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Chapter 5

Acculturation, Discrimination and Delinquency in Moroccan-Dutch Youth

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate underlying processes by which acculturation and perceived discrimination might contribute to the particularly high delinquency rates observed in second-generation migrants. It was carried out among Moroccan-Dutch youth, who are overrepresented in crime statistics, experience a relatively wide cultural gap from the heritage culture to the mainstream culture, and are exposed to the highest degree of discrimination in the Netherlands. Questionnaire data on acculturation and discrimination of 244 Moroccan-Dutch adolescents (mean age 14.0 ± 1.1 years, 89.8% second-generation migrants) were collected as part of a larger school-based population study. In order to study associations between acculturation strategies, perceived discrimination and delinquency, questionnaire data was linked to official police record data. Among marginalized youth, 44.1% was registered as suspect of an offence compared to 16.7% of integrated and 21.4% of separated youth. Among youths with an integration or separation strategy, a higher level of perceived group discrimination was associated with a higher prevalence of delinquency. The social bond theory and strain theory may help explain these findings as is discussed in this article.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Migration, Adolescents, Acculturation, Discrimination, Delinquency.

Ethnic minorities are overrepresented in crime statistics (Blom et al., 2005; Morenoff & Astor, 2006). Therefore, several studies in the United States of America and Europe have investigated the link between ethnic minority status and delinquency (Morenoff & Astor, 2006; Killias, 2011). Among ethnic minorities, most studies indicate that a younger age at migration or being born in the receiving country (second-generation migrants) is associated to higher delinquency rates (Blom et al., 2005; Bui & Thongniramol, 2005; Morenoff & Astor, 2006; Stansfield, 2012). In addition, more use of the language of the receiving country by ethnic minority youth has been associated with increased delinquency rates (Morenoff & Astor, 2006; Pérez et al., 2008). Therefore, it has been suggested that orientation towards the receiving mainstream culture could explain part of the adverse development in second-generation migrants (Stansfield, 2012). On the other hand, an integration acculturation strategy, i.e. being oriented towards both the heritage culture and the mainstream culture according to the model of Berry (2005), has also been associated to positive outcomes, such as a better mental health and general well-being (Phinney et al., 2001; Koneru et al., 2007). One of the potential explanations for these contradicting findings is that particularly for youths oriented towards the mainstream culture, experiences of failure in achieving social success may turn them towards delinquency (Agnew, 2001; Paalman et al., 2011). An important indicator of failure to achieve social success is experiencing discrimination (Schaafsma, 2011). Although discrimination has been linked to delinquency (Pérez et al., 2008; Le & Stockdale, 2011; Tobler et al., 2013), only a few studies in the United States of America investigated the impact of acculturation strategies and perceived discrimination on offending in ethnic minorities (Caldwell et al., 2004; Deng et al., 2010). Therefore, the present study elaborates on these findings by examining the association between acculturation, perceived discrimination and delinquency in a sample of ethnic minority youth in Europe.

Acculturation

Acculturation refers to a psychological process that people experience when they migrate to another country with a different culture. The acculturation process contains two elements; maintenance of the heritage culture and adaptation to the mainstream culture of the receiving country. This two-dimensional process leads to four possible acculturation strategies according to the model of Berry (2005): *separation*, high orientation towards the heritage culture and low orientation towards the mainstream culture; *integration*, orientation towards both the heritage and mainstream culture; *assimilation*, low orientation towards the heritage culture and high orientation towards the mainstream culture; and *marginalization*, a low orientation towards both cultures. Acculturation does not only affect those who actually migrated, but extends to the children of migrants and even to later generations (Escobar et al., 2000; Matsunaga et al., 2010). Also, acculturation is a dynamic, on-going process (Berry, 2005). Acculturation strategies may change over time. For example, after experiencing that acceptance by mainstream society and achieving aspired goals is not possible, youth may withdraw themselves from

society by changing from an integrated or assimilated acculturation strategy to a marginalized strategy (Turjeman et al., 2008; Miller & Gibson, 2011).

