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## **THESIS MASTER CRISIS AND SECURITY MANAGEMENT**

**Easy money, friends in need and a spoonful of arousal: a recipe  
for involvement in drug related crime**

*What experience experts say about making money in drug related business*

## **Abstract**

It has been stated by Tops and Tromp (2017b) that some people already engage in drug related crime from a young age onwards. However, there is little research on the reasons *why* youngsters would engage. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the push and pull factors that are available or present when youngsters get involved in drug related crime for the first time. The answers should be sought, the author of this thesis argues, by youngsters who make or made money with drug related activities. Interview questions are based on four criminological theories (strain theory; differential association theory; social bonding theory and rational choice theory) in order to identify important factors. Thirteen adolescent men who make or made money with drug related crime were interviewed, with an average starting age of 18.04 years. Based on the identified factors, a theory of youth involvement in drug related crime has been developed. Three reasons were found: *materialism* (money-based or drug-access-based), *friendliness* (helping out friends who otherwise would not have access to drugs) and *arousal* (looking for something exciting and risky to do). Other important elements are: connections with peers who use drugs; connections with peers who make money with drugs; low time investment; and low risk estimations. Based on these findings, intervention measures are suggested on the early prevention level (taking people out of their potential delinquent network), primary prevention level (educating youngsters about the moral importance of obeying the laws of society) and the control level (heighten the risk perception of the youngsters). This research is explorative, entering the world of adolescent deviant behavior from a different angle, and the author motivates others to do the same.

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<sup>1</sup> Because of the secretiveness of the interview transcripts, appendixes 5 to 17 are not included in the public version of the thesis.

## **Preface**

This is the thesis “*Easy money, friends in need and a spoonful of arousal: a recipe for involvement in drug related crime. What experience experts say about making money in drug related business*”, the result of my research to gain more understanding about why youngsters engage in drug related activities. It has been conducted by interviewing youngsters who earned money with drugs before age twenty-five. This thesis is written to fulfil the graduation requirements of the master Crisis and Security Management at Leiden University. My earliest research on this topic started in November 2017, and the first interviews were conducted in April 2018.

When I told people I wanted to write my thesis about the reasons youngsters had to make money in the drug business, most told me it was undoable or dangerous. Nevertheless, there were people who believed in me all the time, and who supported me in developing my thesis and conducting the research. Thank you all.

In special, I would like to express my gratitude my first supervisor, Tim Dekkers MSc, and Professor Dr Pieter Tops, who both helped me to make my research proposal suitable for a master thesis. I am also grateful for Tim Dekkers’s guidance and support during the process until August 2018, and Dr Marieke Liem for her supervision from September 2018 until January 2019. My friends and family, who had to accept that every conversation they had with me in the past months was about my thesis, and who proofread, checked and double-checked everything for me: thank you all! Last but not least, I want to say thank you to all the respondents who cooperated: without you I would not have been able to conduct this research. You gave me the opportunity to take a closer look to a world that was not that close to me. Without all these people, this thesis would not have been here.

I hope you enjoy your reading.

Marit Dijkstra

Eindhoven, January 6, 2019

## **Reading guide**

The design of this thesis is as follows: in the introduction, drug-related crime in the Netherlands will be discussed. This will include information why the involvement of youngsters in this scene is beneficial for both the crime groups and the youngsters themselves. Next, the research question will be offered and explained. Attention is also given to the societal and scientific relevance of this research.

In the theoretical framework, two important concepts are being defined: “*drug related crime*” and “*push and pull factors*”. Four different criminological theories are discussed: strain theory; differential association theory; social bonding theory; and rational choice theory. All relevant factors of the theories are explained.

In the methodology chapter, it is clarified how the thesis research has been accomplished. The connection between the criminological theories and the interview questions is explained, as is the recruitment procedure and the method for data analysis. The variables of the different theories are transmuted into codes.

In the analysis it is scrutinized, based on the coded data, whether the factors of the four theories that are mentioned in the theoretical framework can be substantiated. Other noteworthy findings will also be mentioned.

In the discussion chapter, the research question will be answered. The findings will be placed in relation to already existing research. The limitations of the thesis will be discussed. The thesis will end with recommendations for policy makers and a concluding note.

## Introduction

In June 2017, the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* produced an article named “*Youngsters recruited for prostitution or drug trade: how criminal gangs get a handle on schools in the Netherlands*” (Tops & Tromp, 2017b; translation by author). The article showed anecdotal proof of how some secondary school students started to make money the illegal way, often with drug related activities. What are the reasons youngsters would choose these ‘jobs’? In the article, some argue that it is just simply the reward of making money; others say youngsters are being pressured (*ibid.*). This article was the start of a search for more: what does the existing research say about the reasons why youngsters are involved in drug related crime?

### Youngsters and crime

According to different scholars, drugs play an important role in organized crime in the Netherlands (Fijnaut & De Ruyver, 2008; Van Wijk & Bremmers, 2011; Bervoets & Van Wijk, 2016; Tops & Tromp, 2017a; Wolters, Oosterhout & Dijkstra, 2017). The Netherlands serves a role as either “a destination country, a transit country, or, especially in the case of synthetic drugs, a production country” (Kruisbergen, Van de Bunt & Kleemans, 2012, p. 289; European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2017). This is not a minor issue: only in Tilburg (a city of 200,000 inhabitants), the hemp production turnover is estimated to be approximately 800 million euros, which is more than the city’s own budget (Haenen, 2014; Tops & Tromp, 2017a).

The structure of organized crime networks in the Netherlands is fluid and often shaped around already existing social bonds (Kleemans & De Poot, 2007; Kruisbergen, *et al.*, 2012; Bervoets & Van Wijk, 2016; Wolters, *et al.*, 2017). However, Kleemans and De Poot (2007) have noted that it is not necessary for every member of the network to know one another. As is visible in figure 1, this can result in different perspectives: some members will not perceive themselves to be part of an organized crime network, because they are unaware of the fluidness and comprehensiveness of the network they are (sometimes indirectly) engaged in.

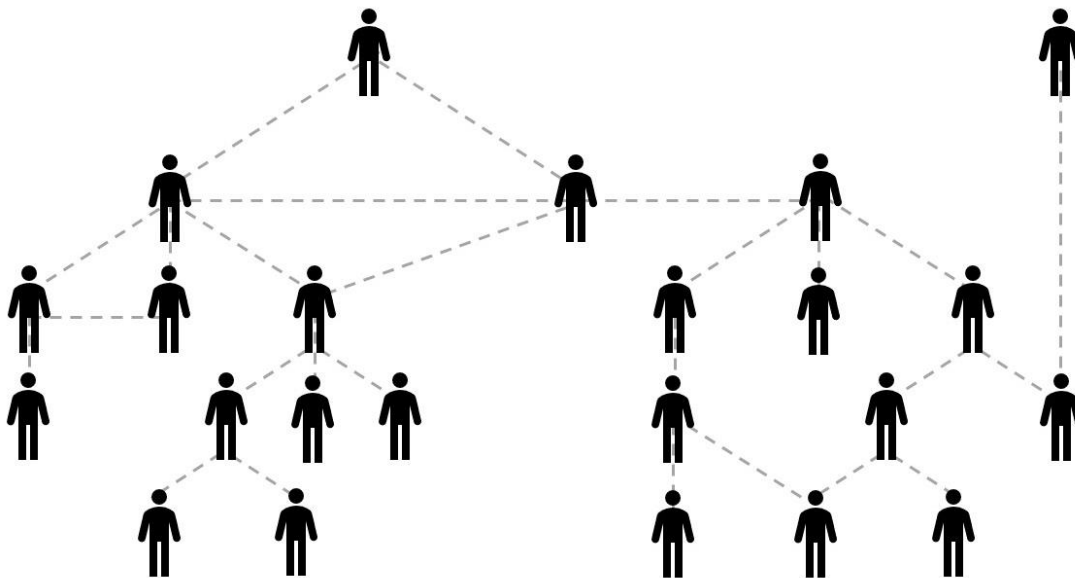


Figure 1. Design of a possible crime network. Not all "members" of the network know one another. Also, the network is fluid: it is possible that some people join on a case-to-case basis, while others remain for a longer time.

This thesis will focus on the role youngsters play in drug related crime in the Netherlands. Tops and Tromp (2017b) have argued that more and more youngsters are involved in drug networks. Several possible reasons have been suggested in Dutch studies for this involvement. First of all, it has been argued work in crime in general is attractive for youngsters, because it can give benefits. Being part of a certain structure can give young people a higher social status in their direct social environment (Kleiman, 1997; Tops & Tromp, 2017a; Tops & Tromp, 2017b; Wolters, *et al.*, 2017). Secondly, since laws are created in such a way that adolescents are tried and punished less severe than adults, Kleiman (1997) has suggested that they are “willing to take lower wages” and higher risks (p. 556). They are therefore both cheaper and easier to recruit than adults. Thirdly, youngsters are less aware of the downsides and dangers of criminal activities, which correlates with the fact that they are inclined to take higher risks (Kleiman, 1997; Ferwerda, 2016). Instead of taking the risks in account, adolescents have the tendency to focus on the positive sides of crime, like the provision of money, the social status and the access to drugs (Kleiman, 1997; Tops & Tromp, 2017b).



## **Research question**

As will be explained comprehensively in the next paragraph, *Relevance*, there are certain gaps in the literature (both globally academic and practical in the Netherlands) that indicate more research has to be accomplished to get a more complete understanding why youngsters are being involved in drug related crime. It is the objective of this research to contribute to the body of knowledge in the Netherlands by adding an overlooked information source. It traces back the origin: the adolescents who engage in the drug business themselves, to find out what are the main reasons, according them, to start to make money in the world of drugs.

The research is based on four criminological theories, which are explained extensively in the theoretical framework: strain theory, differential association theory, social bonding theory, and rational choice theory. Based on these four theories, interview data will be analyzed, in order to answer the research question: *“To what extent can the push and pull factors described by the four criminological theories explain youngsters’ entry in drug related crime?”*

## **Relevance**

### **Academic relevance**

There are two major gaps in Dutch crime research when it concerns the role of youngsters. To begin with, Dutch research is mostly aimed to particular vulnerable groups of youngsters, or to adult offenders (see, for example, Kleemans & De Poot, 2007; Kruisbergen, *et al.*, 2012; Bos, Loyens, Nagy, & Oude Breuil, 2016; Dettmeijer-Vermeulen, Esser, & Noteboom, 2016). The newspaper article of Tops and Tromp (2017b) was one of the first (non-academic) sources contradicting the view people do not engage in drug related crime until later adulthood (as has been stated by, amongst others, Kleemans & De Poot (2007) and Kruisbergen and colleagues (2012)).

Secondly, the overload of quantitative, report- and second sources-based research lack to include insights of the youngsters themselves. Most of the international and Dutch theoretical evidence is based on either quantitative surveys (often developed to prove or dismiss a certain theory), or on police reports. As will be explained more comprehensive in the theoretical framework, there are different criminological theories that have searched for the reasons or decisive factors that determine whether youngsters will show delinquent behavior. Yet, there is little qualitative research aiming to understand the reasons why youngsters engage in crime in

general that includes delinquent youngsters themselves in their sample – let alone qualitative research in the specific field of drug related crime. Research reports can lead to policy implications and interventions (see Van der Steur, 2016). Therefore, one should be very careful about the research one accomplishes and be able to assure that the findings of the research are as close to reality as possible. By adding explorative qualitative research with this thesis, the existing body of knowledge will be extended.

### **Societal relevance**

The societal relevance of this research is even higher. Though working in drugs sounds to youngsters merely as an easy way of money making, it is not all rosy. The involvement in criminality on an early age is a predictor for a life career in crime (Kleemans & de Poot, 2007; Bervoets & Van Wijk, 2016; Ferwerda, 2016). Working in the drug scene can also promote drug abuse (Kleiman, 1997; Tops & Tromp, 2017b) and decrease school prestatation (Kleiman, 1997). Lately, there have been assassinations in the Netherlands, aimed towards people who earned money by working in drug related organized crime – including adolescents (NOS, 2018; Van der Lee, 2018). Also, once involved in a crime network, youngsters can be pressured to do more criminal activities involuntarily (Sonnemans & Rozema, 2017; Tops & Tromp, 2017b). Hence, there is a slippery slope from the first time one gets involved and the involvement of youngsters in drug related crime is highly undesirable.

Understanding why youngsters involve can help to develop more targeted interventions to help youngsters and children at risk. Hence, this thesis is not just developed to test different criminological theories. Knowing more about the perceptions of the youngsters and about which factors have been most decisive, will help to develop interventions that make more sense in the eyes of the youngsters themselves. This is not to state that the factors perceived by the youngsters to be important, truly *are* the most important ones – but by neglecting their insights and ideas, as is happening currently, stubbornness from their side can be created. Hitherto youngsters are not taken seriously, mostly to be spoken *about* instead of *with*. Open conversations can help, and this thesis will be a start practicing this. The aim is also to give policy recommendations, not based on secondary sources or quantitative research, but on qualitative interviews with the youngsters themselves.

## Theoretical framework

Since the goal of this thesis is to determine push and pull factors present in youth involvement in drug related crime, it is important to have a better understanding of the reasons why youngsters engage in criminal activities in general. In the following theoretical framework, four criminological theories will be discussed, which argue for different reasons and possible factors why youngsters would participate in criminal acts: strain theory; differential association theory; social bonding theory; and rational choice theory.

### Defining the concepts

Before moving on to the different theories, it is important to conceptualize “drug related crime” and “push and pull factors”.

### Drug related crime

There are dozens of different tasks in the world of drug trafficking, production and trade that are not always easily distinguished from one another (for more information about different tasks, see: Kleemans & De Poot, 2007; Fijnaut & De Ruyver, 2008; Van Wijk & Bremmers, 2011; Bervoet & Van Wijk, 2016; Tops & Tromp, 2017a, Tops & Tromp, 2017b). In this thesis, there is a focus on the *reasons* why youngsters engage in drug related crime. The exact activity is of less importance. The focus will be on the circumstances that were present during the time the youngsters started their illegal moneymaking, in order to map the push and pull factors. For these reasons, it has been decided to conceptualize “drug related crime” as: *any act where a person earns money with drug related activities, by which during the activity the law is violated, making it a crime* (see Merriam-Webster, 2018). This can be anything in the production line (e.g. ‘topping’ weed plants), the trade line (e.g. dealing or client recruiting (by so-called ‘runners’)) and whatsoever more.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> During the interviews, the term “drug related crime” is not used; instead, it is being replaced with “drug related business”. By doing so, the researcher avoided creating the idea that she would perceive the respondents as criminals, and motivated them to speak freely.

## **Push and pull factors**

The term ‘push and pull factors’ can be traced back to migration studies, where *push factors* are described as the factors “that encourage a population to leave its home”. *Pull factors*, on the contrary, are factors “that draw a population to another area” (Calhoun, 2002). However, this concept is also used to explain, amongst others, decisive factors regarding school dropout (Doll, Eslami & Walters, 2013); early prevention of delinquency (Baldry & Winkel, 2004); and even tourism (Valis, Gibert, Orellana, & Antón-Clavé, 2018). Hence, it is a concept that can be applied to very diverse fields of studies.

According to Doll *et al.* (2013), the main difference between push and pull factors is the *agency*. When it comes to push factors, the youngster himself perceives he is not the agent of the consequence, while in pull factors, he does. It is the aim of this thesis to define important push and pull factors that influence youngsters’ entry into drug related crime. Push factors will hereby be defined as *factors that encourage youngsters to not to obey the law or to make money the illegal way, pushing them away from the legal possibilities to live up to certain demands or to reach certain goals*. These factors often have a (perceived) external cause. Examples are the perception one cannot have a regular job or is deprived in his opportunities otherwise (Kleiman, 1997; Wolters, *et al.*, 2017). On the other hand, pull factors are *the alluring factors that encourage the youngsters to engage in drug related crime: the factors that make it truly attractive*. The choice to do so is more internal than it is in case of push factors. For example, the idea of easy money-making can be a pull factor (Tops & Tromp, 2017b).

## **Strain theory**

Strain theory was developed by Robert Merton, in a time deviant behavior was mostly explained based on biological factors (Merton, 1938). Merton, on the contrary, argued that structural and cultural conditions had to play an important role in the chance one would show delinquent behavior. Two elements are of particular importance when someone wants to comply to society: “the culturally defined goals, purposes, and interests” and the definition, regulation and control of “acceptable modes of achieving these goals” (*ibid.*, p. 672-673). The latter has been defined by Merton (1938) as “institutionalized means” (p. 676). He stated human society is very competitive, and therefore, the obtainment of the defined goals is very important.

Strain theory assumes that some people are unable to reach the demands society has made. Not achieving the cultural goals will create “strain, tension, contradiction or discrepancy (...)

[which] exert[s] pressure for change” (Merton, 1968, p. 116; Featherstone & Deflem, 2003). Featherstone and Deflem (2003) point out these persons experience “a structural situation of blocked opportunities”, which promotes strain perceptions (p. 478). Most people try to achieve culturally defined goals while conforming to the institutionalized means, but people who experience strains will consider the use of illegitimate means to achieve the cultural goals. They follow the doctrine “the-end-justifies-the-means” (Merton, 1968, p. 681).

According to strain theorists, this is not a personal perception problem. Social structures can be reproached to be responsible: “Crime and delinquency are the product of social forces driving individuals to do things they otherwise would not do” (Bernard, 1984, p. 353, in Featherstone & Deflem, 2003, p. 484). DeLisi (2011) has stated strain perceptions are indirect causes of delinquent behavior: the experience of strain results in negative emotional states, which promote criminal acts (see also Merton, 1968; Moon, Hwan & McCluskey, 2011).

