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# STABILITY AND FLUCTUATION IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN ISRAEL\*

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*A review of the literature indicates two major approaches in official crime rate analysis. The first approach postulates a positive correlation between recorded crime rates and a number of factors including police strength, organizational structure of social control agencies, opportunity, and social pathologies. The second postulate is based on Erikson's hypothesis of stability of deviance over time, namely that recorded crime rates in a given society will remain comparatively stable over time. We tested these approaches based on 15 years of juvenile delinquency statistics in Israel. Official statistics on both recorded juvenile delinquents and their recorded crimes were tested through time-series analysis. Results indicate significant yearly fluctuations in recorded crime rates and in the percent of juvenile delinquents. However, a constant rate of delinquency was found among 8 Israeli birth cohorts between 1952–1959. Theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the late 19th century, Enrico Ferri (1884) claimed that fluctuations in crime rates could be explained by the "law of criminal saturation" and by the "law of criminal supra-saturation." These laws state that, in a given social environment with stable social, economic, and physical conditions, a constant

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given number of crimes will be committed (saturation). However, if change occurs in the above mentioned conditions, such as famine, war, political turnover, and economic growth, the number of crimes will fluctuate (supra-saturation).

These laws, derived from biology, have much in common with the functionalist approach to criminology which emphasizes society's pivotal role in regard to crime. Representing the functionalist position, Erikson (1966), in accord with Durkheim's theories, argues that crime "may actually perform a needed service to society by drawing people together in a common posture of anger and indignation." Every existing social problem has some positive functions for the wider society whereas crime and deviance is only one example. Erikson (1966) shows that crime creates automatic solidarity, provides an educational tool by indicating what is forbidden, and enables dissatisfied segments to act out aggression and frustration.

Erikson further claims that "any system as boundary maintaining . . . controls the fluctuation of its constituent parts so that the whole retains a limited range of activity, a given pattern of constancy and stability, within the larger environment". This concept is closely aligned with Ferri's theory on crime rates. In effect, Erikson states that all types of deviance, including juvenile delinquency, are promoted and regulated by and for the benefit of the majority of society; therefore, delinquency will remain constant as long as society does not undergo major changes, and perhaps even then. This stability is predicted to continue as long as cohort sizes remain relatively similar (East-erlin, 1980; Maxim, 1985). Dramatic changes in cohort sizes bring about new life opportunities and new social developments which, in turn, will create new situations for the cohort with the different size.

It is our opinion that the functionalist approach should focus on recorded statistics of crime since they measure the manifest aspect of crimes. It is known that recorded statistics of crime are biased when compared to the actual occurrences and may reflect biases of enforcement agencies rather than the behavior of offenders (Empey, 1978). It is only when deviance is

made manifest and dealt with that it can gain sufficient attention to function as an integrative and educational mechanism for society. Furthermore, societal policies with regard to deviance in general, and delinquency in particular, are more the outcome of the formal recorded statistics of deviance than of actual overt occurrences. We therefore, reformulate Erikson's hypothesis in the following terms: "the officially recorded number of crimes performed by adolescents and the recorded juvenile delinquents will remain constant as long as society does not undergo major changes or develop new needs."

In direct contradiction of Erikson's theory of stability of deviance over time, (assuming no major societal changes occur) a second approach postulates that criminal statistics are subject to fluctuation as a result of certain forces within the society. For example, various institutions such as the police, probation services, the court system, and prisons have been created by society to enforce social norms. These control agencies have the overt goal of maintaining order and unity. It is possible that these agencies contribute to the creation of recorded deviance through their covert struggle for survival and power over the environment. It can be argued that these control agencies are able to change their definition of what constitutes a crime to accord with changing societal values and with their own interests. Thus, through artificial manipulations, they could cause delinquency rates to fluctuate. Recent studies in the field of criminology have focussed on an apparent correlation between organizational structure and strength of law enforcement agencies and the measured (official) crime rates (McCleary et al., 1982; Loftin and McDowell, 1982). If the law enforcement agencies do influence the criminal statistics, then the recorded juvenile delinquency rates should not be constant as is in the above hypothesis based on Erikson, but instead should fluctuate as suggested by Kitsuse and Cicourel (1963), Becker (1968), and Ehrlich (1973).