Acculturation, mental health and delinquency

Several studies have found links between acculturation, mental health and well-being, and delinquency. Adopting an integration acculturation strategy was associated with positive outcomes like mental health, self-esteem and overall well-being, while adopting a marginalization strategy was associated with poorer mental health, lower self-esteem and poorer overall well-being (Phinney et al., 2001; Berry et al., 2006; Koneru et al., 2007; Anderson & Mayes, 2010). Findings on the relationship between acculturation and delinquency, however, showed that psychological orientation towards the mainstream culture (i.e. an integrated or assimilated acculturation strategy) was a risk factor for delinquency (Wong, 1999; Smokowski et al., 2009; Paalman et al., 2011; Stevens et al., 2014). Others did not find such a relationship, but found, in line with the findings on mental health, that marginalization was associated with more delinquency as compared to separation, assimilation or integration (Mesch et al., 2008).

In conclusion, whereas integration seems to be the most favorable acculturation strategy considering mental health and overall well-being, integration and assimilation were also associated with a higher likelihood of delinquency. Marginalization has been associated with poor mental health and well-being, and with delinquency.

Theories on the association between acculturation and delinquency

Several sociological and criminological theories can help explain the association between integration and delinquency on the one hand and the association between marginalization and delinquency on the other. For example, the *strain theory* may explain the link between orientation to the mainstream society (i.e. integration or assimilation) and delinquency (Merton, 1956; Agnew, 2001). According to the strain theory, a substantial discrepancy between aspired goals and achieved goals can cause strains, i.e. feelings of anger or frustration. As anger is often directed outwards, involvement in delinquent behavior is one of the options to reduce the strain. Especially when restrictions in achieving aspired goals are perceived as a general rejection of the social environment, negative emotions are likely to motivate an individual to engage in crime. This is most likely to be true for adolescents, because alternative coping skills are less developed. For ethnic minority youth, perceiving discrimination would certainly contribute to the experience of general rejection of the mainstream society in achieving aspired goals (Stansfield, 2012). In addition, ethnic minorities who have adopted an integration or assimilation acculturation strategy, may be even more vulnerable to feel the restrictions of discrimination by the mainstream society in achieving their goals, as these goals are more likely to be directed towards mainstream society. Therefore, perceiving discrimination when being oriented towards the mainstream society may have a stronger effect and lead to a higher likelihood to involve in crime (Correll & Park, 2005; Paalman, 2013).

The *social bond theory* may explain the link between a marginalized acculturation strategy and delinquency (Hirschi, 2002). According to the social bond theory, youths who do not experience commitment to society will be more likely to engage in criminal activities. Ethnic minority youth with a marginalized strategy would commit criminal behavior due to their lack of bond with any culture. These youths will not be hindered by feelings of shame or guilt because they do not feel related to members of society. So for youth with an integrated strategy delinquency may be the result of failing integration while for marginalized youth, delinquency may be the result of lack of any social bonds.

Measurement and types of delinquency

Most studies on the relationship between acculturation, discrimination and delinquency focused solely on self reports of delinquent behavior (Caldwell et al., 2004; Mesch et al., 2008; Pérez et al., 2008; Deng et al., 2010). Since delinquent behavior usually is underreported in self reports, especially among ethnic minority youth, it is more reliable to use official measures of delinquency (Stevens et al., 2014).

Further, delinquency refers to various types of crimes, such as violent, property, drug and sexual offences, and arson. Most studies on acculturation and delinquency focused solely on violence (Caldwell et al., 2004; Mesch et al., 2008; Pérez et al., 2008). As crimes by ethnic minority youths are particularly marked by high levels of property offences, it is relevant to study a larger range of crimes (Veen et al., 2011b; Stansfield, 2012).

Present study

The present study investigates underlying processes by which acculturation and perceived discrimination might contribute to the particularly high delinquency rates in second-generation migrants. The study focuses on Moroccan-Dutch youth. In the Netherlands, Moroccan-Dutch often have a disadvantaged social position and a relatively wide cultural gap from the heritage culture to the mainstream culture (Stevens et al., 2003; Dagevos et al., 2014). They are exposed to the highest degree of discrimination (Veling et al., 2007b) and are overrepresented in crime statistics (Blom et al., 2005; Blokland et al., 2010). In addition, Moroccan-Dutch youth is the largest ethnic minority population in the age group under 20 and of this group the majority (97.2%) is born in the Netherlands (second-generation migrants) (Statistics Netherlands, 2014). Therefore, studying Moroccan-Dutch youth offers an outstanding opportunity to examine associations between acculturation strategies, perceived discrimination and delinquency.

