

## Reported Juvenile Delinquency in San Francisco, 1960-64

VICTOR EISNER, M.D.

**A**N OBSERVED increase in the number of juvenile delinquents in a community cannot be interpreted without considering whether there have been simultaneous changes in the population of the community. In San Francisco the number of juveniles reported to be delinquent increased from 1960 to 1964, a period in which the total population of the city was decreasing. An analysis of both delinquents and population changes is required to explain this paradox.

In 1960, 4,026 juveniles were cited one or more times to the San Francisco juvenile court. By 1964 this number had increased to 5,038, an increase of 25.1 percent. In 1960, 2,398 other juveniles were stopped by the police for a non-traffic offense, and in 1964 this number had increased to 3,157. If the two groups are combined, this represents a 27.6 percent increase in the total number of juveniles who were recorded in 1964 as delinquent by the police or juvenile court. In the same period, the population of San Francisco fell from 740,316 to 716,469 (1), a decrease of 3.2 percent. The phenomenon of increasing delinquency in the

presence of a decreasing population may be caused by any of a number of factors, including the following.

1. A shift in the age distribution of the population, so that either the total juvenile population increased or the population at high-delinquency ages increased.

2. A shift in the sex ratio of the juvenile population.

3. A shift in the racial composition of the population.

4. A change in the number of nonresidents recorded as delinquent.

5. A shift in the social class distribution of the population.

6. Changes in the police-juvenile interaction, comprising a change in the behavior of juveniles or a change in police practices relating to the arrest of juveniles and the categorization of their offenses, or both. (These two changes cannot be separated without an independent measure of hidden delinquency.)

The first four of these factors can be measured, and inferences can be drawn about the other two.

### Material and Methods

Information concerning juveniles who were recorded as delinquents in the 2 study years was collected and made available for this study by the Research and Statistics Subcommittee of the San Francisco Committee on Youth (2). It

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*Dr. Eisner is associate clinical professor in the Division of Maternal and Child Health, University of California School of Public Health, Berkeley. This investigation was partially supported by Public Health Service Research Grant No. 1-GS-142 from the school of public health.*

comprised an unduplicated list of all juveniles who were either cited to the San Francisco Juvenile Court for a nontraffic offense, or who were "warned but not cited" by the San Francisco Police Department for a nontraffic offense during the study years. The 1960 data have been analyzed elsewhere (3).

Such a list does not measure the extent of delinquent activity by juveniles, for several reasons. First, it measures numbers of juveniles rather than numbers of offenses. Second, it does not measure undetected delinquency, and on the other hand it may include juveniles who were, in fact, innocent of the offense charged. How-

ever, the list does measure the number of juveniles who interact with law enforcement agencies, and from this point of view, it illustrates the sociological problem of delinquency.

The 1960 population figures were taken from the decennial census (4). Population estimates for 1964, made by a modification of the composite method of Bogue and Duncan (5), have been published elsewhere (1, 2).

Estimates of population in two areas of the city were made from birth registration data supplied by the San Francisco Department of Public Health. These estimates were made for each sex and color, and changes in the juvenile

**Table 1. Juvenile population and numbers of delinquents, by area of residence, color, sex, and age groups, San Francisco, 1960 and 1964**

Area of city	White				Nonwhite				Total
	Male		Female		Male		Female		
	5-13	14-19	5-13	14-19	5-13	14-19	5-13	14-19	
<b>Juvenile population</b>									
<i>1960</i>									
Western.....	14, 182	8, 291	13, 978	8, 802	1, 822	770	1, 835	788	50, 470
Eastern.....	17, 235	9, 722	16, 658	10, 994	10, 929	3, 853	10, 522	4, 128	84, 041
Total.....	31, 417	18, 013	30, 636	19, 796	12, 751	4, 623	12, 359	4, 916	134, 511
<i>1964</i>									
Western.....	13, 993	10, 437	13, 845	9, 126	2, 484	1, 417	2, 481	1, 393	55, 176
Eastern.....	16, 233	11, 058	15, 724	10, 864	11, 899	5, 727	11, 474	5, 941	88, 920
Total.....	30, 226	21, 495	29, 569	19, 990	14, 383	7, 144	13, 955	7, 333	144, 095
<b>Delinquents recorded by juvenile court</b>									
<i>1960</i>									
Western.....	130	485	15	77	46	100	13	24	890
Eastern.....	317	710	55	206	321	511	84	149	2, 353
Nonresident.....									783
<i>1964</i>									
Western.....	100	435	27	91	65	187	17	52	974
Eastern.....	311	866	79	227	456	940	124	290	3, 293
Nonresident.....									771
<b>Delinquents recorded only by police department</b>									
<i>1960</i>									
Western.....	41	444	1	33	12	66	0	3	600
Eastern.....	137	960	3	77	68	301	3	19	1, 568
Nonresident.....									230
<i>1964</i>									
Western.....	71	543	8	49	25	90	8	14	808
Eastern.....	174	947	21	116	122	489	28	70	1, 967
Nonresident.....									382