Three other explanations offered for the fluctuations in crime rates over time in a given society are: changing opportunities (Cohen and Felson, 1974), industrial and urban growth (Rahav, 1982), and situational pathology (Erez and Hakim,

1979). All three factors are highly relevant to the Israeli society—the setting of this study.

The theoretical question raised by discussion of the two contradictory approaches concerning recorded crime rates obviously pertains to the robustness of recorded crime rates over time in a given society despite major societal and organizational changes. The one approach, based on Erikson, predicts stability; while the other, based on various institutional and organizational changes, claims the rates are subject to high levels of fluctuation. This study is intended to provide a partial answer to this question through an analysis of the recorded juvenile delinquency statistics over time and by age cohorts in Israel. If Erikson's modified theory is correct, then most recorded crime statistics should remain constant over time unless it can be proven that they are a response to major new societal needs. If the other approach is correct, then recorded crime statistics should fluctuate according to either organizational changes within the controlling agencies or other structural changes.

Israel presents an interesting field for social research. It is a young country with a re-established Jewish society which, in many senses, has started its social life from the beginning (Matras, 1965 and Cnaan, 1982). Among other impossible goals, the first waves of immigration to Israel aimed at creating a normal society with all typical social institutions (and there are still people alive who remember the quest for the first local Jewish thief). In the reality of the last thirty years, most forms of social institutions, including all types of social deviance, have been found in Israel. The relevant control agencies have been established, and they have been busy ever since (Horowitz and Lissak, 1972). Certain factors such as a rapid rate of urban growth and industrialization, and a difficult military and political situation make Israel of particular interest for criminological studies. Friday and Hage (1976), among others, suggest an association between certain social trends, such as those mentioned above, and crime rates which would lend support to a prediction of fluctuation in Israeli crime rates. In other

words Israel's enormous changes in its first 30 years of existence should be associated with fluctuations in official recorded crime rates.

Reliable data are available in Israel concerning adolescents (males, age 9–16; females, age 9–18). These data can help determine whether juvenile delinquency rates in Israel are constant or fluctuate yearly in response to changing environmental circumstances. One of the most reliable sources of criminal statistics in Israel is the National Probation Services (Hoeherman, 1985). This agency has statistics for the last twenty-five years in a uniform manner. These data are stored in the computer of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. It should be noted that in Israel there are no "status" offenses and that all juveniles who appear in court are charged with criminal offenses.

Seidman and Couzens (1974) argued that crime statistics are basically non-comparable over jurisdictions. In this respect, Israeli police and youth probation services can be regarded as one uniform jurisdiction. Both of these control agencies are centralized government organizations which operate according to national laws and are governed by uniform regulations and forms. Almost all probation officers are social workers and their first probation function is to help the court reach a verdict. All juveniles who may appear before the court must undergo a social investigation by the probation services. The agency also makes recommendations to the court as to needed social treatment to be incorporated in the verdict.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the two theoretical approaches presented above as to the stability/fluctuation of officially measured crime rates and the available data in the Israeli Juvenile Probation Services, the following research questions were postulated:

- a. That the percent of crimes committed by adolescents every year as part of the total crimes recorded in this year will be constant/fluctuate over time.
- b. That the rate of yearly referrals to Juvenile Probation

(i.e. every adolescent who in one calendar year committed at least one crime) will be constant/fluctuate over time.

- c. That the percent of adolescents from each birth cohort referred to Juvenile Probation Services at least once in their lives will be constant/fluctuate over time.
- d. That the average number of crimes performed by adolescents in each cohort will be constant/fluctuate over time.