Thus, strain theory is not just about the economic strains persons can perceive (Miller & Matthews, 2001; Vilalta & Martinez, 2011), but about the cultural goals that live in society (Featherstone & Deflem, 2003). In 1992, Agnew named three group of strain sources: “(a) the failure to achieve positively valued goals, (b) the possible or actual loss of positively valued stimuli (...), and (c) the presentation of noxious stimuli to individuals” (in Moon, *et al.*, 2011, p. 854). Concludingly, to strain theorists, if a person feels deprived to achieve cultural goals by his direct environment, or if one loses earlier achieved goals, this can promote criminal behavior (Farrington & Welsh, 2007).

Based on this theory, one could argue youngsters consider earning money in drugs because they are excluded from the possibility to make money and earning status via other, socially more acceptable, means. This is indeed supported by research. Kleiman (1997) and Wolters and colleagues (2017) have found that youngsters who have a hard time finding a regular job or an internship, and who are desperately in need of money, are more likely to be involved in organized crime. There is also proof child abuse (which is an indicator for a deprived environment) promotes offending (Brezina, 1998, in Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Tops and Tromp (2017a) have stated that people who feel treated subordinately by authorities, have less problems with illegal acts. They therefore argue “organized crime is (...) an economic and social issue” (*ibid.*, p. 247, translation by author).

Thus, according to strain theory, lack of chances in the direct social environment of an adolescent, who is aware of the high cultural demands of society, will promote criminal behavior

amongst youngsters. In the interviews of this thesis, one would therefore expect signs of this (a deprived environment and high societal demands): for example, the idea society asks more than the respondent can achieve; the view one can only make a decent wage the illegal way; and perceptions of discrimination, racism or other forms of exclusion by society. It will also be investigated whether the youngsters believe in the institutional means of society.

## **Differential association theory**

The theory of differential association, developed by Sutherland and Cressey, is based on the idea that “criminal behavior is learned through intimate contact with criminal associates” (Miller & Matthews, 2001, p. 253). Hence, according to Sutherland and Cressey, it is the direct social network of a person that matters most (Sutherland & Cressey, 1960; Miller & Matthews, 2001; Moon, *et al.*, 2011). Sutherland and Cressey gave nine statements in which they explained their theory, whereby statement three and four reflect the core of the differential association theory:

*“3. The principal part of the [interactional] learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups. (...)*

*4. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes (a) techniques of committing the crime, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes very simple; (b) the specific direction for motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes”* (Sutherland & Cressey, 1960, p. 78, emphasis as in the original).

Thus, delinquency is not merely mirroring behavior (Sykes & Matza, 1957; Sutherland & Cressey, 1960; Akers, 1996); youngsters learn techniques as well as perceptions of delinquent behavior (Sykes & Matza, 1957; Sutherland & Cressey, 1960; Moon, *et al.*, 2011). Differential association theory states that the belief in the norms of one’s social group results in “behavioral conformity” (Akers, 1996, p. 231). It is important to note that does not necessarily mean that those who are close to the youngster are outright criminals; since their attitudes to behavior matter as well, the *approval* or *acceptance* of delinquent behavior by close contacts can also influence the youngster’s behavior (Sykes & Matza, 1957; Moon, *et al.*, 2011).

However, one should not simply state criminal behavior and its accessory attitudes are learned and therefore justified without further consequences – on the contrary, Sykes and Matza (1957) have argued that people who show delinquent behavior do feel guilt and shame and realize

there is a sense of “wrongfulness” in their behavior (p. 665). Weber (1947) has argued that one can claim that legal rules are legitimate, “without accepting their *moral* [emphasis added] validity” (p. 125, in Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 665). It is likely that delinquent people argue their behavior is valid and justify it, despite the fact it is against the law. Sykes and Matza (1957) name five different ways people do this, called “techniques of neutralization”, which will be shortly mentioned in the following.

“The Denial of Responsibility” means that youngsters argue their criminal behavior is not their own responsibility (*ibid.*, p. 667). This does not mean the delinquent act is an accident, but the youngster acted as such due to factors that are outside himself and moreover, beyond his control. The second technique, “Denial of Injury”, means that a delinquent “feels that his behavior does not really cause any great harm”, even though it is illegal (*ibid.*, p. 668). Another neutralization technique, “the Denial of the Victim” is a method in which the legitimacy of victimization is denied; somehow, the victim deserved his injury and should therefore not be perceived to be a victim (*ibid.*, p. 668). This technique is also present in acts where the victim is absent, unknown or utterly vague, making the perpetrator less aware of the existence of victims. When someone, who is showing delinquent behavior, argues that the ones rejecting his behavior are hypocrites, corrupt or in some other way unqualified to judge, Sykes and Matza (1957) argue the delinquent shows the neutralization technique “the Condemnation of the Condemners” (p. 668). Lastly, “the Appeal to Higher Loyalties”, means that the youngster himself justifies the sacrifice of the good for the larger society for “the demands of the smaller social group to which the delinquent belongs” (*ibid.*, p. 669).

Already in 1970, Cressey noted that deprived adolescents “learn that men who take the illegitimate route to success fare better than those taking the legitimate route” – thus, these youngsters are under severe influence of their direct neighborhood. The differential association school has focused mostly on the role of peers (Ploeger 1997, in Miller & Matthews, 2001). Miller and Matthews (2001) found that both school friends and work friends could influence the delinquent behavior of youngsters; the group they were closest with (often school friends) had the strongest impact. Having criminal peers is a significant factor in predicting whether or not someone will engage in delinquency (Miller & Matthews, 2001; Özbay & Özcan, 2006; Moon, *et al.*, 2011; Vilalta & Martinez, 2011). This also appears to be the case in drug dealing (Kleiman, 1997). In Dutch research, it is mentioned that the *social opportunity structure* determines whether someone will engage in (organized) crime: involvement is facilitated by inter-social relations

(Kleemans & de Poot, 2007; Bervoets & Van Wijk, 2016). This is not only true for adults, but also for adolescents (Wolters, *et al.*, 2007; Van Wijk & Bremmers, 2011, Tops & Tromp, 2017b). The social opportunity structure is not only present between friends, but can also be current in families: for example, it has been noted that younger family members who join gangs, are brought along by their older siblings (Moon, *et al.*, 2011; Bervoets & van Wijk, 2016; Ferwerda, 2016).

Nevertheless, the differential association theory is not without critique. Akers (1996) has argued that this theory cannot explain behavior “that is inconsistent with one’s professed values” (p. 231), though Sykes and Matza’s neutralization techniques may offer an explanation for this. Farrington and Welsh (2007) also note that it is possible that “birds of a feather flock together” – that is, delinquent peers are likely to have more contact and more close bonds with like-minded individuals (p. 80). Therefore, they argue that it is more likely that peer contacts *correlate* with delinquent behavior rather than *cause* it (*ibid.*), while differential association theorists perceive it as a cause of deviant performances (Sutherland & Cressey 1960; Miller & Matthews, 2001).

If the differential association theory is indeed an explanation why youngsters would engage in drug related crime, one would expect that the respondents know others who make money this way, or who at least tolerate such behavior. Since Sykes and Matza (1957) have stated the offenders are likely to justify their illegal acts, it can also be expected there is proof of different neutralization techniques. Examples of how these neutralization techniques can be detected can be found in table 3 in the section *Methodology*.

## **Social bonding theory**

Social bonding theory assumes that the chance someone engages in delinquency depends on the strength of someone’s bond to society (Hirschi, 1968; Farrington & Welsh, 2007). It takes a different perspective compared to other criminological theories; it is not focusing on why someone becomes a delinquent, but why *not* (Hirschi, 1968; Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Özbay & Özcan, 2006; Farrington & Welsh, 2007). According to social bonding theory, no special motivation is needed; there is a *lack* of certain elements that result in delinquent behavior (Hirschi, 1968). Delinquency, therefore, “is the result of weak or broken bonds between the individual and society” (Kelley, 1996, p. 329).

Travis Hirschi is the founding father of social bonding theory. In the book *Causes of Delinquency*, he describes what he calls “a control theory of delinquency”, later named social bonding theory (Hirschi, 1968, p. 16). Hirschi labels four elements that influence the chance



someone will show delinquent behavior, which were later complemented by different social bonding scholars.

The first element Hirschi describes is “attachment” (1968, p. 17). He argues that people who lack attachment to others are “free from moral restraints” and therefore are not stopped from showing immoral and deviant behavior (*ibid.*, p. 18). This is based on the assumption that people are only showing moral behavior, because they want to have positive social interactions with others (Durkheim, 1961, in Hirschi, 1968). Violating moral norms means that one is going against the expectations and desires of social others; something that, according to Hirschi, only can occur when one lacks attachment. Hirschi (1968) did not specify to *what* one is attached, apart from the fact that the attachment should be “outside one’s self” (p. 30). More recent scholars named three special groups that are of importance for the bonds for young people: peers, family and school (Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Kelley, 1996; Özbay & Özcan, 2006).

The second element is “commitment to achievement” (Hirschi, 1968, p. 20). Hirschi argues one’s ambitions and aspirations will normally protect the person from showing deviant behavior, because one would not risk losing his “goods, reputations, [and] prospects” (*ibid.*, p. 21). As an example, Hirschi names educational and professional careers as achievements one is committed to. Lack of feelings of commitment to these causes or achievements can stimulate delinquent behavior.

“Involvement” in traditional activities is the third element of the social bonding theory (Hirschi, 1968, p. 21). Hirschi states that people who engage in many traditional activities lack time to show other, deviant behavior. Commitment and involvement are highly inter-related: being committed to certain aspirations, like making a career, makes one involved in more traditional activities, like staying in school or doing an internship (Hirschi, 1968; Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Kelley, 1996; Özbay & Özcan, 2006).

The final element is “belief” (Hirschi, 1968, p. 23), which Özbay and Özcan (2006) later conceptualized as belief in “the moral values of society” (p. 713). Opposite to strain theory or differential association theory, Hirschi (1968) argues that a person does not break the rules he believes in. He simply does not believe in these rules at all: “The less a person believes he should obey the rules, the more likely he is to violate them” (p. 26). This also makes the neutralization techniques described by Sykes and Matza (1957) unnecessary, for a person does not have to justify his behavior, as he does not believe he should obey the law in the first place (Hirschi, 1968).

All these elements are intercorrelated: “The more closely a person is tied to conventional society in any of these ways, the more closely he is likely to be tied in the other ways” (Hirschi, 1968, p. 27). Özbay and Özcan (2006) summarize three reasons why social bonding will prevent criminal behavior. Firstly, an adolescent will take the opinion of relatives, teachers and peers in account. Secondly, due to the fact one is involved in traditional activities, there is less time to commit delinquent acts (see also Hirschi, 1968). Lastly, if a youngster believes in the values of society, he will believe violating the rules is wrong, and will therefore not engage in delinquency (Özbay & Özcan, 2006). The stronger the bonds are, the less likely it is youngsters will become delinquents (Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Kelley, 1996; Özbay & Özcan, 2006; Farrington & Welsh, 2007).

The social bonding theory has been criticized. Hirschi has stated that the fact one *is* attached to others is leading, more important than to *who* someone is attached to and what the characteristics of these persons are (in Kelley, 1996). This is fully opposite to the differential association theory, since this means that “even [when] juveniles [are] attached to [delinquent] peers, the stronger the attachments to these people, the less likely the tendency towards delinquency” (Kelley, 1996, p. 330). However, social bonding theorists argue that relations with delinquent peers, which is seen as a likely delinquency factor by the differential association theory, can be prevented:

“The formation of social bonds to family and school will decrease the likelihood that youths will develop attachments to *delinquent* peers in adolescence, since the behaviors rewarded in family and school and those likely to be rewarded by delinquent youth are not compatible.” (Hawkins & Weis, 1985, p. 80-81, emphasis as in the original)

Hence, delinquent behavior can only develop, social bonding theorists argue, when there is an inconsistency or interruption in the forming of social bonds. Then, openness to negative peer influence is more likely (Hawkins & Weis, 1985).

Özbay and Özcan (2006), in their research on high school students in Ankara, Turkey, found that “a higher level of social bond is related to a lower degree of delinquent behaviors” (p. 723). Other research has found that inconsistent parental supervision and discipline, and rejection by parents (which are indicators of less attachment to family members) can promote delinquent behavior (McCord, 1979, in Farrington & Welsh, 2007; West and Farrington, 1973, in Farrington

and Welsh, 2007; Moon, *et al.*, 2011; Vilalta & Martinez, 2011). Disrupted families, which often result in a worse or no bond with the father, also correlate with youth delinquency (McCord, 1982, in Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Furthermore, it has been noted that fruitful school environments can impede criminal behavior (Kenney & Watson, 1996; Barreca, 2000; Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Vilalta & Martinez, 2011; Bos, *et al.*, 2016).

Thus, a lack of bonding with society indeed seems to be an indicator of criminal behavior. In this thesis, the following indicators are expected to be found for the social bonding theory: a lack of attachment to friends, family and school; low commitment to and involvement in traditional activities; and a low belief in moral values of society (see also table 4 in the section *Methodology*).

## **Rational Choice Theory**

Rational Choice Theory originates from the economic choice model. It takes a rational standing on crime (Clarke, 1995), stating that people realistically weigh costs and benefits of criminal behavior: will the possible reward be worth the possible punishment (Loughran, Paternoster, Chalfin & Wilson, 2016)? Jensen, Erickson and Gibbs (1978) emphasize the “*perceived* certainty of punishment and offense rates” is decisive: one’s perception is thus more important than the *actual* risks or sanctions (p. 58, emphasis as in the original). This makes rational choice theory “a perceptual theory” (*ibid.*). The theory is closely related to deterrence theory, which argues that the use of restrictive measures will lessen the chance someone will engage in criminal behavior (Jensen, *et al.*, 1978; Heiko & Junker, 2009; Loughran, *et al.*, 2016). However, Loughran and colleagues (2016) argue rational choice theory is more complete than deterrence theory, including not just one component (deterrence), but four: the probability of apprehension; the perceived severity of the criminal sanction; and individual social and personal (material) rewards of crime (p. 96-97).

In their own research, Jensen and colleagues (1978) found that risk-estimation correlated significantly with delinquent behavior. Loughran *et al.* (2016) encountered that personal and social rewards promoted involvement in drug crime. The certainty of getting caught was an important factor; even more important than the severity of the criminal sanction. This is a clear indication for a cost-benefit consideration. Tops and Tromp (2017a; 2017b) also mention rational choice as a reason for engaging in criminal behavior: earning money by illegal acts is relatively easy, and as is mentioned before, the punishment for youngsters is relatively low (Kleiman, 1997;

Tops & Tromp, 2017a). It has also been pointed out that easier access to (cheaper) drugs can be an important personal material reward (Kleiman, 1997).

Rational choice theory is often criticized by criminologists because it is “too economic” and ignores the theoretical constructs of social criminological theories (Heiko & Junker, 2009; Matsueda, 2013, in Loughran, *et al.*, 2016). Some have argued mankind is unable of showing full rational behavior: people are “bounded in their rationality” and can shift preferences (Heiko & Junker, 2009, p. 10; Kroneberg & Kalter, 2012). People do not only make decisions based on rational choices, but can have different motives; amongst others, Kroneberg and Kalter (2012) name altruism and identity-based- and norm-based purposes. Nevertheless, Heiko and Junker (2009) argue bounded rationality considerations can still lead to the same results: as far as humans can make rational decisions, they can weigh the costs, benefits and risks and in this way decide whether or not they will show delinquent behavior. Jensen *et al.* (1978) furthermore concluded that the effect of the cost-benefit consideration is most visible when one is asked to estimate his or her own risks to be punished, more than to make general assumptions. The perception is thus more decisive than the actual rationality of the choice.

To find indicators for the rational choice theory, during the interviews, questions will be asked about perceived sanctions, risks, other costs and social and material rewards. It is expected that the respondents perceive the sanctions, costs and risks (including the risk of getting caught) as relatively low, while the rewards (both social and material) will be perceived to be high. It is also important to find indicators *when* this cost-benefit balance has been made; have the youngsters thought (to a certain extent) rationally about their choice before they started? It is possible they are only thinking about the rationality of their choice for the first time during the interview, which supports the critique of bounded rationality theorists (see Heiko & Junker, 2009; Kroneberg & Kalter, 2012).

### **Summarizing the four criminological theories**

The list of applicable theories regarding the factors why youngsters engage in crime, is likely to be inexhaustible. The four theories above are chosen because of distinctiveness from one another, one theory sometimes even arguing the contrary of other theories. However, some overlap is insurmountable, as years of criminological research has found certain factors reoccurring again and again as particularly important. The goal of this research is not to define which of these theories is closest to the truth or something in that regard. The theories are used as guidelines for

interview questions, which can help to discover important reasons and push and pull factors according to the youngsters themselves.

## **Methodology**

To make the research manageable and feasible for the time given, the focus of this thesis has been narrowed down to youngsters who make or have made money with drug related crime in the Netherlands. There is a focus on country rather than on nationality, to make it possible to include more respondents that are or were active in the Netherlands.

The research was conducted by doing qualitative interviews with youngsters who are or were involved in drug related crime, with a maximum starting age of twenty-five. There was no fixed current age; it was only decided that there should be a relative short time-span since they got involved (no longer then fifteen years). By doing so, it could be affirmed that the respondents gave quite recent information about how and why youngsters involve in drug related crime. Also, using this retrospective design is most effective if the respondents have to answer questions about relatively recent memories (Miller & Matthews, 2001). The age twenty-five as was selected a maximum age to draw a line when someone can be called a “youngster”.