**Table 2. Expected numbers of delinquents in 1964, assuming rates are the same as in 1960, for four assumptions of relevance of population shifts, San Francisco residents only**

Assumption	Juvenile court delinquents	All delinquents
Population increase.....	3, 474	5, 796
Population increase and age shift....	3, 665	6, 182
Population increase and age and sex shifts.....	3, 780	6, 434
Population increase and age, sex, and color shifts.....	3, 936	6, 591

population were assumed to parallel changes in numbers of births. A crude estimate was made for each area, and the crude estimates were adjusted proportionally to the totals estimated for the entire city.

The two areas chosen comprised roughly the eastern and western halves of the city. The study included 83 census tracts in the eastern area and 41 tracts in the western area. In 1960 the western area contained approximately 37.5 percent of the juvenile population, and all but four of the tracts which were in the highest quartile for income, education, and employment. It contained none of the tracts in the lowest quartile for these indices. Its population, both white and nonwhite, consisted mainly of families generally considered "middle class." The eastern area, with 62.5 percent of the juvenile population, contained families generally considered as mixed lower and middle class. It also contained all of the "poverty areas" designated in 1965 by the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Populations, population estimates, and numbers of delinquents obtained by these methods are shown in table 1.

**Results**

*Shift in age distribution of population.* In 1960 the population aged from 5 through 19 years comprised 18.2 percent of the total population, while in 1964 this had risen to 20.1 percent. In actual numbers, the population aged 5-19 increased from 134,511 to 144,095, a 7.1 percent increase (table 1).

At the same time, the population aged 14-19, which includes those ages at which the risk of delinquency is highest, increased from 47,318, or 35.2 percent of the juvenile population, to 55,962, or 38.8 percent of the juvenile population.

Both of these changes in the age distribution of the population could be expected to increase the number of juvenile delinquents.

*Shift in sex ratio of juvenile population.* In 1960 the juvenile population of the city aged 5-19 years included 66,804 boys and 67,707 girls, a sex ratio of 0.9867. In 1964 the ratio was 73,248:70,847, or 1.0339. This change is also in the direction of increasing the number of delinquents.

*Shift in racial composition of population.* Although the nonwhite population in San Francisco increased from 18.4 percent in 1960 to 21.4 percent in 1964, the increase was even more rapid among juveniles. In 1960, 34,649 nonwhites aged 5-19 lived in San Francisco. In 1964 there were 42,815, an increase of 23.6 percent, and a number which comprised 29.7 percent of the juvenile population. The number of nonwhites aged 14-19 years increased from 9,539 to 14,477, an increase of 51.8 percent. In 1964, 25.9 percent of the population aged 14-19 years was nonwhite, compared with 20.1 percent in 1960.

These population changes could also be expected to increase the number of delinquents in 1964.

*Change in the number of nonresidents recorded as delinquents.* In 1960, 1,013 youths who did not live in San Francisco were recorded as delinquents by the juvenile court or the police department. In 1964 the number was 1,153. This 13.8 percent increase is also in the direction

**Table 3. Increases in numbers of delinquents, 1960-64**

Source	Juvenile court delinquents	All delinquents
Resident delinquents.....	1, 024	1, 631
Nonresident delinquents.....	- 12	140
Total.....	1, 012	1, 771

of increasing delinquency. Interestingly, the increase was in the number of delinquents who were warned but not cited by the police department. There was actually a small decrease in the number of nonresidents cited to juvenile court.

*Shift in the social class distribution of the population.* No direct evidence is at hand regarding the social class aspect of population shifts. During 1960-64 both white and non-white families with children were migrating out of San Francisco (1), with the white migration at a higher rate than the nonwhite. Civic agencies believe that emigrating families are generally middle class rather than lower class, but direct evidence of this also must await the 1970 decennial census. If this belief is true, the differential migration would constitute another factor leading to increasing delinquency rates.