To test the two hypotheses, we used the series of data from the Israeli Juvenile Probation Services. In all four research questions, our null hypothesis is that the relevant rates will not be significantly different from the empirical mean and that only a small variation will exist, the alternative being fluctuation, i.e. highs and lows along the axis of time.

The first two research questions relate to changes from one calendar year to the next. The first question examines recorded acts; the second, recorded individuals. The third research question similar to the second, studies individuals though not on a yearly basis. The fourth research question examines recorded acts (as in the first) but on a cohort level (as in the third).

## STUDY DESIGN AND METHOD

Israeli standards define juvenile delinquents (at the time of the study) as males aged 9–16 or as females aged 9–18, who break the law. When an adolescent is caught in, or is suspected of, committing a criminal act, the police have two options: 1) to refer the case to the youth probation services as a preliminary step before it is brought to court, or 2) to drop charges (no legal complaint and no criminal file). The latter action may be taken as a result of insufficient evidence, lack of public interest, or in consideration of the best interests of the adolescent. A study carried out by the Israeli Police (Israel Police, 1981) found that 33 percent of the adolescents dealt with through police channels *were not* referred to youth probation services. Another study (Israel Police, 1980) has shown that 95 percent of all minors in this category against whom no charges had been filed committed no further offenses during the subsequent two

years. This group was not included in the study population since its contribution to official juvenile delinquency rates was negligible.

Since 1962, two methods of data collection have been utilized by the Israeli youth probation services. One method consists of administrative reports which are prepared by probation officers for new cases (including recidivists) and cases in which treatment was terminated. The second method consists of statistical reports concerning adolescents about whom decisions have been reached. Decision by a probation officer means either to close the case (not to press charges but to keep the criminal file) or to send the case to court and follow up the case thereafter. The statistical report includes demographical data and information regarding the individual criminal acts. This computerized data set has been recorded and maintained in a uniform manner from 1962 to the present.

These data are the basis for our analysis. Parts of these data have been published in an annual series by the Israeli Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (Hocherman, 1985). The remaining data presented here were obtained from the data bank exclusively for this study.

To test the first research question—fluctuation of recorded crime rates by juvenile delinquents (males, aged 9–16 and females, aged 9–18)—we used the data regarding new referrals, i.e., the administrative reports. The probation officers reported their new or recidivist cases as well as the number of recorded criminal activities per each adolescent. We did not know the number of adolescent criminal offenses in which the police decided not to press charges nor the actual number of crimes committed by any adolescent (Skogan 1976; Weagel, 1981). It is clear that, in this case, each recorded juvenile delinquent could have committed any number of crimes in each relevant year. The statistics relevant to adolescent offenses and their rates are presented on the left side of Table 1. To obtain the yearly rates of crimes committed by adolescents, the yearly total was calculated as a percentage of all recorded crimes in the same year (See Table 1 - Column 2).

To test the second research question—yearly level of refer-



TABLE 1  
YEARLY STATISTICS OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN ISRAEL\*

Year	Number of crimes performed by adolescents in each year	% of Crimes performed by adolescents	Number of juvenile delinquents	Rate of juvenile delinquents (out of all adolescents at risk)
1962	No data	No data	7,825	16.5
1963	16,276	3.39	7,448	14.9
1964	18,355	3.63	8,506	16.3
1965	19,812	3.87	8,848	16.6
1966	20,978	4.01	9,544	17.3
1967	21,060	4.00	8,152	14.5
1968	22,164	4.07	8,295	14.4
1969	22,443	4.08	9,070	15.6
1970	22,917	4.15	8,326	14.3
1971	23,632	4.23	8,250	13.8
1972	20,531	3.63	8,060	13.3
1973	20,204	3.50	7,742	12.5
1974	18,827	3.22	6,680	10.6
1975	20,401	3.41	7,670	11.9
1976	20,063	3.33	7,708	11.7

$\bar{X}$  = 3.7514

$\bar{X}$  = 14.28

S.D. = .3442

S.D. = 1.9986

\*Males 9-16 and females 9-18.

als of adolescents (males, aged 9–16 and females aged 9–18) to the Israeli youth probation services—we listed each individual according to the time when the probation officer made the final decision in his/her case. For each year, we deducted the recidivists and retained only the raw number of adolescents who were involved with probation services during that specific year. Thus, each individual, regardless of his/her number of offenses during one year, could appear only once in each year but could appear in more than one year.