The interviews focused on the moment when the youngsters earned money in drug related crime for the first time and the circumstances they perceived to be critical at this time. Room was also created to talk about other present factors in general. This, because it is possible that youngsters do not perceive some factors as decisive (e.g. malign parental relationships), but that can still be of great importance. The interviews were semi-structured to avoid bias towards one of the theories mentioned above, while still including relevant questions based on all of them, and to give the youngsters the necessary space to provide extra information. The interviews were accomplished face to face, over the telephone or by the use of an (anonymous) chat app; this was dependent to the preference of the respondent. Because there is a special focus on the first time one engaged, it was also possible to include participants that did no longer make money with drugs.

## **Recruitment**

The participants were recruited with help from the researcher’s own social network and by using of different social media. Two participants were recruited via the researcher’s own network.

On LinkedIn, the following message was published (in Dutch): “For my master Crisis and Security Management, I am investigating the reasons for youngsters to make money with drugs. Therefore, I am looking for people (maximum 25 years old) who make or have made money with drug related businesses in the Netherlands. I am focusing on the reasons why youngsters start. I

am still looking for respondents! Do you know or are you somebody who can help me with this?” The message furthermore included some explanation of the interview methods and contact details. The message was shared four times and reached 1,271 persons. This recruitment method resulted in two participants, who were contacted thanks to a shared acquaintance.

Another social medium that was used was Jodel. On this social medium app, members send each other messages, which are received by everybody within a ten-kilometer range. In the Netherlands, the app is popular in the cities Tilburg, Utrecht, Nijmegen, Groningen and Maastricht, and most users are adolescents<sup>3</sup>. In all these cities, the researcher placed the following message: “For my thesis, I would like to interview people who (occasionally) have earned money with drug related business. I am focusing on the reasons why people start with this. It is not necessary to give any details about your current life or the exact work you are doing if you don’t want to. Everything will be processed anonymously.” The message was placed in Dutch in Nijmegen, Utrecht, Tilburg and Groningen and in English in Maastricht, due to the lingua franca of Jodel in Maastricht. After a few weeks, the researcher sent a reminder with a hashtag which traced back to the original post. This message resulted in the recruitment of thirteen participants.

After the interviews with any participant was completed, he was asked whether he knew someone who might be interested in being interviewed as well (the snowball technique). This resulted in two extra participants. Hence, in total nineteen respondents were found. Unfortunately, contact was lost with four respondents found via Jodel and one respondent found via the researcher’s own network before the interviews could take place. In one case, the respondent decided to withdraw for unfamiliar reasons shortly after the interview started.

Concludingly, in total, thirteen participants were interviewed. Sex, age and preference of interview method of the respondents that were interviewed and included in the thesis are visible in table 1. Of these respondents, 100% were men, with an average starting age of 18.04 years, the youngest being 14 years old when engaging or the first time, the oldest 23 years old<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> There are no official demographics available; indication made by the author, who uses the app herself for over four years. Also, the target group of Jodel concerns students.

<sup>4</sup> When the respondent did know the exact starting age, but suggested two possible starting ages, the average of the suggestion is included in the calculation of average starting age.

Table 1

*Recruited respondents with information about their sex, age and preferred interview method*

Respondent	Gender	Age	Preferred interview method	Recruited by	Starting age
1 (Alex)	Male	30	Face to face	Own network	16
2 (Ben)	Male	21	Chat-app (anonymous)	Jodel	15
3 (Charlie)	Male	21	Face to face	Jodel	19
4 (David)	Male	27	Chat-app (anonymous)	Jodel	23
5 (Elroy)	Male	20	Chat-app	Jodel	19
6 (Frank)	Male	25	Face to face	Jodel	14
7 (Gus)	Male	20	Face to face	Snowball	17/18
8 (Harry)	Male	18	Telephone call	Snowball	18
9 (Ismael)	Male	24	Chat-app (anonymous)	Jodel	15/16
10 (James)	Male	19	Chat-app (anonymous)	Jodel	18
11 (Kevin) <sup>5</sup>	Male	26	Chat-app (anonymous)	LinkedIn	21
12 (Leon) <sup>5</sup>	Male	20	Chat-app (anonymous)	Jodel	17/18
13 (Matthew)	Male	33	Chat-app (anonymous)	LinkedIn	21

*Note.* All names are pseudonyms. Those names are given in alphabetic order.

## The interview questions

As has been noted before, the qualitative interviews were semi-structured to avoid bias and to give respondents room for their side of the story. It has been noted in the theoretical framework that the four criminological theories chosen for this research overlay (sometimes significantly). Still, some distinction can be made. Questions regarding the strain theory focused on the perceived cultural demands of society and how the respondent felt about these demands. Differential association theory questions determined whether the respondent had peers or family members who made business in drug related crime, the relationship between the respondent and these

<sup>5</sup> As will become clear in the analysis, Kevin and Leon differ from the other respondents. Kevin is a non-Dutch European male who started his business outside the Netherlands. He sold drugs in the Netherlands on a case-to-case basis. Leon is Dutch, but was living abroad when he started to make money with drugs. He stated he never engaged in drug related activities in the Netherlands, though he purchased his goods in Dutch cities. Currently, they are both living in the Netherlands. These two respondents were interviewed to find out whether they could provide useful information and to what extent they diverged from the respondents who were merely active in the Netherlands. Based on the analysis, it can be said that they did not heavily deviate from other respondents. They were therefore included in the thesis.



persons, and whether the respondent perceived these persons helped them into the business. To test the social bonding theory, questions were asked about the four elements of social bonding as noted by Hirschi (1968). Questions relating to the rational choice theory were based on four different elements described by Loughran and colleagues (2016). All interview questions and the informed consent (in Dutch) can be found in appendix 2. In appendix 3, a total overview is given of the questions that are likely to correspond (or contradict, depending on the answer) with one or more of the four criminological theories.

## **Transcripts and coding**

Transcripts of the interviews were made. When the interview was face to face or over the phone, it was recorded with the respondent's consent. Respondents that were willing to answer questions using a chat app agreed with the entire conversation being copied in the appendix of the thesis (from the start of the interview until it was officially ended, not the conversation before or after the interview). All transcripts, screenshots and notes can be found in appendix 5 to 17 (not included in the public version of the thesis).

The coding scheme is divided in four tables (table 2 to 5), visible on the next pages. The answers were coded in order to categorize them to the different defined elements that were related to the four criminological theories. Also, other important factors were included. For strain theory, indications of believe or disbelief in the institutional means were sub-coded. Special codes were made to find indicators for the sources of the perceived strains, too. In the differential association theory codes, extra attention is paid to the possible neutralization techniques respondents can use to justify their behavior. Lastly, a special code was added to determine whether the respondent experienced bounded rationality during the code design for rational choice theory. Coding was accomplished by the use of the program NVivo Pro 11\_4. The code tree, which gives an overview of the number of sources which gave indicators for a certain code, and the total amount of references, can be found in appendix 4.

Table 2

*Coding scheme for indicating factors of the strain theory*

Code	Factor codes	Definition	Relevant keywords/phrases
PRO ST		<i>Pro strain theory.</i> Shows proof of the strain theory; any aspect indicating the respondent perceives factors relating to strain theory as likely reasons for the engagement in drug related crime.	UNABLE TO; UNATTAINABLE; WITHOUT OPPORTUNITY
	[PRO ST] DIM	<i>Deviant institutionalized means.</i> Indicators that the respondent, (though accepting the cultural goals, purposes and interests of society,) has not accepted the institutionalized means to achieve these goals.	“You don’t always have to obey the law if you have to achieve your goal.” “Being honest doesn’t bring you anything.”
	[PRO ST] FIN	<i>Finances.</i> According to the respondent, a shortage of financial resources was a reason the engage in drug related crime.	“Everybody has money but me.” “This is the only way for me to make a decent living.”
	[PRO ST] SOC	<i>Social.</i> According to the respondent, social grievances were reasons to engage in drug related crime (for example: lack of status).	“I meant nothing until I started doing this.” “I only made friends thanks to these activities.”
	[PRO ST] CUL	<i>Cultural.</i> This factor indicates the respondent felt like he/she was falling short in achieving goals that are of great importance for one’s cultural environment.	“They were judging me for not having a job.” “People were laughing at me because I was failing.”
SS		<i>Strain sources.</i> The sources that cause negative emotions and strain perceptions (Agnew, 1992, in Moon, <i>et al.</i> , 2011)	
	[SS] FTA	<i>Failure to achieve.</i> The failure to achieve certain goals (whether these are financial, social or cultural).	“I was never able to do this.” “I tried and tried but failed.”

[SS] LOSS	<i>Loss.</i> The possible or actual loss of certain goals, sometimes due to stressful life events.	“I was fired.” “I was always afraid of not achieving anything.”
[SS] NOX	<i>Noxious stimuli.</i> The perception of noxious stimuli to a respondent, which causes negative emotions and perceptions of strain.	“I was discriminated.” “My father hit me and told me I was worth nothing.” “I never got the job because I am a man of color.”
CON ST	<i>Con strain theory.</i> The respondent rejects indications of the strain theory and does not think he was restrained from achieving financial, social or cultural goals the ‘normal’ way.	POSSIBILITIES; OPPORTUNITIES “Everybody can achieve anything.” “Nothing is impossible.” “If one fails, he should blame himself, not society.”
[CON ST] RIM	<i>Regular institutionalized means.</i> Indicators the respondent has accepted the institutionalized means to achieve cultural goals.	“You always have to listen to the law.” “I can achieve everything by just working hard.”

Table 3

*Coding scheme for indicating factors of the differential association theory*

Code	Factor codes	Definition	Relevant keywords/phrases
PRO DA		<i>Pro differential association theory.</i> Any aspect indicating the respondent thinks social relations with delinquents was a reason for engaging in drug related crime.	EVERYBODY; PEERS; RECRUITED “Everybody I know does this.”
	[PRO DA] FRI	<i>Friends.</i> Indicators that friends were engaged in drug related crime.	FRIENDS “All my friends make money in this.”
	[PRO DA] FAM	<i>Family.</i> Family members of the respondent were engaged in drug related crime.	FAMILY “My father had his own marihuana nursery.”
	[PRO DA] REC	<i>Recruitment.</i> Indicators a respondent was asked directly to engage and therefore started.	“Someone asked me to help him, that’s how it started.”
	[PRO DA] ENV PER	<i>Environmental perceptions.</i> The motives, drives, rationalizations and attitudes of the social environment are in line with the behavior of the youngster.	“My family beliefs there is nothing wrong with making money this way.” “I don’t think they would mind.”
CON DA		<i>Con differential association theory.</i> Any aspect indicating the respondent thinks social contacts did not mean anything to him when deciding to engage in drug related crime.	NOBODY; ALONE; BY MYSELF “I didn’t know anyone who did work like this.” “I did it all by myself.”
	[CON DA] ENV PER	<i>Environmental perceptions.</i> The motives, drives, rationalizations and attitudes of the social environment are opposed to the behavior of the youngster.	“My father would condemn me if he knew.” “My friends are against making money the illegal way.”

NT

*Neutralization techniques.*

DENIAL

Explanations a respondent gives to justifies his own (delinquent) behavior, in spite of understanding that his act is illegal.

“I know it is illegal, but...”

DOR

*Denial of Responsibility.* Indicates that the respondent sees his behavior not as his own responsibility.

“I could not help it.” “There is no other way for me to survive.” “The consequences are none of my business.”

DOI

*Denial of Injury.* The respondent argues that the illegal behavior will not result in any great harm.

“I am not hurting anybody.”  
“What’s the harm?”

DOV

*Denial of the Victim.* The idea of victimhood is denied by the respondent: he or she says someone deserved it, or the victim seems absent.

“Maybe someone is affected by my behavior, but it does not feel like it.”  
“He totally deserved it, he was a \*\*\*.”

CoC

*Condemnation of the Condemners.* According to the respondent, the people who judge him, are being hypocrite or liars.

“Alcohol is worse than drugs, why isn’t it prohibited as well?” “Like policemen are saints.”

AHL

*Appeal to Higher Loyalties.* Indicators a respondent places the demands of his own social group above the demands of society, which he is willing to sacrifice.

“My friends and I should be able to do this, I do not care about the law.”

Table 4

*Coding scheme for indicating factors of the social bonding theory*

Code	Factor codes	Definition	Relevant keywords/phrases
PRO SBT		<i>Pro social bonding theory.</i> Focuses on negative aspects regarding attachment (to friends, family and school), commitment and involvement to society. Also indicates that someone lacks belief in the moral rules of society.	ALONE; BAD RELATIONS; DISENGAGED  “I do not feel connected to anyone.” “I am lonely.”
	[PRO SBT] FRI	<i>Friends.</i> Indicates a lack of attachment to friends and intimate relationships with non-family members.	“I didn’t have much friends.” “Before I started, me and my girlfriend just broke up.”
	[PRO SBT] FAM	<i>Family.</i> Indicates a lack of attachment to family.	“My father and I are not close.” “I never knew my parents.”
	[PRO SBT] SCH	<i>School.</i> The lack of attachment to one’s school and teachers.	“I do not care about school.” “My teachers hated me.” “I skipped classes.”
	[PRO SBT] CTA	<i>Commitment to traditional activities.</i> Indicates one is not committed to traditional activities.	“Why do people think school is important? It’s not.” “I don’t want to pursue a career.”
	[PRO SBT] ITA	<i>Involvement in traditional activities.</i> Factors that indicate someone cannot or is not involved in activities in his or her direct environment.	“I had to say goodbye to my club due to an injury.” “I never had a side job.” “I did not have any hobbies except playing single player games.”
	[PRO SBT] BMV	<i>Belief in the moral values of society.</i> Indicators that show someone has lack to the (social and cultural) laws, rules and norms of society.	“Sometimes, you have to break the rules to achieve something.” “Why would I listen to them?”

CON SBT	<i>Con social bonding theory.</i> Proof that the respondent has tight social bonds, is committed to and involved in traditional activities and beliefs in the moral rules.	CLOSE; GOOD RELATIONS; NEVER ALONE; ALWAYS BUSY
[CON SBT] FRI	<i>Friends.</i> Indicates attachment to friends and intimate relationships with non-family members.	“I have a lot of friends.” “I am very close with these people.”
[CON SBT] FAM	<i>Family.</i> Indicates attachment to family.	“Family means everything for me.” “My dad and I are really close.”
[CON SBT] SCH	<i>School.</i> Proof of attachment to school and the people in school.	“I loved my teachers and they loved me.” “School time was the best time of my life.”
[CON SBT] CTA	<i>Commitment to traditional activities.</i> Indicates one is committed to traditional activities.	“I think it is important to support my club.” “I want to pursue a career as a marketing expert.” “I want to finish my education.”
[CON SBT] ITA	<i>Involvement in traditional activities.</i> Factors that indicate someone is engaging in activities in his direct environment.	“I train at my soccer club every week.” “I do a lot of charity work.” “I study very hard.”
[CON SBT] BMV	<i>Belief in the moral values of society.</i> Indicators that show someone perceives (social and cultural) laws, rules and norms of society as very important and truthful.	“You should always do what the state tells you to do.” “It is forbidden to break the rules.”

Table 5

*Coding scheme for indicating factors of the rational choice theory*

Code	Factor codes	Definition	Relevant keywords/phrases
PRO RCT		<i>Pro rational choice theory.</i> Indicators demonstrating the respondent has made a cost-benefit consideration when making the choice to engage in drug related crime.	SOFT SANCTIONS; LOW RISKS; NOT AFRAID; HIGH REWARDS; MONEY
	[PRO RCT] SANC	<i>Sanctions.</i> Focuses on the respondent's perception of sanctions, which will not be harsh.	"I don't think they will punish me harshly." "Maybe I have to do community service, but that's it."
	[PRO RCT] COST	<i>Costs.</i> The costs one perceives (next to sanctions), will be absent or low.	"It is not like it costed me anything." "My life is still the same, nothing really changed negatively."
	[PRO RCT] RISK	<i>Risks.</i> The risk of getting caught according to the respondent, which is low. Also includes other possible risks.	"It's not like the police really care about this." "I do not see any danger." "I am really careful."
	[PRO RCT] MR	<i>Material rewards.</i> Focuses on the material rewards the respondent thinks or hopes to achieve through his illegal activities, which are many and very valuable.	"I know the risk, but the money I make is totally worth it." "I like having this much money." "The drugs are cheaper for me this way."
	[PRO RCT] SR	<i>Social rewards.</i> Focuses on the social rewards that a respondent has due to his delinquent behavior.	"They are really looking up to me." "I am the most important man of the village."
CON RCT		<i>Con rational choice theory.</i> Rejection of the rational choice theory and absence of indicators that would support it. This code will also highlight any aspect that promote the opposite of the 'PRO RCT', e.g. when the costs are perceived to be extremely high.	HARSH SANCTIONS; TERRIFIED; HIGH RISKS; LOW REWARDS



[CON RCT] SANC	<i>Sanctions.</i> Focuses on the respondent's perception of sanctions, which will be harsh.	"Being in jail would be terrible." "The sanctions are ridiculously high."
[CON RCT] COST	<i>Costs.</i> The costs, next to sanctions, one perceives, which will be high.	"I lost everything." "I know I will lose everything."
[CON RCT] RISK	<i>Risks.</i> The risk of getting caught according to the respondent, which is high. Also includes other possible risks.	"I am sure they will arrest me someday." "It is really dangerous work." "Other dealers are threatening me."
[CON RCT] MR	<i>Material rewards.</i> Focuses on the material rewards the respondent thinks or hopes to achieve through his illegal activities, which are low.	"It doesn't really pay off." "I am barely making profit."
[CON RCT] SR	<i>Social rewards.</i> Focuses on the social rewards a respondent has due to his delinquent behavior, which are low or absent.	"People hate me for my work." "It is a really bad job, you are doing all the dirty work." "I mean nothing for no one."
BOU RAT	<i>Bounded rationality.</i> Indicators that imply the respondent is bounded in his rationality.	"I never thought about that before."