The aim of the study was threefold; (i) to examine the association between acculturation strategies and delinquency, (ii) to examine the association between perceived discrimination and delinquency, and (iii) to examine the relationship between acculturation, discrimination and delinquency. We used police record data of different types of offences as an official measure of delinquency. We hypothesized that delinquency is less prevalent in Moroccan-Dutch youth with a separated acculturation strategy than in youth with other acculturation strategies

and that perceived discrimination is related to more delinquency, especially in youth oriented towards the mainstream culture (i.e. integration or assimilation).

METHOD

Procedure

A school-based study collected questionnaire data on demographic characteristics, acculturation and perceived discrimination from June 2009 to April 2010. The ethics committee of the VU University Medical Centre approved the study. A letter of introduction and a description of the study were sent to children and parents at their home address in separate envelopes. Parents or primary caregivers additionally received a passive informed consent form, which they could sign and return when they did not want their child to participate. Children had the option to decline at the time the survey was administered. They completed the web-based survey during a regular school day. A trained research assistant introduced the study and at least two research assistants were available in the classroom to answer the children's questions during administration. Teachers were not involved in the actual administration.

Police record data on delinquency was collected in November 2011. The Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice approved the study protocol and gave written consent to obtain police data. The National Police Services Agency (KLPD) provided a data file containing police records of the participants. Since offence entries from local police systems are uploaded once a year, police data up to 1 January 2011 was obtained.

Participants

In order to obtain a large sample of Moroccan-Dutch youth with various socioeconomic backgrounds, schools with various educational levels in districts with small and large Moroccan-Dutch populations (range 1.9-9.2%) were approached. Eight primary schools and ten secondary schools (78.2%) participated. Children in grades six to eight of primary schools (9-12 year olds) and grades one to three of secondary schools (12-15 year olds) were included. The overall participation rate was 85.7%. The total sample consisted of 1,563 participants of various ethnicities.

Only Moroccan-Dutch youth were included in this study. According to the ethnic classification of Statistics Netherlands, children were categorized as Moroccan-Dutch when they and one or both parents (first-generation migrants) or when one or both parents (second-generation migrants) were born in Morocco (n=407). In case of parents with two different foreign countries of birth, the mother's country of birth was used to define the child's ethnic group.

In the Netherlands, individuals can be registered as suspected of an offence from the minimum age of 12. Only youth who turned 14 and older in 2010 were selected (n=247). Consequently, since police data was obtained up to 1 January 2011, every participant could be registered as a suspect during a time frame of minimum two years. We chose this age cut-off to create a reasonable balance between the time at risk to offend and number of participants. A small proportion

(n=3) did not complete the questionnaire, resulting in a total sample for analysis of 244 participants.

Measurements

Demographic information

Children filled out questions on demographic characteristics, such as their gender, age, and their own and parents' country of birth.

Acculturation

Psychological acculturation was measured using the Psychological Acculturation Scale (PAS), originally designed for Puerto Ricans in the USA (Tropp et al., 1999). It was adapted by Stevens and colleagues (2004) for Moroccans living in the Netherlands. It consists of six items which measure orientation towards mainstream Dutch culture (D-PAS) and six items which measure orientation towards Moroccan heritage culture (M-PAS). Items were rated on a 5-point scale (1='strongly disagree' to 5='strongly agree') and added to compute sum scores (range 6-30). This instrument had good psychometric properties in previous studies on acculturation of Moroccan-Dutch youth (Stevens et al., 2004). In the study sample, Cronbach's alphas were 0.89 for the D-PAS and 0.92 for the M-Pas. Acculturation strategies were identified using Latent Class Analysis (LCA) described previously (Paalman, 2013). Three acculturation strategies were found: integration, separation and marginalization. Thus, assimilation as acculturation strategy could not be studied here.

Perceived discrimination

Three items assessed whether children perceived *personal discrimination* based on skin color, origin or religion during the past year: 'In the past year, have you felt discriminated against by others or disadvantaged based on your skin color/country of origin/religion?' (Stevens et al., 2005a). Children answering 'yes' to one of these items were classified as having experienced personal discrimination.