To test the third research question—the number of adolescents from each cohort who were officially engaged in criminal acts—we had to create new computer files. We used birth cohorts rather than other types of cohort such as first year of crime, larger intervals of years, schools, etc., as can be derived from Ryder's (1965) analysis of the concept of cohort. The reason for the use of cohorts is that the level of internal validity is larger than in regular one-time studies (Hirshi and Selvin, 1967). The study covers only eight cohorts as a larger size would have meant lower internal validity. In the mid-1970s, Israel enacted a new law which changed the legal age of juvenile delinquency from 9–16 for males and 9–18 for females, to 9–18 for all. Along this line of liberalism, the legal age was again changed several years later to 13–18 for all. To avoid all these biases, we used cohorts born in 1952 to 1959 who were at the relevant ages between 1961 and 1975 and whose relationships with the youth probation services of necessity terminated as of 1976. Kleinman and Lukoff (1981) noted that, at times, the time-gap between the actual commission of a crime and its formal recording is considerable. In Israel, we needed another year to account for these bureaucratic time lags and it was properly handled.

To test the fourth research question—average number of recorded crimes per adolescent in each birth cohort—we aggregated for each individual in each cohort the number of relevant recorded crimes. Then the sum of all recorded crimes committed by those who were born in one year was added. Last, it was divided by the number of the effective cohort size. The results are presented in the last (right) column of Table 2.

TABLE 2  
COHORT STATISTICS OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN ISRAEL\*

Year of birth	Effective sample size	Number referred to probation	% of juvenile delinquents in each cohort	Average number of recorded crimes in each cohort
1952	59,966	6,203	10.34	2.39
1953	59,521	6,229	10.47	2.35
1954	58,083	6,011	10.35	2.30
1955	60,305	6,300	10.45	2.31
1956	60,408	6,372	10.55	2.44
1957	60,824	6,330	10.41	2.44
1958	61,084	6,236	10.21	2.45
1959	62,518	6,466	10.34	2.43
Total	482,709	50,147	—	—

$\chi^2 = 4.7580$  D.F. = 7 P = N.S.

$\bar{X} = 10.386$

$\bar{X} = 2.889$

S.D. = 1.9986

S.D. = .0613

\* Adolescents age 9-16, both male and female.

One of the problems we encountered while working on the cohorts was the unequal number of adolescents in the entry and exit years for any cohort, i.e. between the ages of 9 and 16, as some die, some migrate, and other immigrants join. In Israel, due to a wave of immigration, the number of adolescents within each cohort increased with time. We assumed that, on the average, these individuals who were added to the population during the relevant period of time were at risk of being referred to youth probation services for half the period. Therefore, we defined the effective cohort size as the mid-range. This is an (actuarial-based) estimate commonly used for cohort life tables (Miler, 1981).

## RESULTS

The data regarding the first research question—the fluctuation of percents of recorded crime performed by adolescents in each year—is presented on the left side of Table 1. These rates increased from 1963 to 1971 and decreased in 1972 through 1974. In 1975 there was an increase followed by a decrease in 1976. As to absolute number of recorded crimes performed by adolescents, a similar trend exists. In 1974 (the post-Yom Kippur War year), a record low of rates of recorded crimes by adolescents was set. A cursory glance at these data shows that the number of yearly recorded crimes committed by adolescents fluctuated from one year to another. It is of interest to note that 1967, another war year, was the only exception of very slight decrease in the period of increase from 1963–1971.