## **Validity and reliability**

Due to different reasons, full validity and reliability cannot be assured. The qualitative design makes it hard to repeat the findings, though disclosure is given on the interviews (appendixes 5 to 17). Also, in the research, there is a dark number, because direct contact with youngsters who are or were involved in illegal acts is required. Therefore, one cannot argue a certain sample will be representative for the whole group. Currently, male respondents are overrepresented as women showed little interest in being interviewed; however, according to earlier studies, men are more involved in crime in general (Farrington & Welsh, 2007) and in drug related crime (Fijnaut & De Ruyver, 2008). Due to the invisibility of the target group, it is not possible to simply target women or men – every respondent is an important, not easily accessible source. Also, there are many other demographic factors, aside from gender, that may indicate or promote criminal behavior (for an overview see Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Hence, the representativeness of the group is unverifiable.

All respondents were free to choose the way they wanted to be interviewed, which is another possible limitation. It has been decided to do this to make it possible to include respondents who wanted to stay as anonymous as possible. This option resulted in three different interview methods: as is visible in table 1, some respondents preferred interviews via an (anonymous) chat app, while others were interviewed over the telephone or face to face in a public place (a café in the town of their preference). As is visible in the appendixes (5 to 17), this has implications for data collection. The chat app interviews took more time (sometimes three hours) and the researcher had to ask more detailed questions. While in face to face interviews, the interviewer could sometimes be silent and by doing so, motivate the interviewee to continue to talk, this was difficult to implement via a chat app. Being silent during interviews is an important practice to prevent steering or unfinished answers in an interview (Lang & Van der Molen, 2012). However, when the interviewer would be silent during an interview over a chat app, it is possible the interviewee would be distracted. Being continuously online was more important, and therefore, in these interviews, the researcher was more talkative than during the face to face interviews. Being silent during the telephone interview was easier. Another difference between the telephone and chat app interviews, compared to the face to face interviews, was that facial information could not be included in the first two interview practices. Nevertheless, the face to face interviews were in a public place, which may have influenced the tendency of respondents to answer socially desirable or to sometimes lie (since it could never be guaranteed that no one else

was listening). Thus, the three different methods had different pros and cons. In the end, it can be said that including different practices enabled the researcher to involve more respondents, including those who were hesitating to be interviewed due to the sensitivity of the information given.

The reliability of the research leaves to be desired. Due to the promised anonymity and secretiveness of the subject, the interviewer decided not to ask the full name of the respondents: only their first name is known to her. This makes it impossible to ensure that the youngsters spoken to, were or are indeed engaged in drug related crime. There is more certainty when it comes to the respondents found through the researcher's own network, but it is an issue regarding the participants recruited via the anonymous app Jodel. Yet, there is little to win for the youngsters; the interviews asked time from them without any monetary rewards in exchange. The motivation to be interviewed was thus mostly intrinsic. Lying their way through an interview would be of little worth for fake participants and ask a lot of effort.

Thus, validity and reliability are not fully guaranteed. This does not quite mean that the research will be useless – the contrary is true. Because of its unique perspective, and since it is targeting an invisible group, this research can give new insights in the field of drug related crime. It can provide more information about the stepping stones for adolescents. Understanding the perceptions of the youngsters themselves is of high importance, because this knowledge can lead to more effective intervention approaches.

## **Analysis**

In this section, it will be discussed to what extent different aspects of the four criminological theories can be supported by the interview data. Support will be demonstrated by referring to the different interviews and providing quotes of the respondents<sup>6</sup>. The transcripts of the interviews are given in appendix 5 to 17. The code tree can be found in appendix 4. The major goal is to find support for the different factors inclined in every theory. Other important factors will also be mentioned. In the next chapter, the discussion, the research question will be answered based on this analysis.

### **The respondents**

For the legibility of this research, it has been decided to use pseudonyms to reference to the thirteen respondents. In this paragraph, all respondents will be introduced shortly.

- **Alex** (age 30, appendix 5) was sixteen years old when he started dealing drugs in the village where he lived (approximately 9,000 inhabitants). He started during the time drugs were often polluted, and the prices for good drugs had increased. He said he has now stopped dealing (large amounts) of drugs.
- **Ben** (age 21, appendix 6) started to deal in drugs six years ago, aged fifteen. He provided it to people he knew: friends and acquaintances. He asked the author specifically to mention that he has now abjured these activities.
- **Charlie** (age 21, appendix 7) is a student, living in a large city (over 200,000 inhabitants). Last year, when he was nineteen years old, he was convinced by his roommate to set up a small marihuana nursery on his roof terrace. He did so for two months during the summer. Most of the harvest was sold to a friend of the roommate.
- **David** (age 27, appendix 8) is a man born outside the Netherlands. When he finished his education aged twenty-three, he came in a financially difficult situation. He decided to deal drugs for a while. He said he quit the business when he made enough money.
- **Elroy** (age 20, appendix 9) started to deal drugs last year, when his student life started. He was nineteen years old. According to Elroy, the main reason for this was that he used drugs

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<sup>6</sup> All quotations (except Kevin's, since he preferred to be interviewed in English) are translated in English by the author of this thesis. The original text (in Dutch) can be found in appendix 5 to 17.

himself, and by buying larger amounts and selling what he did not need, he could make profit. It is not clear whether he still makes money with drugs.

- **Frank** (age 25, appendix 10) was the youngest when he started, aged fourteen. He grew up in a small village in the south of the Netherlands (almost 20,000 inhabitants). He was into IT and found (via a schoolfriend) a way to work for a criminal group that made money with drug trade. He said he started out of boredom.
- **Gus** (age 20, appendix 11) is an acquaintance of Elroy. He started to deal drugs when aged seventeen or eighteen. He was already using drugs himself and decided to buy larger amounts to lessen the price and make small profit. He provided to his own network of friends.
- **Harry** (age 18, appendix 12) was contacted thanks to Gus. He has been selling drugs to friends for almost a year. He started because one of his friends asked him if he could provide drugs for him after this friend's dealer was arrested. The first time he sold drugs, he was not making profit; now, he does. He argues that helping friends is the most important motivator for him to deal drugs.
- **Ismael** (age 24, appendix 13) dealt drugs when fifteen or sixteen years old. He grew up in a village in the north of the Netherlands, where he was one of the few of non-Dutch heritage. He sold drugs without profit to friends, and with profit to acquaintances. He said he quit after approximately two years.
- **James** (age 19, appendix 14) argued that the start with dealing drugs was an almost unconscious decision: when aged eighteen, he was the only one of his friends who knew dealers to buy-in drugs. He started to provide drugs to his friends. For a short time, he extended his network to acquaintances, but lately, he is again only selling to friends.
- **Kevin** (age 26, appendix 15) was a drug dealer from age twenty-one till age twenty-three (approximately 2.5 years). Though he has only made money with drugs in the Netherlands on a case to case basis, he had a more professional partnership with his roommate in a different North-European country. He quit when he graduated and started his professional career. The interview was conducted in English.
- **Leon** (age 20, appendix 16) is a Dutch man who started dealing drugs when aged seventeen or eighteen. He went to an international school in a North-West European country. Together with a friend, he went to the Netherlands by train a few times. They bought large amounts of marihuana, which they sold for twice the price.

- **Matthew** (age 33, appendix 17) grew up in a village (approximately 20,000 inhabitants) were, according to him, many people were dealing in illegal goods. He started to deal anabolic agents when aged twenty-one. He was unemployed and used anabolic substances himself. He offered his business on diverse online fora on the internet and sent it to his customers by post.

## **Strain theory**

Hirschi (1968) named two basic assumptions as important motivators for delinquent behavior: firstly, that people accept the goals set by society; and secondly, that they do *not* believe it is necessary to do this the legal way (via the “institutionalized means”). Most respondents indeed accepted the goals set by society: only Alex and Matthew did not complete higher education, and all interviewees believed having a job was important. Also, in line with Hirschi’s assumptions, almost all respondents believed they did not always have to obey the law. Frank, for example, argued that sometimes there is a “gray area”, even in his daily life, where he has to push back frontiers (Appendix 10). Only Harry, James and Matthew argued this was totally unnecessary. Hence, Hirschi’s basic assumptions are largely substantiated by the interview data.

Furthermore, it would be expected that the respondents experienced a lack of chances in their life, which would interfere with their attempts to live up the (perceived) demands of society to achieve certain financial, social and cultural goals. The question that most clearly provoked an answer demonstrating whether the respondent was perceiving strains, was given as a statement to the respondents during the interview: “You can achieve anything, as long as you put enough effort in it” (see appendix 2, interview question 5). The follow-up questions were clear indicators of whether or not these perceived strains were personally relevant to the respondent (see appendix 2, interview question 5.2 and 5.3).

Only one respondent, David, explicitly mentioned to struggle with societal demands. He was the only one disagreeing with the statement that one could achieve anything in life. He blamed noxious stimuli (see Agnew, 1992) for this, saying society would not give him an honest chance, because he is a foreigner:

“As a foreign person without good education, it is hard. (...) If there is someone called Jan and he’s white, and there’s me... In the end, Jan will stand a better chance” (David, Appendix 8, 00:58:00, 01:06:00).

However, he also mentioned a failure to achieve objectives as a strain source (see Agnew, 1992), mentioning that he knew people who worked really hard, but could not realize their life goals. In his perception, delinquency was sometimes the only way to achieve what one was entitled to. David was also the only one to admit he had severe financial issues which motivated him to earn money with drug related crime.

The other respondents did not perceive societal strains. They believed that they themselves decided whether they would achieve their life goals:

“And if you don’t make it, you did that yourself. You can learn here, you can study... You can do everything here. (...) If you don’t do it, you are screwing up yourself.” (Alex, Appendix 5, 00:32:24);

“You set the bar as high as you want. It isn’t society who is doing that, no one does that for you.” (Frank, Appendix 10, 00:12:15);

Interviewer: “Did you feel like society is expecting certain things from you? (...)”

Kevin: “[To] a certain extent, but my own expectations have always been higher so [I] haven’t really bothered me about the societal expectations” (Appendix 15, 01:59:00-02:00:00).

Eight respondents mentioned there are some differences between people, resulting in unfair disadvantages for some. Sometimes, they argued, people were just unlucky. Still, all respondents apart from David were convinced everyone was able to make themselves happy and to achieve goals. They did not think they or others were ruled by society.

Though these respondents did not explicitly mention strains, four respondents may have experienced them indirectly. Alex told how he perceived cultural strains, arguing that society was becoming more demanding and that you needed to have certification for literally everything. However, he did not believe that lack of education would stop him from achieving his goal:

making enough money to go on a world trip and maybe live abroad. (The other respondents also thought it was very likely they would achieve their goals<sup>7</sup>.) Harry and Ismael argued that some youngsters are being pushed by their environment to achieve certain goals, while they are not ready or self-motivated to do so. They did not have to deal with these issues themselves. Ismael also stated that because of the color of his skin, he was in line with the “stereotype idea” of a drugs dealer (Appendix 13). He also felt pushed by society to finish higher education. This can indicate the perceived presence of cultural boundaries or strains, because Ismael diverged from the majority of Dutch people. Matthew experienced a failure to achieve cultural goals, because he did not finish his higher education and when starting to deal in anabolic agents, he unable to work. Nevertheless, he nor Ismael projected these strains as things that withhold them from achieving culturally expected goals, as would be expected by Hirschi’s (1968) theory.

Thus, it can be concluded that only one respondent perceived severe societal strains, and also blamed society for making his life harder, because of his foreign lineage. The other twelve respondents did not believe they were hindered to achieve their life goals. The expectations mentioned in the theoretical framework (the idea that society asks more than the respondent can achieve; the view that one can only make a decent wage the illegal way; and perception of exclusion by society) were only fully confirmed by David.

## **Differential association theory**

To find support for the differential association theory, the following question was asked to the respondents: “Before you started to make money with drugs, did you already know people who were in this business?” (see appendix 2, interview question 3). Also, the respondents often mentioned social relations who earned money thanks to drugs when answering question 1 (“Can you tell me how your life looked like when you earned money with drugs for the first time?”).

Every respondent knew other people who were making money due to drugs. They were often acquaintances and friends. For some, these friends were a direct motivator to start to make money with drugs:

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<sup>7</sup> Frank was not able to name a future goal, because he was convinced that over the past few years, he already reached the major goals he wanted to achieve. Kevin had difficulties naming a concrete goal. At present, he was also pursuing a career.



“I was once talking with my roommate about it, and he said, ‘O, well, you can place some [hemp] plants, since you have a lot of space left, and you do not use it at all.’ (...) ‘Wait,’ I asked, ‘What should I do with all the harvest? I do not use that myself.’ And he said: ‘Oh, yes, but I do have some friends, who can... who can help you... lose it, let’s put it that way’.” (Charlie, Appendix 7, 00:00:28-00:00:46);

“Where I grew up, everybody was dealing in something (...). I believe that if I grew up in a better neighborhood, with more normal friends, I would have gone an entirely different way” (Matthew, appendix 17, 00:30:00, 00:35:00).

However, not all respondents saw knowing delinquent people was the stepping stone that enabled them to make money with drugs. On the question whether these contacts helped them to begin to make money with drugs (see appendix 2, interview question 3.4), most respondents reacted negatively. These respondents often stated they recruited themselves, saying they “proofed themselves” (David, Appendix 8), decided to purchase larger amounts and start dealing for themselves (Alex, Appendix 5; Elroy, Appendix 9; Gus, Appendix 11) or specifically asked other people who were engaged in drug related crime if they (the respondents) could work for them (Frank, Appendix 10). Ismael and James stated that it was quite convenient to know people who were already engaged in the drug business, because it eased their connections, but they built their own network and did not rely on their peers. Kevin (Appendix 15) said knowing people who were also involved in drug related activities was an “insurance”, making him feel safer. Most interestingly is that respondents sometimes condemned their delinquent peers:

Interviewer: “And what did you think about these guys?”

Ismael: “Simple people. Very simple (...). They did very cool and conspicuous about it [dealing drugs], while I was only afraid I would get caught.” (Appendix 13, 00:31:00-00:33:00);

“Well, in general most drug dealers are dumb fucks. An absolute majority of the criminal guys (...) I encountered are idiots and behave accordingly. (...) They are most often egocentrics, like to feel like they are powerful and dangerous, and also in generally not very responsible” (Kevin, Appendix 15, 00:46:00-00:50:00).

Thus, though all respondents knew people who made money in drugs, they did not always perceive them as friends, and thought they were showing very risky behavior.

Two indicators were found that recruitment by others, as mentioned by Tops and Tromp (2017b), was a reason for the respondents to start to make money with drug related matters: Charlie was motivated to start by his roommate, and Harry was asked to help out a friend whose regular dealer was in jail.

As Sutherland and Cressey (1960) have argued, the approval or acceptance of certain behavior by friends can also be of importance. Therefore, it was also analyzed whether drug use and making money with drugs were accepted by peers of the respondents. The majority of the respondents stated drug use was common amongst their friends. They did not seem to feel judged by their friends for their involvement in drug related crime – on the contrary, it often was opportune to their friends, who now had an easier access to drugs.

Though differential association theorists see friends as an important influencer on youngsters, family can also play a role. Alex pointed out that his nephew was a dealer, who helped him to establish his first contacts with the people from which he could purchase drugs. His relationship with this family member was not that great:

“And then I said, ‘[I came here] via [nephew], because [nephew] is family of me, but he is an asshole with his prices, so I can sell way more than he does” (Appendix 5, 00:18:07).

Alex’s sister knew he was dealing in drugs. She provided him customers, regularly asking him to fix a certain drug for her; however, this only happened after Alex already started to make money in this business. The same happened to Ismael, whose uncle was a former drug dealer and who used drugs as well. He shared experiences with Ismael, and Ismael sold him drugs, though he stated that his uncle was not a motivator for him to start making money with drugs. However,

it is possible that the presence of his uncle normalized drug related activities for Ismael.

The opinion their parents had on drug related crime was, according to almost all respondents, very negative. Some argued that they were most fearful their parents would find out they were dealing drugs, which was more terrifying for them than the risk of being arrested. The respondents furthermore thought their parents would disagree because of the illegality and danger the business entails:

“And my mother, she is gentler, but she would have kicked me out of the house. But my father, he would for sure have brought me to the police station, with a bag of pills in my hand like... That’s what he would do.” (Alex, Appendix 5, 00:29:25-00:29:34);

Interviewer: “Do they [your parents] know you made money with drugs?”

Ismael: “(...) NOOOOO. My mother would never look to me again” (Appendix 13, 00:53:00, emphasis as in the original).

Only Charlie thought his parents would not condemn his way of moneymaking; yet, he did not inform them. Matthew’s parents were the only ones that were aware of the fact their son was making money with drugs, which did not seem to worry them. Matthew believed that if his parents *had* condemned his behavior, it would have made a difference.

Hence, there is only one indication in the interviews a family member was engaged in drug related crime and due to this, directly motivated the respondent to do the same. The respondents’ parents were expected to condemn their children’s involvement in drug related crime. Friends and peers seem to be important motivators or examples, also because they often accept (and even encourage) the easy access to drugs that has become possible by the respondents, even if they are not involved in the business themselves.

