt your friends or family.
alpha = 0.86

**SOCIAL CONTROL SCALES**

*Attachment to parents (Dutch)*

I have nice parents.
I would like to have other parents.
I don’t like being with my parents.
I feel fine when I’m with my parents
alpha = 0.72

*Warmth at home (Dutch)*

I can notice that my parents love me.
My parents are friendly towards me.
My parents know the things I like.
My parents tell me when I have done something well.
alpha = 0.66

*Maternal and paternal attachment (US)*

Think about your mother or mother-figure (father or father-figure)
Can talk about anything 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Can’t talk about anything
Always trusts me 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Never trusts me
Knows all my friends 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Does not know any of my friends
Always understands me 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Never understands me
Always ask her advice 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Never ask me advice
Always praises me when I do well 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Never praises me when I do well
Maternal alpha = 0.84
Paternal alpha = 0.88
Attachment to school (Dutch)

I go to school with pleasure.
I get bored at school.
I have a nice school.
I would rather be at another school.
At school, I feel at home.

alpha = 0.75

School commitment (Dutch)

I pay much attention in the class.
I do as much as I can for school.
I work hard to get good grades.

alpha = 0.77

School commitment (US)

Homework is a waste of time.
I try hard in school.
Education is so important that it’s worth it to put up with things about school that I don’t like.
In general, I like school.
Grades are very important to me.
I usually finish my homework.
If you had to choose between studying to get a good grade on a test or going out with your friends, which would you do?

alpha = 0.81

DELINQUENCY SCALES

Minor offending (US)

How many times in the past 12 months have you:
Avoided paying for things such as movies, bus or subway rides?
Purposefully damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you?

Minor offending (Dutch)

How many times in the past school year have you (0, 1, 2, 3–5, 6–10, more than 10 times):
Without paying travelled by bus, subway or train?
Damaged or destroyed things on the street, for example bicycles, bus stops, streetlights or something else?
Outside school illegally painted or written on walls, doors, buses, etc. with pencils, aerosol etc.?

*Property offending (US)*

Stolen or tried to steal something worth less than $50?
Stolen or tried to steal something worth more than $50?
Gone into or tried to go into a building to steal something?
Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle?

*Property offending (Dutch)*

Stolen something out of a shop worth less than €5?
Stolen something out of a shop worth more than €5?
Stolen a bike or a moped?
Stolen a car?
Broken and entered to steal something?
Stolen something in a different way, for example by pickpocketing or taking away something secretly?

*Crimes against person (US)*

Hit someone with the idea of hurting them?
Attacked someone with a weapon?
Used a weapon or force to get money or things from people?
Shot at someone because you were told to by someone else?

*Crimes against person (Dutch)*

Fought on the street or hit someone, without wounding the other person?
Fought so badly, hit someone, or used a weapon so that the other person was wounded?
Robbed someone?

*Total delinquency (US)*

The preceding 10 items plus the following:
Skipped classes without an excuse?
Lied about your age to get into some place or to buy something?
Carried a hidden weapon for protection?
Illegally spray painted a wall of a building?
Been involved in gang fights?
Sold marijuana?
Sold other illegal drugs such as heroin, cocaine, crack or LSD?

*Total delinquency (Dutch)*

The preceding 12 items plus:
Bought something that you knew or thought to be stolen?

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