In order to assess perceived *group discrimination*, children were asked whether they felt their ethnic group was discriminated against in four situations (street, school, shops or by the police) (Stevens et al., 2005a). Answers (ranging from never to always on a 4-point Likert scale) were summed to create a total perceived group discrimination scale (range 0–12). Children were categorized into low (scores 0 and 1), medium (scores 2 to 4) and high (scores 5 to 12) perceived group discrimination according to tertiles based on our sample.

Delinquency

The National Police Intelligence Service (IPOL) of the National Police Services Agency (KLPD) provided official police records. For each participant, the data file contained all offences the participant was suspected of and the corresponding numbers of the section of law. Moroccan-Dutch youths were categorized into *not delinquent* (not registered as suspected of a crime) and *delinquent* (at least once

suspected of a crime). Delinquent youths could be divided in first offenders (suspected of one crime) and re-offenders (more than once suspected of a crime). Types of offences were categorized into property, violent, arson, drug, sexual and other offences, according to the classification of Kordelaar (2002) and the law section numbers.

Statistical analysis

Analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 19.0. General descriptive data of the sample were provided first. Demographic characteristics were compared between non-delinquent and delinquent Moroccan-Dutch youths and offence characteristics of delinquent youths were described. Differences between groups were tested by chi-square tests for categorical variables (gender and migrant status) and independent sample t-tests for continuous variables (age). Further, the distribution of acculturation and perceived discrimination was described for the total sample, as well as the distribution of perceived discrimination by acculturation strategy.

In order to investigate the relationship between acculturation, perceived discrimination and delinquency, logistic regression analyses, adjusted for gender and age, were applied with delinquency as outcome. First, the univariate associations between acculturation and delinquency, and between perceived discrimination and delinquency were calculated. Second, in order to study the independent associations, gender, age, acculturation and perceived discrimination were simultaneously entered in a multivariate logistic regression model with delinquency as outcome variable. In order to test whether associations between perceived personal and group discrimination and delinquency were different across acculturation strategies, interaction effects for personal discrimination * acculturation and group discrimination * acculturation were tested, with all factors entered in the model.

RESULTS

Demographic characteristics of the sample and offence characteristics of the delinquent group are presented in table 5.1. Boys and girls were represented equally (51.6% boys versus 48.4% girls). The majority was second-generation migrant (89.8%). The mean age was 14.0 years ($SD \pm 1.1$) at the time of collection of the questionnaire data and 15.3 ($SD \pm 1.1$) at the time of collection of the police data.

Regarding offence characteristics 22.1% of the sample was registered for at least one offence. Of all delinquent youths, half was first offender (50.0%). Property (72.2%) and violent (57.4%) offences were the most prevalent types of crimes. Compared to Moroccan-Dutch youths without a police registration, Moroccan-Dutch youths who were suspected of an offence at least once, were more likely to be boys ($\chi^2=18.97$, $p<0.001$) and they were older (questionnaire data, $t=-4.53$, $p<0.001$; police data $t=4.40$, $p<0.000$).

Table 5.1: Demographic characteristics of the sample and offence characteristics of the delinquent group

	Delinquency	
	No (n=190) n (%)	Yes (n=54) n (%)
Gender		
Boys	84 (44.2)	42 (77.8)
Girls	106 (55.8)	12 (22.2)
Migrant status		
First generation	21 (11.1)	4 (7.4)
Second generation	169 (88.9)	50 (92.6)
Number of offences		
First-offenders	-	27 (50.0)
Re-offenders	-	27 (50.0)
Type of offence		
Property	-	39 (72.2)
Violent	-	31 (57.4)
Arson	-	1 (1.9)
Drug	-	1 (1.9)
Sexual	-	1 (1.9)
	mean ± SD	mean ± SD
Age at the time of collection questionnaire data	13.8 ± 1.1	14.5 ± 1.0
Age at the time of collection police data	15.1 ± 1.0	15.8 ± 1.0

Table 5.2 shows the distribution of acculturation and perceived discrimination in the total sample and the distribution of perceived discrimination by acculturation strategy. Integration was the most common acculturation strategy (51.6%), followed by separation (34.4%) and marginalization (13.9%). Almost a third reported to have perceived personal discrimination (29.5%). Perceived personal discrimination did not differ across acculturation strategies. In contrast, the proportion of youth reporting high group discrimination increased from marginalization and integration to separation (χ^2 (linear-by-linear)=7.36, $p=0.007$).