### **Neutralization techniques**

According to Sykes and Matza (1957), though differential association can indeed promote delinquent behavior, delinquents will always try to justify their performances through so-called neutralization techniques. During the data coding, indicators were indeed found that all respondents used neutralization techniques. Some seemed to be very popular; the Denial of

Injury technique, for example, was used by eight respondents. In this case, most respondents stated that drugs were not that damaging (or at least not the drugs they were selling). As was stated by Alex:

“There are drugs, and there are drugs. There is addictive crap and there is the kind of stuff they use on parties” (Appendix 5, 00:56:00).

Furthermore, Alex stated that during a time of highly polluted drugs, he was selling “good stuff” (Appendix 5). Another indicator of the Denial of Injury was the fact that the respondents generally believed they did not harm anybody with their work.

Regarding the technique Denial of Responsibility, the respondents often distanced from possible consequences of their (delinquent) behavior. Instead, they blamed the government for making bad policy (Alex, Appendix 5; Frank, Appendix 10). Also, it was stated that they were ten a penny, and that they were not playing a decisive role in the drug world (Charlie, Appendix 7; Frank, Appendix 10; Harry, Appendix 12; Leon, Appendix 16). Furthermore, the respondents did not feel responsible for the effects their money making could have:

“Look, you cannot totally affect what is happening when... If you produce something, what is happening with it. You just assume that all people who have to deal with it, are all adults and know how to deal with it. (...) Maybe it is a little bit indifferent, but... Yes... There are enough things that can go wrong and... That you cannot totally affect” (Charlie, Appendix 7, 00:17:18-00:18:10).

The last denial technique, Denial of the Victim, was also found in a small minority of the interviews. The respondents denied the idea they brought harm to someone, stating for example that they did not sell drugs to drug addicts (but only to those that truly had the money to afford it) or did not rip off anybody.

Appeal to Higher Loyalties was another neutralization technique that was very often found in the data. The respondents repeatedly say that they wanted “to make people happy” (Ben, Appendix 6) or that they could help friends who did otherwise not have access to drugs. David furthermore pointed out that, though their behavior was illegal, his drug dealing friends should

be entitled to make a proper wage.

The neutralization technique Condemnation of the Condemners was used less often, only found in three interviews. When the respondents adopted this technique, they often blamed the government to be hypocrite (Alex, Appendix 5). They also argued alcohol was a harmful drug as well, even more damaging than other drugs (Alex, Appendix 5; David, Appendix 8; Frank, Appendix 10).

Ben and Kevin also pointed out a broader justification: Ben mentioned that one should look to the consequences of one's deeds, and Kevin said that there would always be a moral limit. Where this line was drawn, or what the consequences exactly could (or should not) be, like victimhood, or injury to third parties, was unclear (Appendix 6; Appendix 15). Concluding, it can be said that the respondents used different forms of neutralization techniques to justify their delinquent behavior. Denial of Injury and Appeal to Higher Loyalties were used most often.

## **Social bonding theory**

The social bonding theory is built on four different elements, which have significant overlap, that would guard a person from engaging in delinquent behavior. Therefore, *negative* indicators of the social bonding theory in the data would substantiate the theory, for all respondents are or were making money thanks to drugs (and therefore, showing delinquent behavior).

The first elements, attachment, has been divided by later scholars in attachment to peers, family and school. There were no indicators that the respondents lacked attachment to peers. The contrary seems to be true: the respondents all felt very close with their friends and did a lot of activities together. As has been mentioned during the analysis of the differential association theory, some of these friends were showing delinquent behavior. Kevin mentioned his girlfriend recently broke up. Yet, he had peers and friends he hanged out with.

All respondents said they had a good relationship with their family members, except for David, who did not have any contact with his father, half-brothers or other family members, and Matthew, who was not in touch with his father when he started to make money with drug related crime. The bond between David's and Matthew's mother and them, however, was very good. Alex's father had passed away, but this was only after the respondent already started making money with drugs. It is interesting to note that almost all respondents were convinced their parents would condemn their behavior, even when they stated that the opinion their parents had, was very important to them:

Interviewer: “Is the opinion of your parents important for you?”

Elroy: “About some things, yes. About drugs too, I just do not listen to them.” (Appendix 9, 00:42:00-00:45:00);

Interviewer: “What do you think they [your parents] would have thought if they knew you sold drugs?”

James: “[I] am thinking that, at first, they would be very angry. And after that, disappointed.”

Interviewer: “(...) And do you value your parents’ opinion?”

James: “Yes. That’s why I don’t tell them, so they can’t have an opinion on it” (Appendix 14, 00:41:00-00:42:00).

Kevin had a good relationship with his parents, though he was the only one who mentioned that he did not value his parents’ opinion regarding major life choices (like study or career). He appreciated their opinion in the fields he thought his parents were experienced in. Only one respondent, Charlie, stated that he thought his parents would not condemn his behavior, saying they would be convinced he was old enough to make his own decisions. Nonetheless, he did not inform his parents about his activities. As has been noted before, Matthew’s father and mother were the only parents aware of the fact their child made money with drugs.

The last important form of attachment is attachment to school. David already finished his education when he started to make money with drugs, and Matthew dropped out. The others were still in school. Two of them (Alex and Frank) explicitly mentioned they did not like going to school, and two others (Ben and Ismael) said they liked most of it, yet played truant occasionally. It was not because they had a difficult time in school: all four respondents mentioned school came easily. However, they did not always feel in place. This does not necessarily mean that they did not bond with the other students; Alex told he felt very close with them, and so did Ben. Since Özbay and Özcan (2006) argued that the opinion of teachers would matter to youngsters who feel attached to them, the respondents were asked what their relationship with the teacher was like (see Appendix 2, interview question 1.2.2.1). All expect one respondent said they had a good relationship with most of the teachers (Gus and Harry mentioned they were their teachers’ favorites), including the ones that did not feel in place at school:

“I had another teacher who would advise and assist me in everything.” (Ben, Appendix 6, 00:17:00);

Interviewer: “How was your relationship with the teachers?”

Frank: “Good. I am good in dealing with people. But I just detested school”  
(Appendix 10, 00:03:01).

Kevin did not perceive having close bonds with the teachers, but he argued this was regular: he was studying at university and teachers never knew everyone by name.

The second element described by Hirschi is commitment to traditional activities. The data was analyzed for indicators the respondents did or did not want to achieve “regular” ambitions or aspirations, like having a career or staying in school. It was found that all respondents wanted to pursue a serious career and hoped to have a good job within a few years (except for Alex, Frank and Kevin, who already enjoyed their current jobs). They often had plans to accomplish higher education. Only two respondents did not complete higher education and were not planning to: Alex and Matthew. When he was asked about what he wanted to achieve in life, Alex was the only one who did not talk about education or jobs, but about making a world trip. This is an indication that he is not as committed to traditional activities as the other respondents were; nevertheless, he did have a regular job which he liked and valued.

Closely interrelated to commitment to traditional activities is, according to Hirschi (1968), involvement in traditional activities. Based on Hirschi’s theory, it would be predicted the respondents were not involved in many activities. However, the data indicated otherwise. Almost all respondents had one or more side jobs. Some mentioned the wage was very low, and David explained he only had a side job because his mother forced him to, but generally, they liked their side job. Except for David (who graduated) and Matthew, all respondents were still in school when they started to make money with drugs, which is also an indicator for involvement in traditional activities. A great part took extra courses; only Ben and Ismael admitted they were sometimes absent in school. Almost all respondents took part in different sports several times a week, often with friends. Alex was also an active sportsman, but after an injury, he could no longer play soccer. He mentioned this was difficult for him:

“In the beginning it was hard, yes. I decided to not go watch for a while, because I thought I could not handle it. You know, I could go watch my friends, while I could never play soccer myself again” (Appendix 5, 00:05:56).

Alex, consequently, experienced losing the ability to do an activity he was very committed to; nevertheless, after a while, he accepted the fact he would no longer play soccer and started watching his friends’ games again. Therefore, little support is found for these two elements, for in general, the respondents felt committed to traditional activities and were involved in many of them as well.

The last element, belief in the moral values of society, regards whether or not the youngsters would think violating the rules is wrong. To provoke an answer, they were asked to react on the following statement: “To make progress in life, you sometimes have to flout the rules” (see appendix 2, interview question 6). As is in line with the social bonding theory, the majority of the respondents agreed it was allowed to be creative with the rules, and your progress would be at least a little bit quicker or easier when you flouted the rules sometimes:

“Yes... As long as you are aware of other people’s needs, and you just do the things you think are right, then it is possible that you sometimes wander outside the lines.” (Charlie, Appendix 7, 00:13:56);

“I agree with that. Sometimes, it can help, and despite it is not allowed, it can affect a lot.” (Elroy, Appendix 9, 01:12:00);

“I am just thinking, yes, it is not allowed by the rules, but when I really want it, and I think it’s useful for me... Then you have to flout the rules for once” (Gus, Appendix 11, 00:12:58).

However, some discrepancy became visible during the analysis of the data. The respondents often admitted they broke the rules and were engaged in illegal acts. Yet, they believed that in general, it was better to follow the rules, and when you *did* break the rules, one should deal with the consequences. This seems to be incongruent with the respondents’ own behavior, because



they did deal drugs. Weber (1947, in Sykes & Matza, 1957) has stated that the *legitimacy* of legal rules can be accepted by people, without accepting the fact that these rules are indeed *morally* validate. This seems to be the case for these respondents. Kevin summarized this view by arguing the following:

“If you want to achieve optimal success you need to break rules simply because following rules is not optimal from the individual’s perspective. Rules are there for society, for the greater good. (...) The rules are there for a good reason. The society benefits from the rules. If I would vote I would vote for what’s best for society, and not me. However, in practice when I live my everyday life, I do what I believe is best for me” (Appendix 15, 02:17:00, 02:26:00).

Thus, not all elements described to be decisive by Hirschi (1968) could be found in the answers of the thirteen respondents. More importantly nonetheless, Özbay and Özcan (2006) described three reasons why social bonding would prevent criminal behavior. Therefore, in the next paragraph, it will be analyzed whether these reasons are valid for the respondents in this thesis.

First of all, Özbay and Özcan (2006) stated that youngsters would take the opinion of their relatives, teachers and peers in account – and if these persons would condemn criminal behavior, this would demotivate the youngsters to violate the rules. Yet, most of the friends of the youngsters seem not to criticize making money with drugs. This finding substantiates the critique of Kelley (1996): it is unlikely that those who are closely attached to delinquent juveniles have a lesser tendency to show deviant behavior. Though most respondents were attached to their family members and teachers, and though they were often convinced their parents would not agree with this illegal way of money making, this did not seem to influence their delinquent behavior. Nevertheless, it influenced their decision to be silent to their parents about their activities.

Secondly, social bonding theorists state that if a youngster beliefs in the values of society, he will believe violating the rules is wrong, and will therefore not engage in delinquency. Since there are indeed clear indications that the respondents had little belief in obeying the societal rules, and believed you could sometimes cross a line, this assumption is substantiated.

Lastly, Özbay and Özcan (2006) said youngsters would not have enough time to commit delinquent acts, because they were being involved in other activities. However, some

respondents stated that their illegal work did not take as much time as Özbay and Özcan (2006) may assume:

Interviewer: “Where you busy doing that [side jobs]?”

Elroy: “Yes, busier than I was with drugs. That was very small-scale.” (Appendix 9, 00:13:00);

“Once a week [I would] send out a bag full of packages and that’s it. (...) In my most lucrative year I would make approximately 8000 euros a month” (Matthew, Appendix 17, 00:13:00).

The respondents often liked the fact that making a lot of money with drugs did not take much time. Also, it is interesting to note that Hirschi (1968) has stated neutralization techniques are not necessary, for youngsters simply do not believe in the moral rules at all, and therefore, there is no reason to justify their behavior. However, as has been noted in the paragraph *Differential Association Theory*, every respondent used one or more neutralization techniques. Thus, some factors of the social bonding theory are more clearly substantiated than others, but overall, the theory is not verified based on the interview data.

### **Rational Choice Theory**

To find proof of the rational choice theory, it was examined whether the youngsters would say the benefits of making money with drugs were higher than the sanctions. Furthermore, the youngsters’ risk perception was determined: what was, according to them, the likeliness of the sanction to happen? First, the presence of the defined factors by Loughran *et al.* (2016) are determined; then, it is discussed to what extent the cost-benefit consideration made by the respondents was fully conscious and whether they were bounded in their rationality.

On the cost-side, Loughran and colleagues (2016) described two major costs: the probability of apprehension and perceived severity of the criminal sanction. To start with the latter, there were large differences between how the respondents perceived the height of the possible sanctions for their work. A majority of eight respondents thought the sanctions would be high. Some thought this was justified, others found them outrageous:

“You can run over a kid, kill it and get away scot-free, and you have a small marihuana nursery and a few kilograms of coke in trunk and you can go to jail for a couple of years” (Charlie, Appendix 7, 00:21:50).

Two respondents were unaware of what the actual sanctions would be. The three remaining respondents stated that they were very low, at least for small delicts, like the ones these were involved in. However, it can be said that the severity of the sanctions did not seem to occupy the respondents.

The other cost is probability of apprehension. Almost all respondents perceived this probability to be very low. They often simply argued they were not important enough for authorities. Interestingly, Frank and Harry both experienced the arrest of someone involved in drug related crime, but this did not seem to influence their perception on risk apprehension. It did change Leon’s perception: when his friend was arrested for the same drug related activities as he was involved in, Leon decided to quit. The respondents discussed different manners they implemented to decrease the risk to be arrested, like only selling drugs to acquaintances, keeping their business small-scale, and meeting on specific locations<sup>8</sup>. Next to the risk of arrestment, the respondents named other risks. The two most common were the dangers of the underworld environment of drug related crime, and the fear other people (like parents, teachers or managers) would find out:

“I will never deal in cocaine, I think that’s way too dangerous. (...) You will be in contact with people... They have guns, you know. Very dangerous.” (Alex, Appendix 5, 00:11:05, 00:12:12);

“The greatest risk was that [other children’s] parents would find out and that they would demand their child to tell where it came from, then I would be screwed” (Ben, Appendix 6, 02:21:00).

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, the respondents took very different measures to reduce the risks they perceived. For example, some would only deal in public places, while others emphatically would not. Hence, it can be said that risk estimation and (good) risk restraints are highly subjective.

Though Loughran *et al.* (2016) did not name any other costs, the respondents discussed a couple of them. Charlie and Harry, for example, argued that you should not be “too involved” or “too absorbed” with making money with drugs, because that would no longer be mentally healthy (Appendix 7; Appendix 12). Furthermore, the respondents were sometimes worried about hanging out with “the wrong people” (Alex, Appendix 5; Ismael, Appendix 13; James, Appendix 14; Kevin, Appendix 15), the safety of their relatives, or about health issues that come along with drug use.

On the benefit-side of the consideration, Loughran and colleagues (2016) mentioned both personal (material) and social rewards. Regarding material rewards, the respondents argued they liked the monetary benefits: it was an “easy way of earning money” (Alex, Appendix 5). Another important material reward was the easy and cheaper access to drugs, which seemed to be a key driver to start with making money with drugs for different respondents:

“I used it [drugs] myself and was often buying large amount, so the price would be lower. Then I devised to sell it to other people and to make money with it.” (Elroy, Appendix 9, 00:15:00);

“But if you buy purchase a lot, then it is a lot cheaper. So yes, from that angle, it was easier to ask a little bit more for it.” (Gus, Appendix 11, 00:03:00);

“It was not like I was selling it to make more money. It was mostly to be able to buy more [cheaper drugs for myself]” (Leon, Appendix 16, 00:17:00).

James was the only one who did not perceive large material benefits:

“Well you have to spend a lot on it [drugs] initially, [it] takes some time before you lose it, and you get sums that small, it disappears in a black hole or something like that” (Appendix 14, 01:24:00).

Social rewards were also identified by the respondents, who said they liked the fact they could provide drugs to friends and could give them a good time. In general, the respondents valued the

material rewards over the social rewards. Ben, James and Harry, however, noted that money was not the most important thing:

“You didn’t do it just for the money. Of course, that was a key driver. But everybody I knew and who did this too, only did it for people they knew. (...) We did it more for friends, to say so” (Ben, Appendix 6, 01:01:00).

Ben argued the social rewards were quite high, because he could provide drugs to friends and acquaintances, who looked up to him. Harry even said the money was not that important, because he just wanted to help his friends. At the same time, he valued the “extra pocket money” (Appendix 12). Ismael and James liked the fact that they could help out friends; however, they did not enjoy the larger social status they achieved:

“You get a certain status. Some people are only hanging out with you because you can fix stuff for them. Or because you are ‘cool’. (...) I don’t want (...) people hanging out with me with double agendas, or who are doing nice things with me because I use drugs or know where to get it.” (Ismael, Appendix 13, 01:33:00-01:36:00);

“And people expect something from you, that you fix something for them, which is really annoying. (...) You get in touch with people you normally don’t speak, just because of that” (James, Appendix 14, 01:24:00-01:26:00).

Kevin was the only one who appreciated the social status that was given to him by his larger network; he did not only mention friends as a status giving source, but also “people you encounter with” and even “prospective sexual partners” (Appendix 15). David and Matthew were the only ones who did not mention large social rewards; they were also the only respondents who did not provide their services to friends and acquaintances, but to more general customers.