The data regarding the second research question—the fluctuation in the number and rates of adolescents who were referred to youth probation services—is presented on the right side of Table 1. The absolute numbers and rates show an increasing trend from 1962 to 1966 (with the exception of 1963), a sharp decrease in 1967 (the year of the Six-Day War), an increase in 1968–69, and a new decreased trend since 1970 with a record low in 1974 (the post-Yom Kippur War year). The rates fluctuate from a peak of 17.3 percent in 1966 to a low of 10.6 percent in 1974. These numbers indicate significant differences from one year to the next.

The data regarding the third research question—the fluctuation in the absolute numbers and percent of adolescents in each birth cohort who were referred to youth probation services—is presented in the left part of Table 2. According to both absolute number and percentages, the eight study-cohorts allocated similar proportions of their members to youth probation services. In other words, there is no significant fluctuation of percent of juvenile delinquents among the cohorts. The record high 10.55 percent (1956) and the record low is 10.21 percent (1958). A chi-square test, performed to determine whether these eight cohorts significantly differed from one another with regard to the number of known adolescents involved in crime, found no significant differences. This analysis used an eight-by-two table which consisted of eight cells of numbers referred to probation (i.e. juvenile delinquents) and eight cells of effective cohort size minus those referred to probation services, i.e. those never officially labeled as juvenile delinquents.

We further studied these eight cohorts with regard to those who were referred to probation services from the aspect of three possible moderating variables: sex, religion, and among Jews, country of origin.

The data regarding the fourth research question—the average recorded number of crimes performed by each cohort—are presented on the left column of Table 2. The data clearly show a trend of constancy with a high of 2.45 (1958) and a low of 2.30 (1954). This trend is even stronger among the last four cohorts (1956–1959) than among the first four cohorts (1952–1955). If there is any meaningful fluctuation, it is between these two groups of cohorts.

A comparison of Table 1 with Table 2 shows that the standard deviations regarding the first two research questions (Table 1) are larger than these of the last two research questions (Table 2). In all four cases, we had to account for the different size of means. Thus, we employed the coefficient of variation (DeGroot, 1970). The coefficient of variation is a measure of fluctuation which adjusts for the different magnitudes of the sets of numbers involved by dividing the standard deviation by the average. Thus, the larger the value of the coefficient of

TABLE 3  
COHORTS IN YOUTH PROBATION SERVICES IN ISRAEL BY SEX

Year of birth	MALES			FEMALES		
	Effective sample size	No. of referrals	% of referrals	Effective sample size	No. of referrals	% of referrals
1952	30,917	5,396	17.45	29,049	807	2.78
1953	30,473	5,451	17.89	29,048	778	2.68
1954	29,842	5,225	17.51	28,241	786	2.78
1955	30,855	5,394	17.48	29,450	906	3.08
1956	31,327	5,575	17.80	29,081	797	2.74
1957	31,546	5,538	17.56	29,278	792	2.71
1958	31,413	5,455	17.37	29,671	781	2.63
1959	32,166	5,852	18.19	30,352	614	2.02
Total	248,539	43,886	—	234,170	6,261	—

$X^2=11.9403$

D.F.=7

P=N.S.

$X^2=71.0768$

D.F.=7

P<.01

variation, the larger the fluctuation in the data relative to its average value. Employing this tool reveals significantly higher scores for the first two research questions (.0917 and .140 respectively) than for the latter two (.010 and .257 respectively). We can thus conclude that the data based on cohorts is significantly more stable than the data based on years.