Table 5.2: Perceived personal and group discrimination by acculturation strategy

	Acculturation strategy		
	Separation (n=84) n (%)	Integration (n=126) n (%)	Marginalization (n=34) n (%)
Personal discrimination			
No (n=172)	59 (70.2)	89 (70.6)	24 (70.6)
Yes (n=72)	25 (29.8)	37 (29.4)	10 (29.4)
Group discrimination			
Low (n=78)	21 (25.0)	43 (34.1)	14 (41.2)
Medium (n=90)	29 (34.5)	46 (36.5)	15 (44.1)
High (n=76)	34 (40.5)	37 (29.4)	5 (14.7)

Table 5.3 displays the prevalence of delinquency by acculturation strategy and perceived personal and group discrimination. Compared to integrated (16.7%) and separated (21.4%) youth, marginalized youth were more often registered as suspect of an offence (44.1%). The association between marginalization and integration showed a trend (OR=2.26, 95%CI=0.92-5.57, $p=0.076$).

Table 5.3: Univariate associations between acculturation, discrimination and delinquency

	Delinquency		Model ^a	
	No (n=190) n (%)	Yes (n=54) n (%)	OR	95% CI
Acculturation strategy				
Separation	66 (78.6)	18 (21.4)	1.00	-
Integration	105 (83.3)	21 (16.7)	0.73	0.34-1.53
Marginalization	19 (55.9)	15 (44.1)	1.64	0.64-4.21
Personal discrimination				
No	133 (77.3)	39 (22.7)	1.00	-
Yes	57 (79.2)	15 (20.8)	0.67	0.32-1.41
Group discrimination				
Low	65 (83.3)	13 (16.7)	1.00	-
Medium	73 (81.1)	17 (18.9)	1.03	0.44-2.43
High	52 (68.4)	24 (31.6)	1.69	0.71-4.01

^a Model adjusted for gender and age

Table 5.4 displays the multivariate results on the relationship between acculturation, perceived personal and group discrimination, and delinquency. Adjusted for all other variables, a marginalization strategy was independently associated with delinquency compared to an integration strategy (OR=2.75, 95%CI=1.07-7.11, $p=0.037$). Compared to low perceived group discrimination, high perceived group discrimination was independently associated with delinquency (OR=2.69, 95%CI=1.01-7.18, $p=0.048$). No interaction-effect was found between personal discrimination and acculturation strategy (wald=1.29, $p=0.526$). An interaction effect was found between group discrimination and acculturation (wald= 8.69, $P=0.069$) (see figure 5.1).

Table 5.4: Multivariate logistic regression model of acculturation, discrimination and delinquency

	Delinquency		
	OR	95%CI	p
Demographic characteristics			
Gender	0.26	0.12-0.55	0.000
Age	1.63	1.15-2.31	0.006
Acculturation strategy			
Separation	1.00	-	-
Integration	0.82	0.38-1.75	0.603
Marginalization	2.25	0.81-6.22	0.119
Personal discrimination			
Yes	0.49	0.22-1.11	0.088
Group discrimination			
Low	1.00	-	-
Medium	1.11	0.46-2.69	0.812
High	2.69	1.01-7.18	0.048

All factors were simultaneously entered in the model

The association between group discrimination and delinquency is shown in figure 5.1 for all acculturation strategies. Among adolescents with an integration and separation strategy the prevalence of delinquency increased when perceived group discrimination increased (resp. OR=1.62, 95%CI=0.77-3.40, $p=0.203$; and OR=3.05, 95%CI=1.23-7.58, $p=0.016$). In contrast, in marginalized youth, the

prevalence of delinquency showed a trend to decrease when perceived group discrimination increased (OR=0.28, 95%CI=0.06-1.19, $p=0.085$).