### **Final cost-benefit consideration**

Based on these factors, the interviewees were asked to make a cost-benefit consideration (“according to you, what is higher: the costs or the benefits?”, see appendix 2, interview question 8.2). A large majority of the respondents argued the benefits outweighed the costs, as would be

expected according to the rational choice theory. Some did not: Alex, for example, said that the fact that he was constantly “looking behind” made the costs very high (Appendix 5). However, this did not stop him from dealing drugs. It has to be noted that he told the interviewer he is no longer dealing on a large scale; it is possible the perceived costs influenced his own considerations, motivating Alex to scale down his activities. Matthew experienced the same. Though he said that at the moment of stepping in, he thought the benefits would outweigh the costs, he became much more careful and changed his cost-benefit consideration after he was arrested for drug related activities three years ago.

The interviewees also named another important factor: time investment, which has already been mentioned in the paragraph *Social Bonding Theory*. At the moment of stepping in, the respondents liked the ability of making a lot of money in a relatively short time-span, and they found out they were right:

“If you, for example, sell five hundred pills of ecstasy, you can easily make seven hundred euros profit. And if you sell it yourself, it only takes you half an hour, maybe an hour” (Harry, Appendix 12, 00:16:04).

Thus, it can be said that all respondents were able to do a cost-benefit consideration, and that for most of them, the costs were lower than the benefits.

### **Bounded rationality**

Rational choice theory has been criticized because it assumes that people make choices based on economic considerations. Therefore, it was also noted when the respondents admitted they did not consider all elements of the rational choice theory (or none at all). Seven respondents indeed made statements that indicated bounded rationality:

“I have never seriously thought whether that [sanctions] could happen or not.” (Ben, Appendix 6, 02:17:00);

“It could have been that... If helping a criminal organization, in the eyes of the court, if that is a criminal offence, yes, then it [the punishment] would be pretty high, I think. But I have no idea. I don't know” (Frank, Appendix 10, 00:23:46).

The other respondents did not show substantial proof of bounded rationality. On the contrary, some of them stated that they indeed made a cost-benefit consideration beforehand:

“I was thinking, you know what, I am going to do it differently, I am going to buy-in large amounts, it charges me less, and then I’ll sell it myself” (Alex, Appendix 5, 00:08:51).

Nevertheless, this is no evidence that this respondent took in regard *all* different factors that are named by Loughran *et al.* (2016). After considering it during the interview, Alex concluded that, with these insights, he would see more negative than positive sides to making money with drugs. Thus, the respondents seemed to be indeed bounded in their rationality, and to the extent that they argued they made a rational choice, they did not take in account all different factors. The sanctions, which were often perceived to be high, did not seem to influence their choice. For those who valued the benefits over the costs, the perception of a low probability of apprehension and the material rewards seemed to be of great importance. Time investment was also a decisive factor.

### **Other important findings**

In the data, some other findings came forward, that were not particularly connected to one of the four theories above. Because these findings seem to be present among all respondents, they are shortly discussed in this section.

#### **Another reason to join: excitement**

All respondents were asked to answer the question “according to you, what was the main reason to make money with drugs?” (appendix 2, question 2). As is visible in appendix 3, the author expected the respondents would give an answer which would correlate with one of the four criminological theories. However, next to these, the respondents often added another reason: excitement. Five respondents specifically mentioned excitement or boredom as the main reason to engage in drug related crime:

“It is a dangerous environment, everybody is saying it is dangerous, that creates some kind of tension” (Frank, Appendix 10, 00:04:37);

“You know it is not allowed (...). You do not see the consequences, it is all very novel, and for many people in your environment, it is a taboo. That makes it only more interesting” (Ismael, Appendix 13, 00:22:00-00:23:00);

“I always enjoyed doing prohibited stuff. I am [a] pretty well adapted guy in the society in general, but I always enjoyed doing stupid things now and then. Like an outlet of everything. Some people like to do drugs, I liked to be in a fight or steal something or sell some drugs” (Kevin, Appendix 15, 00:33:00).

All respondents who mentioned excitement as a reason to join brought up more than one reason, often combining the search for excitement with the expectation of making a lot of money. Interestingly, only Leon mentioned he wanted to have access to cheaper drugs (Appendix 16). For the other four interviewees, this specific material reason seems to be less important. The remaining respondents did not mention excitement to be an explicit reason, but some of them argued they did stuff others did not dare to do, which can mean they liked the idea they were doing something dangerous (at least in the eyes of others).

### **Perception of own activities**

Secondly, the respondents often distanced themselves from what they called “criminals”. Hence, despite the fact they were making money with drugs, they did not perceive themselves to be criminal offenders. For example, Alex (Appendix 5) called dealing in speed and coke, two things he did not do, “the real criminal shit” and Charlie and Frank denied that they did do anything that was forbidden. Others made a distinction between themselves and “real dealers”:

“Of course we knew we would be seen as ..., if they would ever arrest us. We were conscious of that. But it didn’t feel that way. (...) In our opinion, *criminal* [emphasis added] dealers were people who were still involved at age twenty-five, and did not have the idea that they would ever have a normal job, or something like that.” (Ben, Appendix 6, 01:03:00-01:06:00,);



“I’d rather not be a full-on dealer. (...) [I] believe when I would have been a real dealer, I wouldn’t have started higher education (...). There is, I think, a difference between ‘dealers’ and dealers; I wouldn’t classify myself as dealer, though I have sold drugs occasionally (of which 20% with profit) – which makes me a dealer” (Ismael, Appendix 13, 00:42:00-00:44:00, 01:32:00).

When discussing sanctions, the respondents often mentioned they agreed with harsh permissions against large-scale drug dealers or the people that truly belonged to “the underworld”, but they did not perceive themselves as part of this world.

Thirdly, and very closely related to the second finding, almost all respondents did not think of their work as a ‘real job’. In the introduction talks, before the interviews started, the respondents frequently immediately mentioned that they were never involved very seriously, or large-scale. They often had side-jobs, which were the ‘real jobs’ for them. They did not deny that they made (sometimes large) amounts of money; they just denied the fact that this could be called a job.

Two intertwined elements seem to influence these perceptions. Except for David and Matthew, the respondents largely provided their services to friends and acquaintances. As was mentioned in the paragraph *Rational Choice Theory* in this chapter, helping their friends was an important reward for the respondents. Secondly, the interviewees often saw themselves as working on a small-scale level:

“So, these drugs, that was very small, just on the side, to help my friends. And very small, small-scale.” (Harry, Appendix 12, 00:03:42);

“I was ‘dealing’ only when I had something or could sell a small portion. (...) I am happy I kept it small, in relatively small networks” (Ismael, Appendix 13, 00:38-00:42:00).

Again, David and Matthew were somewhat divergent from the other respondents: they were the only ones for who making money with drugs was a main activity; Matthew called it a “fulltime job” (Appendix 17). Kevin and James used to have a broader network, but James had difficulties handling the social expectations of this network, and therefore choose to taper off, now only

providing drugs to friends. Thus, though they were aware of the fact that what they were doing, is forbidden by law, the respondents questioned it when the interviewer talked about their ‘job’, and also sometimes denied the illegitimacy of their moneymaking.

### **The bigger picture**

This thesis started with a short explanation of organized crime in the Netherlands and the importance of drugs for Dutch organized crime groups. Kleemans and De Poot (2007) discussed that despite the fact drug related crime can be organized in large social networks, this does not necessarily mean that every “member” of this network will know the others (see also figure 1). Therefore, it is interesting to note that the majority of the respondents did not feel like they were part of a network; the same way they distanced themselves from “real dealers” or having a “criminal job”, they took distance from “the underworld”. As has been discussed in the paragraph *Differential Association Theory*, though the respondents knew others who were involved in drug related crime, they often built their own network of customers. This can have contributed to the perception the respondents had: they felt in no way connected to the “bigger picture”:

“I wouldn’t call it organized. (...) It’s a bunch of teenagers who are messing around and sell some weed” (Leon, Appendix 16, 00:28:00-00:30:00).

The large-scale disadvantages of drug related crime seemed to be invisible for the majority of the respondents. Only two of them showed awareness of the impact drug criminality can have:

“Indirectly, I was contributing to certain rivalries and more heavy criminalities. (...) While my own activities, in my eyes, were pretty innocent.” (Ben, Appendix 6, 02:07:00);

“I believe that, from production to use, approximately two to three people die (in the case of coke). That’s just sick” (Ismael, Appendix 13, 01:33:00, emphasis as in the original).

As can be noted in Ben's quote, there is a discrepancy between perception and behavior for these two respondents. To the other respondents, the larger disadvantages of the drug world seemed to be invisible. For example, Alex argued that only the marijuana business was "organized crime business" (Appendix 5). Frank was directly involved in an organized crime group. Yet, he did not believe his behavior was blameworthy, and in the same way, he did not condemn organized crime: he argued it was all a question of demand and supply.

Therefore, it can be stated the respondents did not perceive themselves to be part of a network, despite Kleemans and De Poot's (2007) claims. A likely reason for this is they often worked small-scale and in a familiar network; the idea of an organized crime group seemed enormous and remote.

## Discussion

### Answer to the research question

#### Defining push and pull factors based on the four theories

Though the analysis of the study in this thesis has been divided in the four different criminological theories, the aim of this research was not to find the theory that is most substantiated by the data. On the contrary, the aim is to determine which *elements* of these theories can explain why youngsters engage in drug related crime. Therefore, the theories are analyzed on a more in-depth level to answer the research question: “*to what extent can the push and pull factors described by the four criminological theories explain youngsters’ entry in drug related crime?*” In the following, the elements that were most present will be summarized per theory.

Little support could be found in the data for *strain theory*. The two assumptions of Hirschi (1968) could be substantiated, indicating that the youngsters **(1) do not believe in institutional means to achieve culturally defined goals**. This can be defined as a push factor, for the youngsters did not settle with the way society is configured. Furthermore, strain theorists would expect the perception of strains by delinquents; however, only one of the respondents felt like it was harder for him to live up to the standards of society than other (white, non-foreign) people. The other respondents, to a great extent, believed they were responsible for achieving their life goals, and thought outsiders had no to little impact on this. They felt little societal pressure to live up to certain standards and were convinced it was possible to achieve their goals.

Substantial support could be found for the *differential association theory* regarding friends: all respondents had peers who engaged in drug related crime. Some of these were direct motivators, by showing or telling the respondents how convenient it was to make money with drugs, or asking the respondents to provide them a service. Others were examples for self-recruitment. These respondents decided for themselves they wanted to make money with drugs, and looked how others did this in order to develop their own methods. Furthermore, the respondents’ friends were often drug consumers. For these friends, it was useful to know somebody – namely, the respondent – who was selling drugs. Thus, **(2) the perception that many people are engaged in drug related crime**, and **(3) the perception that making money with drug related crime is accepted in the social environment** can be defined as pull factors. Next, as would be expected by differential association theorists, all respondents used neutralization techniques to justify their

behavior. **(4) The use of neutralization techniques** indicates that the youngsters do believe in law and order, but do not obey, and overrule the caused internal conflict by reasoning. Little scientific backing could be found in the data for the differential association theory regarding other social contacts, like family. These associates often condemned drug crime or drugs in general.

*The social bonding theory* is built on four different elements, which are discussed one by one in the following. To begin with, little underpinning was found that a lack of social attachment was an important factor for the youngsters' delinquent behavior. The majority of the respondents was closely attached to friends, family and teachers. However, as has been noted above, some of the peers of the respondents were showing delinquent behavior. This is in line with the critique on the social bonding theory, stating it is unlikely that people who are friends with delinquent persons will stay away from showing this behavior themselves. Though the respondents were close to their parents, they were often convinced their parents would condemn their delinquent behavior. In the end, it can be concluded that a lack of attachment was no clear indicator for delinquent behavior. On the contrary, another defined pull factor is **(5) the close attachment of the respondents with people who were engaged in drug related crime.**

The second element of the social bonding theory, commitment to traditional activities, is closely interrelated with the third element: involvement in traditional activities. It is not substantiated by data that respondents lacked commitment or involvement: they wanted to finish education, pursue a career, had side jobs, were higher-level educated, and were involved in sports. The argument made by social bonding theorists, that those who are being committed to and involved in traditional activities would simply not have enough time to engage in delinquent behavior, is not supported by the interviews. The main reason for this is that the specific illegal activities the respondents were involved in did not take that much time: **(6) short time investment** is therefore a pull factor.

The last element of the social bonding theory is belief in the moral values of society. Almost all respondents agreed you should break the rules sometimes in order to achieve something in life (or at least, to achieve it more easily). This is therefore in line with the social bonding theory. **(7) A lack of belief in the moral values of society** can be seen as both a push and a pull factor. It is a push factor, because the respondents do not agree with how the laws of society are configured. Yet, it is also a pull factor, for the moral values of society will not easily stop the youngsters from making money with drug related crime, since they simply ignore rules. However,

it is important to note that the youngsters often agreed with the *existence* of the rules and state that they were important. Yet, they do not feel bad about flouting them from time to time. In the next paragraph, *A new theory of youth involvement in drug related crime*, this finding will be discussed more extensively. For now, it can be concluded that only one element of this particular theory, namely, little belief in the moral values of society, was consistently present in all respondents.

To find factors relating to the *rational choice theory*, it was questioned whether the cost-benefit consideration by respondents had influenced their choice to engage in drug related crime. The majority of the respondents perceived benefits to be higher than costs (or at least did so at the beginning). The most influential factors seemed to be material rewards on the benefit-side, and risk-perception on the cost-side. Though some argued they liked the fact that they could help their friends, or that people were looking up to them (which are **(8) social rewards** as pull factors), **(9) the material rewards** were referred to more consistently and were therefore a clear pull factor. The material reward was not only **(9a) monetary**: the **(9b) easy access to (cheaper) drugs** was also an advantage for some. Furthermore, (low) time investment was again found to be an important influencer. The respondents estimated the chance of being caught as very low, making **(10) low risk-estimation** another pull factor. Though the youngsters were able to make this cost-benefit consideration, they often did not do so consciously beforehand; they repeatedly mentioned they did not think about the costs, benefits and risks before stepping in. Rational choice theory assumes a very economical way of thinking and reasoning, but the economic benefits of their behavior did not seem to lead the respondents that explicitly. Hence, these findings align with the critique addressed to the rational choice theory, since the results indicate that the respondents were bounded in their rationality.

Thus, different push and pull factors could be identified based on the four criminological theories. An overview of these factors and the percentage of respondents substantiating the different factors can be found in table 6.

Table 6

*Overview of the identified push and pull factors based on the four criminological theories*

Factor	Substantiated by % respondents
1. No believe in institutional means to achieve cultural goals	85
2. Perception many people are engaged in drug related crime	100
3. Perception the social environment tolerates engagement in drug related crime	100
4. Use of neutralization techniques	100
5. Close attachment to people who engage in drug related crime	100
6. Short time investment	46
7. A lack in belief in the moral values of society	92
8. Social rewards	85
9. Material rewards	92
a. Monetary rewards	85
b. Access to (cheaper) drugs	31
10. Low risk-estimation	100

*Note.* Percentage based on the interview data (n = 13).

a. The use of neutralization techniques (factor 4) can be identified as neither a push nor a pull factor. Yet, since neutralization techniques are used by all respondents, it is important to take this factor in consideration.

b. Short time investment was mentioned explicitly by 46% of the respondents as a factor; nevertheless, it can be noted almost all respondents (85%) had little time to spent on drug related activities due to other activities they were involved in (like going to school and having a side job).

### **A new theory of youth involvement in drug related crime**

In the former paragraph, different push and pull factors have been identified based on the data analysis, which are connected to the four criminological theories. However, it is important to discuss how these factors are related to one another. In this paragraph, the coherence between the factors will be studied, which results in a new Criminological Theory of Youth Involvement in Drug Related Crime. This will mean that the factors found are not only described in context: they are also interpreted in their meaning for the youngsters.

Corley and Gioia (2011, in Dankansa, 2015; Tibbets, 2018) have described theory as “a relationship of concepts that shows how and why a phenomenon occurs” (p. 65). To explain the

occurring phenomenon in this thesis, namely, youth involvement in drug related crime, a series of concepts will be discussed. In order to make this theory as comprehensive as possible, one fictional youngster (Nick) will be used to conceptualize the most important findings and to present the new theory. The theory is also visible in figure 2 (page 67).

Nick is a boy who lives in the Netherlands. He is doing well at school (secondary or higher education). He is content with his social life and has different groups of friends. His parents, with whom he is closely bonded, have always motivated him to engage in different activities. Therefore, he has a side job, joins a team sport and takes extra courses. His week is always loaded with different activities. His parents have worked Nick's whole life, and Nick wants to pursue a career as well. His life is relatively stable and safe.

When Nick is in his early teens, his friends introduce him to drugs for the first time. He starts to use occasionally, mostly on festivals and parties or when accompanied by friends. His parents are aware of this, and do not condemn the use of drugs per se. Since Nick has different groups of friends, he discovers two sides of drugs. The first group consists of friends who use drugs: the consumers. The second group includes a few friends who make money with drugs: the facilitators<sup>9</sup>. They introduce Nick to this world on different levels: some facilitators only talk about it and show how much money they make; others introduce Nick to their own dealers; and the last level exists of facilitating friends who motivate Nick to start to make money himself.

If Nick decides to join, he can choose different activities to engage in. The exact activity is dependent on the reasons why Nick involves in drug related crime. It is important to note that whatever activity Nick chooses, the act of making money with drugs should not take too much time, because he does not quit any of his social activities that were mentioned in the former passage. It is likely that if drug related activities would take too much time, Nick would not involve, because he is very busy with school, sports and his side job.