In testing the impact of each of the variables—sex, religion, and country of origin—we found a low level of fluctuation (insignificant chi-square score at the .01 level) for any of the larger groups, with the exception of Jews of Asian-African origin. The term “large group” refers to a category from which most of these referred to probation services were drawn, e.g. males when gender is the variable of interest. The chi-square score of the one exception in this category, Jews of Asian-African origin (Table 5), is significant at the .008 level which is usually considered more than acceptable in most studies in the social sciences. In large samples, however, it may be insufficient as the level of significance is also a function of the sample size; thus even significant results can scarcely be considered as reflecting strong association. Overall, the large groups, males (Table 3) and Jews (Table 4), did not significantly fluctuate over time with regard to referrals to youth probation services. In such large samples, an insignificant chi-square is usually a clear indication of no association. In the small groups, however, the fluctuation was found to be significant. The term “small groups” refers to categories which supplied less than one third of the juvenile delinquent population, e.g., females when gender is the variable of interest. This was the case for females (Table 3), non-Jews (Table 4), Jews of Israeli origin, and Jews of American-European origin (Table 5). Again, due to the large size, the significant results may not necessarily indicate a meaningful association.

## CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The State of Israel went through major changes during the study period (1961–1976). Its population grew by 23 percent, mainly due to immigration and to the annexation of East Jerusalem. The number of policemen per 1000 in the population

TABLE 4  
 COHORTS IN YOUTH PROBATION SERVICES IN ISRAEL BY RELIGION

Year of birth	JEWS			NON-JEWS		
	Effective sample	No. of referrals	% of referrals	Effective sample size	No. of referrals	% of referrals
1952	52,467	5,219	9.95	7,499	984	13.12
1953	51,381	5,307	10.33	8,140	922	11.33
1954	49,770	5,118	10.28	8,313	893	10.74
1955	51,174	5,335	10.43	9,131	965	10.57
1956	51,135	5,400	10.56	9,273	972	10.48
1957	50,819	5,314	10.46	10,005	1,016	10.15
1958	50,337	5,235	10.40	10,747	1,001	9.31
1959	50,664	5,300	10.46	11,854	1,166	9.84
Total	407,747	42,228	—	74,962	7,919	—

$X^2 = 13.5936$   
 D.F. = 7  
 P = N.S.

$X^2 = 83.4656$   
 D.F. = 7  
 P < .01



TABLE 5  
COHORTS IN YOUTH PROBATION SERVICES IN ISRAEL BY ORIGIN

Year of birth	JEWS OF ISRAEL ORIGIN*			JEWS OF ASIAN-AFRICAN ORIGIN**			JEWS OF EUROPEAN-AMERICAN ORIGIN***		
	Effective sample size	No. of referrals	% of referrals	Effective sample size	No. of referrals	% of referrals	Effective sample size	No. of referrals	% of referrals
1952	3,778	241	6.38	27,979	4,203	15.01	20,710	775	3.74
1953	3,952	206	5.21	28,304	4,374	15.45	19,125	727	3.80
1954	3,698	260	7.03	28,783	4,168	14.48	17,289	690	3.99
1955	4,185	232	5.54	29,187	4,394	15.05	17,802	709	3.98
1956	4,526	236	5.21	29,352	4,496	15.32	17,257	668	3.87
1957	5,200	239	4.60	29,271	4,426	15.12	16,348	649	3.97
1958	5,303	240	4.53	29,307	4,333	14.78	15,727	662	4.21
1959	5,766	265	4.60	30,060	4,304	14.32	14,838	731	4.93
Total	6,408	1,919	—	232,243	34,698	—	139,069	5,611	—

X<sup>2</sup>=48.8114  
D.F.=7  
P<.01

X<sup>2</sup>=24.8525  
D.F.=7  
P<.01

X<sup>2</sup>=40.5778  
D.F.=7  
P<.01

a. This table contains only Jews.

\*They and their fathers were born in Israel.

\*\*They or their fathers were born in Asia or Africa.

\*\*\*They or their fathers were born in Europe or America.

increased from 3.1 in 1961 to 4.7 in 1976 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 1982); the numbers of youth probation officers grew by 82 percent and special community programs were established for the prevention of delinquency. In the political arena, Israel's standing remained stable. Nevertheless, the country was involved in two major wars (1967 and 1973–4). Israel also experienced major urbanization and industrialization and culturally became increasingly materialistic and Western-oriented. It should be noted that the size of each of the eight cohorts did not increase drastically, as most of the demographic changes affected older people (immigration and prolongation of life) and infants (births).