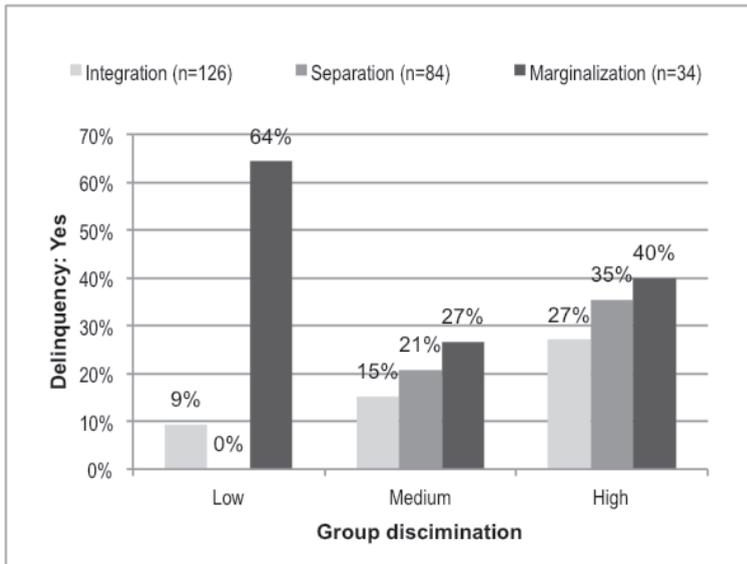


Figure 5.1: The association between perceived group discrimination and delinquency by acculturation strategy

DISCUSSION

Summary of findings

In this study, examining the association between acculturation strategy, perceived discrimination and delinquency in Moroccan-Dutch youth, three main findings have emerged. First, compared to those with integration or separation strategy, the prevalence of delinquency was higher among Moroccan-Dutch youth with a marginalization strategy. Second, perceived discrimination was not directly associated with delinquency in Moroccan-Dutch youth. Finally, increasing perceived group discrimination was associated with higher prevalence of delinquency in Moroccan-Dutch youth with an integration or separation strategy.

Acculturation and delinquency

In our study, delinquency was most prevalent in Moroccan-Dutch youth with a marginalization strategy. Marginalization has been associated with delinquency previously (Mesch et al., 2008). According to Hirschi's social bond theory (Hirschi, 2002), not being committed to any culture or society (i.e. marginalization) increases the risk of problem behavior, including delinquency. These youths are less hindered by feelings of shame or guilt towards other society members because they do not feel related to them. Children who do feel attached to either the heritage (i.e. separation) or mainstream (i.e. assimilation) culture, or both (i.e. integration), may fear rejection by their social environment if they engage in criminal activities.

The social bond theory also explains that delinquency was less prevalent in Moroccan-Dutch youth with an integration or separation strategy. These strategies have the orientation to the heritage culture in common. Previous studies also found that adherence to the heritage culture was protective against delinquent behavior (Wong, 1999; Smokowski et al., 2009). However, our findings on the relatively lower level of delinquency of youth with an integrated acculturation strategy are contrary to earlier studies conducted in the United States of America and Canada (Wong, 1999; Smokowski et al., 2009) and in the Netherlands on delinquency in Moroccan-Dutch youth (Paalman et al., 2011; Stevens et al., 2014). Interpretation of these contradicting findings is difficult for two reasons. First, studies differ in examining orientation towards the heritage and mainstream culture as independent variables (Wong, 1999; Smokowski et al., 2009; Paalman et al., 2011) or taken together into acculturation strategies (Stevens et al., 2014). Second, finding an appropriate comparison group for a delinquent population comparable in social context is difficult, but very important as acculturation is a dynamic process very much influenced by social context (Phinney et al., 2001). Stevens et al. (2014) compared acculturation strategies of detained Moroccan-Dutch adolescents from all over the Netherlands to acculturation strategies of Moroccan-Dutch adolescents of the general population from two big cities in the southwest of the Netherlands. These cities are characterized by large Moroccan-Dutch populations and a high degree of segregation. In such a social context is easier to maintain values of the heritage culture without too much involvement in the mainstream culture, i.e. adopting a separation acculturation strategy. Therefore, their finding that integration was more and separation was less prevalent in adolescents in pre-trial detention could also be an artifact of the likelihood to adopt certain acculturation strategies in different social contexts. Taking these considerations into account, we think our findings may indicate that orientation towards the mainstream culture is only a risk factor for delinquency when the protective influence of adherence to the heritage culture is lost (i.e. assimilation) as was also concluded by a review on the role of culture on youth violence (Soriano et al., 2004). Unfortunately, this hypothesis could not be studied in our sample as an assimilation acculturation strategy is generally not found in Moroccan-Dutch youth (Stevens et al., 2004; Paalman, 2013; Stevens et al., 2014).