One reason Nick can decide to engage is **arousal**. If Nick feels like his parents are overprotective, or if he does not perceive his needs to be fulfilled by his social activities, it is likely that arousal is a motivator to get involved in drug related activities. Unintentionally, by providing him a safe life, the adults in Nick's environment promote his search for excitement. The illegality of the act is what makes it attractive and creates arousal. Therefore, Nick will not be too delicate about the exact activity: he can become a dealer, but he can also do entirely different activities,

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<sup>9</sup> There is a possibility these two groups overlap.



like more facilitating services.

The second possible reason is **materialism**. The materialistic reason can be broken down in two different sub-reasons. In the first, Nick is not in a financial difficult situation: his parents have enough money and he has a side job. However, he thinks the side job wage is low, and the stories told by the friends who already make money with drugs sound attractive. He feels like it is only logical to look for more lucrative activities next to his side job. Again, Nick can be engaged in different jobs: if money is the incentive, he does not necessarily have to deal drugs, but he can set up a marihuana nursery, for example. The second sub-reason would be if Nick buys drugs for his own use and realizes he can get a good deal out of it if he buys-in larger stocks and sells what he does not need. In this case, it is likely Nick will become a small-scale drug dealer for his direct social environment. In the first sub-reason, money is the leading motivator; in the second, a cheaper access to drugs is.

The third and final reason is **friendliness**. Nick's consumer group of friends knows he has a network of people who can provide him (cheaper) drugs, and they start asking him if he can help them out: can he provide this-or-that drug for them? Nick convinces himself that his friends will only have access to drugs through him. He often makes small profit with the drugs he sells; yet, Nick believes the most important incentive is that he can help his friends.

So, based on the data of the thirteen respondents of this thesis, three main reasons can be defined for youth involvement in drug related activities: arousal, materialism, or friendliness. It is not unlikely there is a combination of different reasons: for example, Nick sells drugs to his friends, so they will have access, but he will also ensure he makes some profit, which overlays with the materialistic reason.

It has become clear that friends are a significant motivator (and in case of the friendliness reason, a reward) for getting involved in drug related crime. However, there are more important elements that need to be mentioned.

As has been noted before, Nick has a good relationship with his parents and teachers. From a young age onwards, Nick has developed beliefs, morals and values, thanks to these adult role models. Though some of them know he uses drugs, Nick's adult role models never know he makes money with it. Nick assumes they will condemn it and to not create problems, he decides it is best not to talk about it at all. However, though Nick ignores his parents' and teachers' opinion on drug related crime, he values their judgments in general, and this results in incongruency for Nick.

First of all, he knows he should condemn criminal behavior, while at the same time, he does not follow the institutional means of society. Therefore, when he gets involved in drug related crime, it is likely he uses neutralization techniques to justify his behavior. He will often argue that he has to do this for his friends, who otherwise do not have access to drugs (especially if he is motivated by friendliness reasons), or he may state that drugs are not as harming as one is told.

Secondly, Nick has learned from his adult role models it is important to pursue a career. Because the illegal pathway he has chosen currently, is not likely to help Nick with having a successful (societal accepted) career, he will not perceive the drug related activities he is involved in as a job. He believes that only those who are too long and too much engaged in these businesses, will become “real dealers” or “real criminals”. Therefore, the activities he is involved in are in his perception not a real job, but a more temporary enterprise.

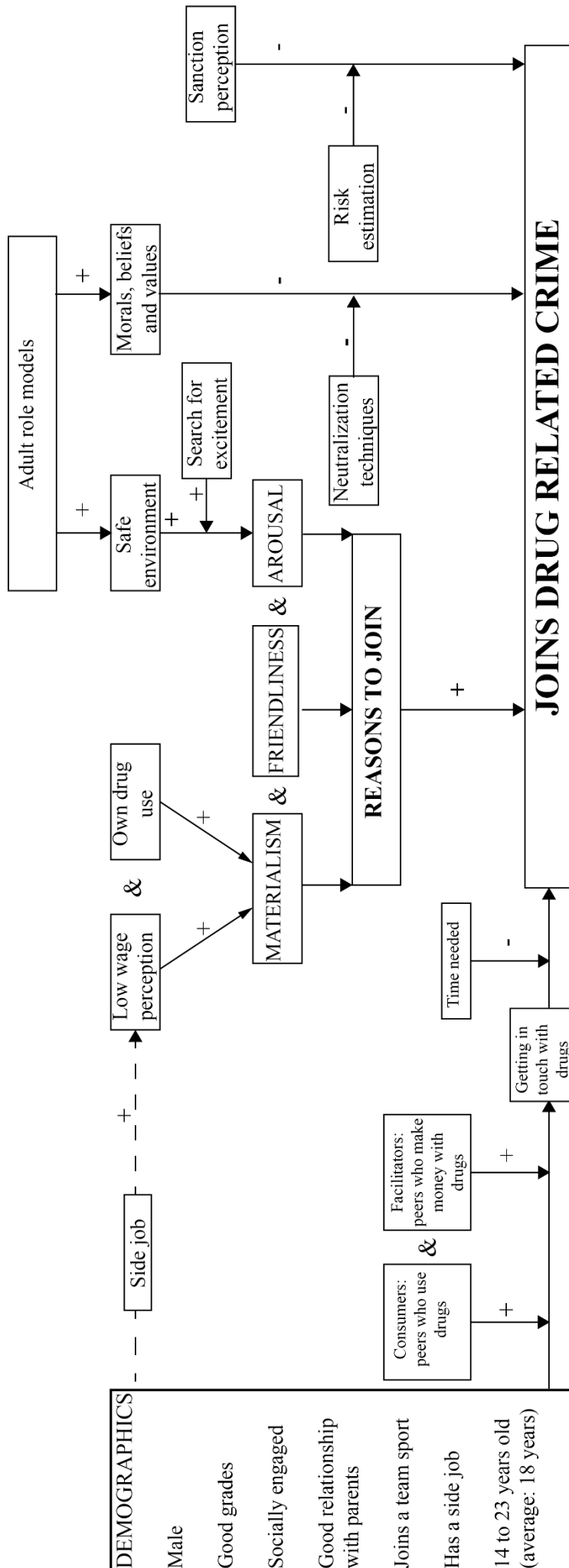


Figure 2. The joining model, which explains the decisive factors and elements and reasons given why youngsters decide to join drug related crime.

It is very likely Nick will quit after a few years, or scale down his drug related activities, for two possible reasons: he is no longer able to do his business, because he moves to another town, loses certain contacts or makes another demographic change (like getting a girlfriend); or because he is sated with the drug world. The first reason seems to be most appearing, which coheres with the fact that drug related crime is seen as a temporary activity. The same way the youngster would resign when he moves to another city to finish his education, the same way he quits drug related activities.

The second reason happens as well, but is less likely, because Nick will almost always believe the benefits of his involvement in drug related crime will outweigh the costs. When he started, Nick did not really think about the negative consequences, but only about the possible rewards and the small-time investment. Though he thinks the sanctions on drug related crimes are harsh, Nick does not think the risk of apprehension is high, even when he experiences arrestments nearby. As is visible in table 7, when Nick argues he is very careful and will not take too much risks (irrespective of the exact measurements he takes to reduce the risks), the chance of joining drug related crime is high. This is also visible in figure 2.

Table 7

*Relationships between risk estimation, perceived height of sanctions and probability one will get involved in drug related crime*

	High perceived sanctions	Low perceived sanctions
High risk estimation	Low join probability	Medium join probability
Low risk estimation	High join probability	High join probability

*Note.* The relationship between ‘low perceived sanctions’ and ‘high risk estimation’ is only substantiated by one respondent (Leon), who became more careful after his risk-estimation increased, and eventually quit.

When Nick decides to quit because he is sated with the drug world, this is because his cost-benefit consideration has shifted: he has, for example, become more fearful of the risks, or has made enough money and does not see why he should continue his activities. In this case, it also possible that Nick will scale down his activities: for example, he no longer provides to a larger network, but only facilitates drug related services for friends.

The quitting model is visible in figure 3. Of course, a combination of both quitting reasons

is possible. For example, Nick can graduate and find a fulltime job, which makes it harder to continue his drug related activities. At the same time, the fulltime job will provide him with more money, whereupon the monetary reward of drug related crime becomes less valuable. This will result in a shift in the cost-benefit consideration.

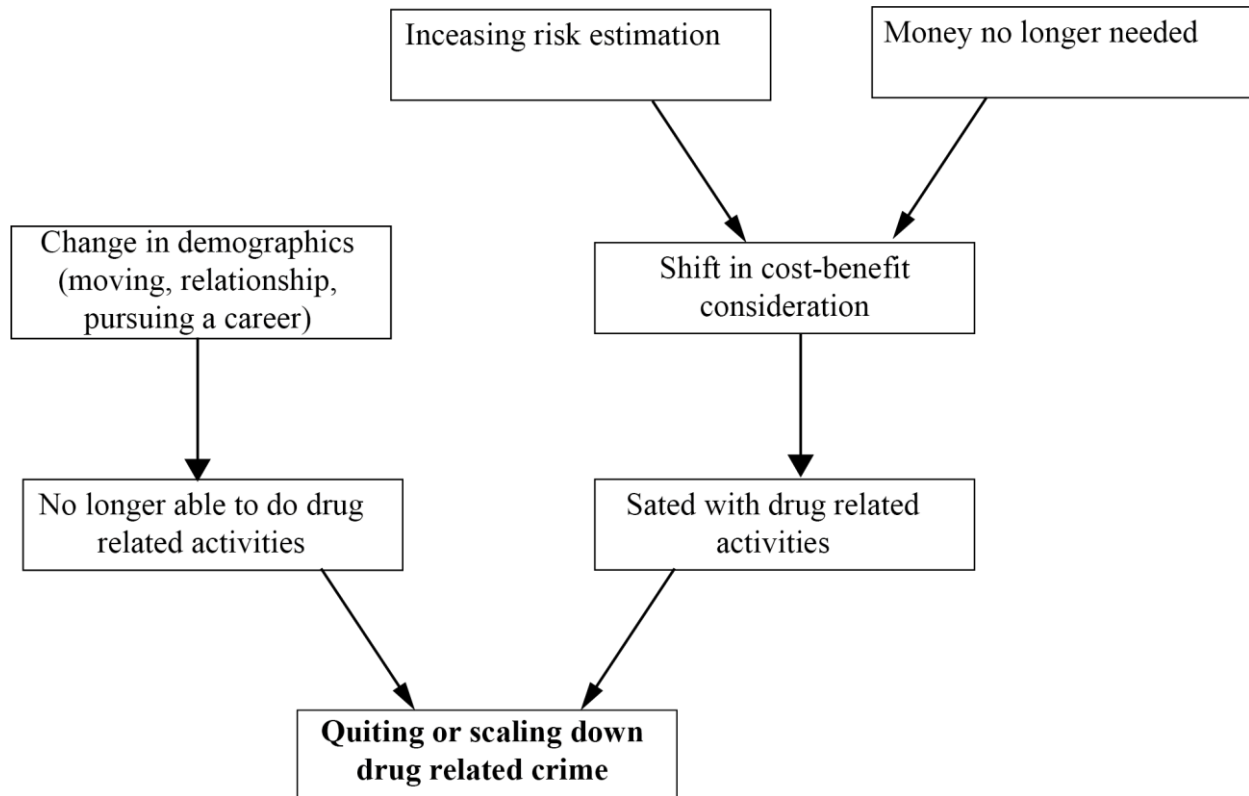


Figure 3. The quitting model, which explains the decisive factors that influence a youngster’s decision to scale down or quit drug related crime activities.

Not all push and pull factors named in the former section are being explicitly mentioned in this Criminological Theory of Youth Involvement in Drug Related Crime. The aim of the presented theory is not to force all observations into one model, but to logically determine how they would relate to one another. Therefore, factor 1 (no believe in institutional means to achieve certain goals) and factor 7 (a lack of belief in the moral values of society) cannot be traced back literally in the theory. This is mainly due to the incongruency the respondents showed during the interviews: though they often very clearly distinguish what is morally right and wrong, they do not always follow these moral rules, but instead, use neutralization techniques to justify their behavior.

Jensen *et al.* (1978) have argued that there is a difference between making general

statements and making statements that clearly involve oneself when it comes to risk estimation. In this theory, it is propositioned this will also happen when it comes to judging one's behavior and justifying this behavior: the youngster is likely to condemn deviant behavior of others, while at the same time, he can show the same or similar behavior (Reeve, 2009). However, his own behavior is justified by the youngster by the use of neutralization techniques. Concluding, it can be stated this new theory presents the most important elements that explained drug involvement for the thirteen respondents in this thesis.

### **Relation to existing research**

Some of the findings of this research are inconsistent with the findings mentioned in the theoretical framework of this thesis. Evidence for the strain theory was only profoundly found in one participant. Regarding the social bonding theory, little influence was found for most factors; for example, the participants thought their parents raised them well and their relationship with them was good. According to the rational choice theory, the respondents should be expected to make a cost-benefit consideration, resulting in more advantages than disadvantages. However, there are clear indicators this consideration was not always consciously made, and not all factors identified by the rational choice theory were taken into account. Nevertheless, support that the respondents estimated the risks to be very low was indeed found in the research accomplished in this thesis. This is in line with the findings of Loughran *et al.* (2016), who state that the certainty of arrest was a better predictor for delinquent behavior than the severity of sanctions. In the end, the only theory that seems to be fully supported by this thesis, is the differential association theory, whereby friends are the most important intimate contacts of the youngsters, who show how to make money in it and who tolerate drug-related crime.

Nonetheless, it has to be noted that the criminological theories used in this research are indeed no more than that – *theories*. They are in no way the absolute truth, and based on the current (explorative) findings, it cannot be said one theory is “closer” to the truth than any other. In the theoretical framework, all four theories were already criticized. During the interviews, it was attempted to take these critiques into regard. For example, when asking questions that related to the rational choice theory, when respondents mentioned that they did not “think about this ever before”, this was not overlooked, but coded as a sign of bounded rationality, which is one of the major critiques on the rational choice theory. Codes were made for both answers that indicate

support and rejection of the different theories, and all codes were analyzed one by one, to avoid cherry-picking. More critiques have already been mentioned in the chapter *Analysis*.

The findings of this thesis diverge from the findings in earlier (and often larger-scale) research. This is not surprising, due to the unique design of this research. Most of the current research on youth criminality has focused on different delinquent behavior, like shoplifting or vandalism. This can influence the outcomes. Furthermore, by focusing on an invisible group (that is, those who are engaged in drug related crime in the Netherlands under the age of twenty-five), this research has offered unique insights. It has not ignored the youngsters, as happened before in the Netherlands, but invited them to tell their side of the story. Though very small scale, this research has shown how important it is to do this and to identify the important push and pull factors according to the youngsters themselves.

### **Limitations of the study**

This study is not without limitations. As has been noted in the chapter *Methodology*, though it is unlikely the respondents would lie, it cannot be ensured they merely spoke the truth. This is not an uncommon issue for this kind of research, because people are inclined to give socially desirable answers (Kämpfe, Penzhorn, Schikora, Dünzl, & Schneidenbach, 2009; Kolarcik, Madarasova Geckova, Reijneveld & Van Dijk, 2016). Köllisch and Oberwitteler (2004) found in their study that answering socially desirable was mostly profound in youngsters from an ethnic minority or with a lower social economic status (SES) (see also Paalman, Van Domburgh, Stevens & Doreleijers, 2011). Unfortunately, due to the small sample and design of this thesis, it could not be determined whether answering socially desirable was common. E.g., social desirability may have influenced the outcome of the cost-benefit consideration the adolescents made. Perchance they reasoned that since it was clear that they were showing delinquent behavior, it would make sense to perceive the benefits to be higher than the costs. Also, the respondents were asked to look back to when they engaged in drug related crime for the first time. This means the study relied on a retrospective design, but memories can be influenced over time, amongst others by other experiences, mood and forgotten details (Hardt & Rutter, 2004), and therefore this influences the reliability of the study.

Fact is that lying, thus *consciously* not telling the truth, did not reward the youngsters materially; they were not paid for the interview or rewarded in any other way. The youngsters interviewed face-to-face were offered one to two drinks, which three of the four respondents

accepted. The respondents interviewed via a chat app or by a telephone call did not receive any reimbursement. Therefore, it can be said that the choice to lie would be unlikely: the interviews were fully voluntary and took the respondents time without any incentive.

Other positive aspects were the demographics of the researcher herself: she is relatively young (twenty-two years old) and did not have a strong opinion on people who engage in drug related crime. Therefore, she could interview the respondents openly, without judgment, and most important: without consequences. This is very different from, for example, a research (commissioned) by the police, interviewing convicted youngsters. Because of the difficult relationship between interviewer and interviewee, it is likely that this kind of research would provoke more lies and unfair behavior than with the relationships that were present in the current research.

A limitation is the sample itself: it is difficult to validate. Only thirteen respondents were interviewed, who were all male. Their education level and cultural background was diverse, as was the place in which they were active: the Dutch provinces Groningen, Noord-Brabant, Zuid-Holland, Utrecht and Gelderland were all represented. Thus, beside gender, the group was quite diverse – however, gender is seen as a major difference between individuals regarding delinquent behavior (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Most of the respondents were engaged in small-scale drug related activities, in a small network of people they knew, and they did these activities next to many other, like going to school and having side jobs. This can also alter the findings, since this group can diverge from, amongst others, dealers who have a larger network or people who make a living out of drug related activities (Moffit, 1993).