Based on one approach presented above, one would have expected that the major changes in Israel would have greatly influenced official juvenile delinquency statistics. The claim is made that official statistics of juvenile delinquency are a manifestation of society's varying needs of deviance. A society which underwent such major changes probably has new needs that are reflected in fluctuations of official crime rates. Yearly crime rate statistics, as opposed to the recorded crime rates by cohort, did in fact fluctuate.

This study differentiates between yearly analysis (cross-sectional) and cohort analysis (longitudinal) of recorded juvenile delinquency. It appears that the statistics for short time periods, i.e., one year, tend to fluctuate as a result of societal and institutional forces, while the statistics for longer time-periods, i.e., cohorts, remain stable. Thus, long-term statistics support Erickson's modified hypothesis of constancy of recorded deviance.

Several factors may be said to influence crime levels. Rahav (1982) finds that urbanization in Israel is the single independent variable linked to the rate of juvenile delinquency. He further concludes that: "delinquency as a systematic response to structural strains appears only when the local juvenile group is large enough to develop a delinquent subculture." No data on domiciles of juvenile delinquents were included in our study. It was therefore impossible to differentiate between urban and rural criminal activities, or to consider this variable in

analyzing any possible long-term effects of urbanization on crime. Other traditional factors such as industrialization, housing and social life are of less importance because of the nature of Israel's society: it is a small country; communities are not dissimilar as distances between them are short; and most people shop, work, and seek entertainment in the three major cities.

One factor which was clearly found to influence criminal records is war. Israel's two wars during the period studied have a significant impact on recorded crimes performed by juveniles and on the rates of adolescents referred to probation services. The statistics show an apparent marked reduction in criminal acts and referrals (Table 1). The impact of wars can be attributed to three main causes. First, during the two wars, a special situation existed in which most individuals, including many juvenile delinquents, were willing to sacrifice and give more of themselves for the collective good than in peaceful times (Rosenfeld, 1980); thus many juvenile delinquents avoided criminal activity for a while. Second, after both wars, legal amnesties were granted and many criminal files were closed and cancelled. Third, some police and other employees of control agencies were assigned to military reserve duty, whereas the remaining workforce had to handle unusual tasks which were a result of the war situation. As a result, less criminal activity was attended to and recorded. These findings and explanations of the effect of variables support the theory that yearly recorded crimes and the yearly number of referred juvenile delinquents are affected by societal forces, and that, on a yearly basis, criminal statistics are affected by police and law enforcement agencies' organizational and structural changes as was suggested by Kitsuse and Cicourel (1963). In general, the findings presented in Table 1 tend to support the approach which claims that recorded crime rates do fluctuate with time due to several societal forces. Rates of referrals to probation services, for example, were significantly higher in 1966 (17.3) than in 1974 (10.6).

Even in the last three to five years of the yearly-based statistics, there are indications that Erikson's modified theory of

stability of recorded deviance may have some support. A strong argument for this approach, which postulates stability of recorded delinquency over time, is the finding that all eight cohorts in the study allocated very similar percentages of their members to youth probation services, i.e., constant level of recorded juvenile delinquents along eight birth cohorts. We studied only eight cohorts and observed only one dichotomous variable—referral to youth probation services—regardless of the severity, type, and magnitude of the crime (the influence of these variables should be researched separately). It is amazing to see that in all studied cohorts, 10.21 to 10.55 percent of the adolescents aged 9–16 were treated by the youth probation services, despite the influence of time and societal changes. In other words, the same percent of adolescents were labeled and treated as delinquents. Furthermore, among the eight cohorts (ages 9–16), in eight years the average number of recorded crimes performed by adolescents also remained stable. This may indicate that most societal interventions and influences have a short-term effect and that there are basic social forces which over longer periods of time are constant. Another interesting Israeli study (Hassin, 1983) finds that the types of crime committed by adolescents in the years 1948–1977 were kept stable with the exception of drug use. In other words, there is some indication of stability even in types of recorded crime.