Discrimination and delinquency

The absence of a direct relationship between perceived discrimination and delinquency in Moroccan-Dutch youth is in contrast with previous research (Pérez et al., 2008; Le & Stockdale, 2011; Tobler et al., 2013). This discrepancy may be explained by measurement variation. First, the aforementioned studies all used self-reports of delinquent behavior. Underreporting of delinquent behavior is relatively common because of social desirability answering, especially among ethnic minority youth (Stevens et al., 2014). It is possible that measurement of both perceived discrimination and delinquency are influenced by social desirability and that the threshold for reporting delinquent behavior could be lower when having reported perceived discrimination, because participants may

justify their criminal activities as a fair reaction to discrimination. Leading to an artificial relationship between perceived discrimination and self-reported delinquency and a weaker relationship with officially registered delinquency. Second, one of the previous studies focused solely on violence (Pérez et al., 2008), whereas property offences are much more common in delinquent ethnic minority youth (Veen et al., 2011b; Stansfield, 2012). Possibly, perceived discrimination is in particular associated with violent offences as a direct response to discrimination and not with delinquency in general.

Discrimination in explaining the association between acculturation and delinquency

Among Moroccan-Dutch youth with an integration or separation acculturation strategy, delinquency increased with degree of perceived group discrimination. The *strain theory* can help explain this finding in integrated ethnic minority youth (Merton, 1956; Agnew, 2001). As was stated in the introduction of this paper, a serious discrepancy between aspired and achieved goals can eventually lead to delinquency. The finding that delinquency increased with the degree of group discrimination in integrated youth may be caused by the mechanism that group discrimination is perceived as a restriction of mainstream society to achieve the aspired goals, resulting in delinquent behavior. However, strain theory cannot explain the finding that delinquency also increased with the degree of group discrimination in separated youth.

As was stated earlier, integrated and separated youth both orient to the heritage culture, as such they may interpret more incidents as discriminating. Our findings indicate that group discrimination may only result in delinquency when it is against the group someone identifies with. This is in line with a previous study in Chinese American adolescents which found that discrimination was particularly related to delinquent behavior in the ones who were oriented towards their heritage culture (Deng et al., 2010).

Strengths and limitations

The findings of this study are subject to several limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small to investigate interaction-effects and only one specific ethnic minority group was included. However, especially when studying factors explaining delinquency at ethnic group level, it is preferable examine associations within specific ethnic groups, as characteristics of ethnic groups and attitudes towards these groups of the mainstream society vary. Second, acculturation and perceived discrimination were only assessed once. Since acculturation is a dynamic process, acculturation strategies are likely to change over time, for example in interaction with discrimination. Because of the cross-sectional nature of the study, we were also not able to determine causal relationships between acculturation, discrimination and delinquency. Third, whereas using official police records is preferable over self-reports of delinquent behavior, there are also several limitations inherent to this approach. Only crimes for which an official report was made up or crimes that came to the attention of the police were registered. Also, when registered, participants were suspected instead of convicted

of committing a crime. However, delinquent behavior is less likely to be missed by official records than by self-reports because social desirable answering causes more underreporting than delinquent behavior missed by the police. Especially in ethnic minorities since they are more likely to be stopped and frisked, and get caught when committing a crime (Mutsaers, 2015).

Strengths of this study were the assessment of different factors at ethnic minority group level, investigating the interplay between these factors and the influence on official registered delinquency of different types of offences in a general population sample with of a large ethnic minority youth in the Netherlands marked by high delinquency rates.

Conclusions and implications

This study investigated underlying processes by which acculturation and perceived discrimination might contribute to the particularly high delinquency rates observed in second-generation migrants. The prevalence of delinquency was higher among youths with a marginalization strategy and among youths with an integration or separation strategy who experienced group discrimination. In addition, findings suggest that orientation to the mainstream culture only is associated to higher delinquency rates when adherence to the heritage culture is lost (assimilation). As the assimilation acculturation style could not be studied in this sample, future research should compare assimilated to integrated ethnic groups to test this hypothesis. These conclusions were drawn by studying Moroccan-Dutch youth in the Netherlands. The investigated underlying processes may operate in the same way in other ethnic minority groups with a similar wide cultural gap with the mainstream society, a high degree of discrimination and high delinquency rates in the Netherlands or other countries.