Another interesting note is that the respondents joined the research voluntarily; it is yet impossible to know to what extent they differ from the people who had the same experiences, but decided not to be interviewed. There may be differences in, for example, the risk estimation they made. The face to face interviews were completed in a public space (a coffee bar), where other people were present. The youngsters who agreed with these interviews may not have felt threatened by talking about their behavior in public, which may be consistent with the fact that they estimated the risk of getting caught as low. Hence, the voluntariness of the sample may have influenced the outcome of the research.

Therefore, it is impossible to generalize this study to Dutch society. However, the goal of this thesis was never to generalize. It is designed as an explorative study, meant to be a stepping-stone for further research, by pointing out the importance of including the youngsters



who engage in drug related crime in research.

### **Recommendations for future research**

It would be recommended in future research to include more participants, as well as a higher percentage of women. Time did not allow to strive for a certain number of respondents in this study. The researcher was motivated to include as much respondents as possible in the time given. The theory presented in the chapter *Discussion* is based on interviews with people who were active in drug related crime in the Netherlands. Two of them indicated they were (also) active in another Northern-European country. It would be interesting to accomplish further comparable research with youngsters from other states, since drugs is more tolerated and used by youngsters in the Netherlands than it is in most other European countries (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2017). Furthermore, it is recommended to include youngsters who decided not to involve in drug related crimes, despite the fact that they had a realistic opportunity to (because they show similarities with the current sample, in demographics and social network). Adding their perception can expatiate the theory developed in this thesis.

Reliability of this research topic will always be an issue; however, one can decide to schedule more time for the interviews and include control questions. Questions about the respondent's relationship with his or her parents, for example, can be asked at the start and, somewhat altered, at the end of the interview. When the answers to these questions diverge from one another, this can be an important indicator of lying or answering socially desirable, by which the respondent can be excluded from the research. Another possibility is the use of an indirect measure to indicate social desirability, as has been done in other research in the field of delinquency studies (see, for example, Köllisch & Oberwitteler, 2004; Kämpfe, *et al.*, 2009; Kolarcik, *et al.*, 2016).

### **Recommendations for intervention**

Finding useful interventions was not the major goal of this research. Yet, in the following, attention will be given on how different interventions can be used to influence the identified push and pull factors and the choice path made according to the developed model (figure 2). As was mentioned in the paragraph *Societal relevance* (page 10) there can be negative consequences for youngsters who show delinquent (drug related) behavior on an early age: not only can it impede

school presentation and promote drug abuse, but it can even bring their lives in danger and predict a life career in crime. In this section, possible interventions will be discussed.

Interventions in the world of youth delinquency can take different forms. Hawkins and Weis (1985) discriminate two forms: **prevention**, which is “an action to prelude illegal behavior before it occurs” and **control**, which is a “reaction to an infraction after it has been committed” (p. 74). Prevention is currently the most popular intervention form (*ibid.*). Prevention measures can be classified in “early prevention”, focused on adolescents or children that are of high risk of becoming delinquents; or “primary prevention”, which is focused on the “organizational, institutional, social structural and cultural level” (*ibid.*, p. 74).

The findings of this research give opportunities for prevention measures, both early and primary, that can help to decrease the involvement of youngsters in drug related crime. When it comes to early prevention, interventions should focus on targeting youngsters who are at risk. Based on the findings of this research, this means that teenagers who are attached to peers who are already engaged in drug related crime, should be taken out of this network and into a network of people who do not make money with similar activities. For example, when a youngster is being arrested for drug dealing, his or her personal social network should be mapped, and the intervention should take place on the contacts at risk. This measure should take place on a personal level, for joining is often perceived to be a personal decision. It is likely that arresting the delinquent youngster will not have a large deterrent effect, since several respondents noted that they knew people who were arrested for their involvement in drug related activities, which did not seem to influence their decision to join.

Interventions on higher levels are also possible. When it comes to primary prevention, youngsters can be taught about the moral values of society and why these values are important to hold onto. Teaching this in school will give them luggage to guard themselves against the risk of ignoring the existing institutional means. According to Weber (1947, in Sykes & Matza, 1957) understanding the *morality* of rules is more important than understanding the *legitimacy* of rules; and as was supported by this research, the majority of the respondents indeed agreed with the legitimacy of rules without obeying them. Understanding why obeying rules from a moral perspective is important, as it may discourage involvement in drug related crime.

Lastly, control measures should focus on the cost-benefit considerations the youngsters make. Currently, they make a large amount of money in little time, and the risk of arrestment is perceived as low. Sanctions do not seem to influence the cost-benefit consideration. Therefore,

interventions in the control area should not focus on threatening with sanctions, but with risks: when the youngsters realize the risk of being caught is higher than they initially perceived, this can demotivate them to make money with drugs. The other side of the cost- benefit consideration is more difficult to influence: drugs are currently highly valuable. As long as the demand for these goods is high, and as long as drugs will remain illegal, it is unlikely they will decrease in price.

## **Final conclusion**

“It is a very different world, one you do not easily see (...). If you want to understand it all, you should just join” (Frank, Appendix 10, 00:21:14, 00:21:30).

This thesis started out of curiosity: why would youngsters be interested in making money with drugs? To figure out their main reasons, this thesis did not follow the beaten path. Hitherto, an important information source has been neglected. The researcher of this thesis aimed to give voice to the youngsters who earn money in drug related crime. She completed interviews with thirteen respondents, who shared their unique insights about push and pull factors that were important for them when starting to make money in the world of drugs. This resulted in the development of a new Criminological Theory of Youth Involvement in Drug Related Crime.

The outcomes showed that these respondents perceived certain factors to be more (and sometimes less) important than state-of-the-art research would conclude. Based on the findings of this research, both prevention (primary and early) and control measures can be of use to intervene in the behavior of the youngsters, in order to tackle this problem.

Moreover, this development should not stop here. The researcher wants to challenge others to do the same: to no longer talk *about*, but *with* those who are the main subject of the research; and not to ignore their insights but to take them into account. For an outsider, it is not always possible to understand this world and to see the story from the side of the adolescents involved. Their perception and opinion can be a valuable contribution to the field of delinquency studies, and should therefore not be overlooked.

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## **Appendix 2: Informed consent and interview questions (Dutch)**

### **Informed consent**

Fijn dat je mee wilt doen aan mijn scriptieonderzoek. Voordat we beginnen, wil ik je meer uitleggen over mijn onderwerp, het doel van het onderzoek, waarom ik denk dat jij me kunt helpen en wat je rechten zijn.

Ik ben bezig met het afronden van mijn master Crisis and Security Management aan de Universiteit Leiden. Mijn scriptie gaat over waarom jongeren geld verdienen met drugs. Ik ben zelf heel nieuwsgierig naar dit onderwerp en wil er meer over weten, omdat het een wereld is die ik zelf niet goed ken. Ik heb er daarom veel over gelezen. Wat me opviel, is dat in andere onderzoeken de jongeren zelf bijna nooit aan het woord komen. Vaak vertellen politie, jeugdwerkers of andere professionals hun ervaringen. Op basis daarvan worden conclusies getrokken over waarom en welke jongeren geld verdienen met drugs. Ik ben zelf van mening dat hierdoor dingen over het hoofd kunnen worden gezien. Daarom wilde ik heel graag terug naar de bron: namelijk de jonge mensen zelf die geld verdienen met drugs.

Ik wil jou graag interviewen omdat je aangeeft hier ervaring in te hebben. Of je nu nog steeds geld verdiend met drugs of dat alleen in het verleden hebt gedaan, maakt voor mijn onderzoek niet uit. Het kan ook zijn dat dit niet je voornaamste inkomstenbron was. Ook dat maakt niet uit. Het meeste belangrijk is dat jij, op een bepaald moment in je leven, geld hebt verdiend dankzij drugs. Je hoeft geen informatie te geven over de exacte taken of banen als je dit niet wilt, want dit is niet nodig voor mijn onderzoek. Dankzij jouw deelname kan ik meer leren over waarom jonge mensen geld gaan verdienen met drugs.

Het interview zal tussen de vijfenveertig en zestig minuten duren. We zullen in deze tijd praten over hoe je leven eruitzag rond de tijd dat je voor het eerst geld ging verdienen dankzij drugs. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden en je deelname is geheel vrijwillig. Als je me iets niet wilt vertellen, kun je dit aangeven. Dan gaan we door naar de volgende vraag. Als je wilt stoppen met dit interview, kan dat ook. Je hoeft hier geen reden voor te geven.

Ik begrijp dat dit een gevoelig onderwerp is. Daarom ga ik zo zorgvuldig mogelijk met je gegevens om. Ik zal de “ruwe data” van mijn onderzoek (de transcripten van de interviews of de chatteksten) delen met mijn scriptiebegeleider, Tim Dekkers, en de tweede lezer, Marieke

Liem. Zij werken allebei voor de Universiteit Leiden. Ik zal hen geen informatie geven die jouw identiteit te achterhalen valt: alleen je geslacht en huidige leeftijd zullen genoemd worden. Als er in de tekst details staan die naar jou herleidbaar zouden kunnen zijn, zoals een plaats of andere namen, zal ik deze onleesbaar maken.

Op basis van deze interviews zal ik een scriptie schrijven. Wanneer deze af is, is hij vrij beschikbaar voor iedereen. De bijlage met de ruwe data van de interviews is hier geen onderdeel van. Er kunnen in de tekst wel verwijzingen naar het interview staan, of citaten van jou. Ook hier noem ik alleen je leeftijd en geslacht, zodat het niet herleidbaar is naar jou.

Tot slot zou ik je willen vragen of ik het interview mag opnemen (in het geval van chat-app: letterlijk mag overnemen). Als ik de opname heb getranscribeerd, zal ik de opname verwijderen. Als je niet wilt dat ik een opname maak, zal ik uitgebreide aantekeningen maken. Je moet er dan wel rekening mee houden dat het interview dan waarschijnlijk iets langer duurt.

Voordat het interview van start kan gaan, heb ik je officiële toestemming nodig dat je begrijpt waar dit interview over zal gaan, waarvoor het is, wat jouw risico's zijn en dat je deelname vrijwillig is en elk gewenst moment beëindigd kan worden.

## **Interview questions**

1. Kun je me vertellen hoe je leven eruitzag toen je voor het eerst geld verdiende met drugs?
  - 1.1. Hoe oud was je?
  - 1.2. Ging je naar school?
    - 1.2.1. Wat was je opleidingsniveau?
    - 1.2.2. Vond je het leuk om naar school te gaan?
      - 1.2.2.1. Hoe was je relatie met je docenten?
  - 1.3. Zat je op een sport of bij een andere vereniging?
    - 1.3.1. Vond je het leuk om hierbij aangesloten te zijn?
  - 1.4. Wat voor hobby's had je in die tijd?
  - 1.5. Wat was je financiële situatie?
    - 1.5.1. Verdiende je al op andere manieren geld toen je hiermee begon?

2. Wat is volgens jou de grootste reden waarom je geld bent gaan verdienen met drugs?

Ik wil nu wat meer ingaan op de sociale relaties die je had in de tijd dat je begon met geld verdienen met drugs.

3. Voordat je begon met geld verdienen met drugs, kende je toen mensen die al in deze *business* zaten?
  - 3.1. Hoe oud was je toen je hen leerde kennen?
  - 3.2. Wat is jouw relatie met deze mensen?
    - 3.2.1. Hoe lang kende je deze mensen?
    - 3.2.2. Hoe vaak zagen jullie elkaar?
  - 3.3. Wat vond je van deze mensen?
  - 3.4. Hebben deze mensen je geholpen om te starten met het verdienen van geld met drugs?
4. Kun je me vertellen hoe de relatie met je familie was rond die tijd?
  - 4.1. Zou je zeggen dat jij en je vader/moeder/broers en zussen een goede band hebben?
  - 4.2. Wat vind je van de manier waarop je ouders je hebben opgevoegd?
  - 4.3. Weet je familie dat je geld verdient of hebt verdiend met drugs?
    - 4.3.1. Wat is de mening van je familie hierover?
      - 4.3.1.1. Is deze mening voor jou belangrijk?

Ik wil nu graag een aantal meer algemene stellingen aan je voorleggen en horen wat je hiervan denkt.

5. Je kunt alles bereiken in het leven, als je er maar hard voor werkt.
  - 5.1. Indien nee: door wie komt het dat niet iedereen alles kan bereiken?
  - 5.2. Denk je dat de maatschappij te veel van mensen vraagt?
  - 5.3. Heb jij iets soortgelijks meegemaakt?
  - 5.4. Wat zou je willen bereiken in het leven?
    - 5.4.1. Heb je stappen ondernomen die je naar dit doel helpen?
      - 5.4.1.1. Welke?
    - 5.4.2. Is dit doel haalbaar voor je?
6. Om vooruit te komen in het leven, moet je soms de regels aan je laars lappen.

7. Er zijn positieve kanten aan geld verdienen met drugs.
  - 7.1. Wat zijn volgens jou de voordelen?
    - 7.1.1. Bijvoorbeeld persoonlijke beloningen, sociale beloningen, vrienden, status, geld, of toegang tot drugs.
8. Er zijn negatieve kanten aan geld verdienen met drugs.
  - 8.1. . Wat zijn volgens jou de nadelen?
    - 8.1.1. Bijvoorbeeld risico op arrestatie, verslaving, gevaarlijk werk.
  - 8.2. Wat geldt voor jou als groter, de voordelen of de nadelen?
9. Wat vind je van de straffen in Nederland als het gaat om druggerelateerde zaken?
  - 9.1. Waarom vind je dat?
  - 9.2. Is de kans dat jij gepakt gaat worden hoog of laag?
    - 9.2.1. Waarom denk je dat?
  - 9.3. Zijn er andere risico's in het werk dat je doet?

Dit waren mijn vragen.

10. Is er nog iets wat je graag met mij wilt delen?
11. Ken je andere mensen die zich door mij zouden laten willen interviewen?

## Appendix 3: Connection between the four criminological theories and the interview questions

In this appendix, it is explained which questions are likely to correspondent with one of the four theories. This list is not exhaustive but presented to give an idea of how the interview questions have been developed. Some questions are related to more than one theory. If a question is particularly aimed towards one of the factors of a certain theory, this is emphasized by not the use of a simple X, but of a code-letter. Explanation of these codes can be found in the footnote. Note that not every code is being mentioned in text; this does not mean that they are absent, but that they are not exceptionally named in a question. These factors, however, can be found in the general questions marked with an “X”.

Table 8

*Connection between the four criminological theories and the interview questions*

Question number	Strain theory	Differential Association	Social Bonding Theory	Rational Choice Theory	Additional information
1	X	X	X	X	
1.1					X
1.2					X
1.2.1	S C				X
1.2.2	S C		AS		X
1.2.2.1			AS		
1.3			I		
1.3.1			C		
1.4			C I		
1.5	F			X	
1.5.1	F			X	
2	X	X	X	X	
3		X	X		
3.2		X	X		X
3.2.1		X	X		X
3.2.2		X	X		X
3.3		X	X		

3.4		X		X		
4		F		AF		
4.1				AF		
4.2				AF		
4.3				AF		
4.3.1				AF		
4.3.1.1				AF		
5	X					
5.1	X			X		
5.2	C			B		
5.3	X			X		
5.4	X			X		
5.4.1	X					
5.4.2						X
5.4.3	X					
6	X			B	S	
7		X		X	B	
7.1		X		X	B	
7.1.1						X
8		X		X	X	
8.1		X		X	X	
8.1.1						X
8.2					S R	
9				B	S	
9.1						X
9.2					R	
9.2.1						X
9.3		X		X	X	
10	X	X		X	X	X
11						X

Note. For the interview questions, see appendix 2.

a. Strain theory abbreviations: F: financial factors; S: social factors; C: cultural factors

b. Differential association theory abbreviations: P: peers/friends; F: family; R: recruitment

c. Social bonding theory abbreviations: AP: attachment to peers; AF: attachment to family; AS: attachment to school; C: commitment to traditional activities; I: involvement in traditional activities; B: beliefs in the moral value of society

d. Rational choice theory abbreviations: S: sanctions; R: risks; B: benefits/rewards

## Appendix 4: Code tree

Table 9

*Code tree: an overview of all used codes, the number of respondents (sources) indicating these codes, and the amount of references in all interviews.*

Theory	Code	Subcode	Sources	References
Strain theory	Con strain theory		5	43
	Pro strain theory		1	3
		Cultural	3	9
		Finances	2	4
		Social	2	2
	Strain sources		0	0
		Failure to Achieve	2	5
		Loss	0	0
		Noxious stimuli	1	4
	Differential association theory	Con differential association		6
		Con DA environmental perceptions	11	19
Pro differential association			0	0
		Family	2	7
		Friends	13	56
		Recruitment	2	2
		Pro DA environmental perceptions	13	38
Neutralization techniques			2	5
		Appeal to higher loyalties	8	10
		Condemnation of the condemner	3	10
		Denial of Injury	8	23
		Denial of Responsibility	5	19
		Denial of the Victim	5	9
Social bonding theory	Con social bonding theory		0	0
		Belief in the moral values of society	7	15
		Commitment to traditional activities	12	29
		Family	13	39
		Friends	5	6
		Involvement in traditional activities	11	26
		School	10	21
	Pro social bonding theory		1	1



	Belief in the moral values of society	12	30
	Commitment to traditional activities	5	5
	Family	10	23
	Friends	2	5
	Involvement in traditional activities	9	12
	School	5	16
Rational choice theory			
	Con rational choice theory	8	14
	Costs	7	10
	Material rewards	7	14
	Risks	9	23
	Sanctions	8	17
	Social rewards	5	8
	Pro rational choice theory	10	18
	Costs	9	14
	Material rewards	12	53
	Risks	13	64
	Sanctions	4	5
	Social rewards	11	43
	Bounded rationality	7	11