There is a seeming contradiction between the two approaches on recorded crime rates reflected in our findings, i.e., that statistics of juvenile delinquency both fluctuate and remain stable. This contradiction can be resolved by distinguishing between short units of time, i.e., yearly recorded criminal activity and analysis (cross-sectional analysis) and long units of time, i.e., cohorts analysis (longitudinal analysis) of recorded criminal activity. It appears that yearly recorded criminal activity is a more sensitive social phenomenon which can be influenced by planned intervention, police organizational and procedural changes, and societal trends; whereas official rates of delinquency over eight years of potential activity (ages 9–16) is a more robust phenomenon, less prone to social manipula-

tion. We postulate that the recorded participation of adolescents in criminal activity both in acts and in a number of known active juvenile delinquents over a given short-time period is influenced by wars, economic status and other external forces. These factors, however, have a short-term effect and influence only the official number of recorded criminal acts performed by adolescents and the number of known juvenile delinquents in one year. The stability that is evidenced by the rate of adolescents drawn from each cohort and the consistent average number of recorded crimes in each cohort can be interpreted as a result of long-term influences which have cancelled each other out, thereby maintaining a constant level of recorded juvenile delinquency according to society's needs. In one year, society may experience a higher or lower rate of recorded deviance. However, over a few years, the rates tend to balance themselves to a semi-equilibrium of approximately 10.3 percent recorded juvenile delinquents from each birth cohort and approximately 2.37 recorded criminal acts per each of known juvenile delinquent in each birth cohort. Furthermore, as societal needs change, the internal structure (e.g. sex, origin, religion, etc.) of those referred to youth probation services may change but the overall picture will remain stable. Thus, it can be proposed that known criminals serve the basic functionalist purpose, namely, that they are those who society needs as constant negative examples and targets for attack (their latent function); whereas the severity of their crimes and their yearly exposure are merely the instruments used to create the appropriate temporary criminal records required at a given time which is easily manipulated by external factors. This proposition requires further study.

It can be argued that the cohort statistics are stable because the police look for known delinquents rather than tracking down new, and therefore unknown and unrecorded, juvenile delinquents. Our assumption is that the period of eight years (aged 9-16) is of sufficient duration to trace most of the juvenile delinquents. This assumption is supported, in part, by the fact that over 60 percent of those referred to probation services are referred only once and for one known criminal act, while the

others are referred a few times for a larger number of known criminal acts. Thus, the police are tracking down more new unknown juvenile delinquents than known ones. However, this possibility merits further study.

Easterlin (1980) and Maxim (1985) saw cohort size as a key factor in explaining changes in recorded criminal rates. They assert that, regardless of the law enforcement agencies' "handling capacity," it is the cohort size that affects percentages of recorded crimes and criminals. Although Israel experienced large increases in population, the cohort sizes, as can be seen in Table 2, remained almost equal. Thus, the stability of recorded criminal statistics over cohorts may lend some support to this approach.

The major finding of this study is that, although the yearly magnitude of crimes fluctuates, the number of adolescents from each birth cohort that are referred to probation services (i.e. - labeled and handled as juvenile delinquents) is constant. This finding has numerous implications for policy and practice. One immediate policy issue is related to the need for and the role of the various control and prevention agencies. It is quite possible that the number of youngsters referred to probation services is not correlated with the societal investment in crime prevention and that this is a case of low "value for money." The many programs and the increase in staff members of these agencies did not affect the larger phenomenon of stability over age cohorts. There is, then, a case for revision in the claims and actual performance of these agencies. The data presented only indicate in this direction and further similar studies are required in Israel and elsewhere to study the practical meanings and universality of these findings.

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