*Changes in behavior of juveniles and police practices relating to arrest.* The nature of recorded data on juvenile delinquency makes these two factors impossible to separate. According to members of the San Francisco Police Department (2 and personal communications) no change took place in police policy toward juveniles from 1960 to 1964; however, they believe that several changes were apparent in the activities of juveniles, including an increase in severity of offenses and an increase in delinquent activity by girls.

#### Partition of Increase of Delinquency

It is possible to calculate the expected numbers of 1964 delinquents, based on the population changes and the delinquency rates recorded in

1960. Such calculations are shown in table 2, where they are made with the following four assumptions:

*Population increase.* The calculation is made assuming that the only relevant change is the numerical increase of the population aged 5-19.

*Population increase and age shift.* The calculation is made assuming that the relevant changes are the increase of the juvenile population and the shift in its age distribution.

*Population increase and age and sex shifts.* The relevant changes are assumed to be the increase of the juvenile population, the shift in its age distribution, and the increase in the proportion of boys.

*Population increase and age, sex, and color shifts.* The relevant changes are assumed to be the increase of the juvenile population, the shift in its age distribution, the increase in the proportion of boys, and the increase in the non-white population.

The actual increases in numbers of resident and nonresident delinquents from 1960 to 1964 are shown in table 3. The total increase was 1,771 delinquents: 1,631 of these were San Francisco residents.

The information in tables 2 and 3 is combined in table 4 to show how much of the increase in number of delinquents may be attributed to increased juvenile population, change in age of that population, change of sex ratio, change in color distribution, and change in number of nonresidents. Approximately two-thirds of the total increase is due to measured population changes. The remainder must be attributed to

**Table 4. Partition of increase in number of delinquents from 1960 to 1964, by reasons for increase**

Reason for increase	Juvenile court delinquents		All delinquents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Increase of juvenile population.....	231	22.8	385	21.7
Change in age distribution.....	191	18.9	386	21.8
Change in sex ratio.....	115	11.4	252	14.2
Change in color distribution.....	156	15.4	157	8.9
Change in number of nonresidents.....	-12	-1.2	140	7.9
All other reasons, including changes in social class distribution and changes in police-juvenile interaction.....	331	32.7	451	25.5
Total.....	1,012	100.0	1,771	100.0

other factors, including any change in the social class distribution of the population or any change in police-juvenile interactions.

A further calculation can be used to estimate whether changes in the social class structure of the population were of significance, although it would be hazardous to attempt to quantitate such changes. This is shown in table 5, where a new computation of expected numbers of de-

linquents has been made dividing the juvenile population not only by age, sex, and color, but also by area of the city. The expected totals are slightly less than those in the last line of table 2, but the difference, which amounts to less than 1 percent, may be ignored.

The differences between the observed and expected numbers of delinquents show which population categories contributed most of the

**Table 5. Expected number of delinquents in 1964, by area of residence, color, sex, and age groups, if each population category had been recorded as delinquent at 1960 rates**

Area of city	White				Nonwhite				Total
	Male		Female		Male		Female		
	5-13	14-19	5-13	14-19	5-13	14-19	5-13	14-19	
Juvenile court only									
Western.....	128	611	15	80	63	184	18	42	1, 141
Eastern.....	299	808	52	204	349	759	92	214	2, 777
Total.....	427	1, 419	57	284	412	943	110	256	3, 918
All delinquents									
Western.....	169	1, 169	16	114	79	305	18	48	1, 918
Eastern.....	428	1, 899	55	280	424	1, 207	95	242	4, 630
Total.....	597	3, 068	71	394	503	1, 512	113	290	6, 548

**Table 6. Differences between observed and expected numbers of delinquents in 1964, by area of residence, color, sex, and age groups**

Area of city	White				Nonwhite				Total
	Male		Female		Male		Female		
	5-13	14-19	5-13	14-19	5-13	14-19	5-13	14-19	
Juvenile court only									
Western.....	-28	-176	12	11	2	3	-1	10	-167
Eastern.....	12	58	27	23	107	181	32	76	516
Total.....	-16	-118	39	34	109	184	31	86	349
All delinquents									
Western.....	2	-191	19	26	11	-28	7	18	-136
Eastern.....	57	-86	45	63	154	222	57	118	630
Total.....	59	-277	64	89	165	194	64	136	494

NOTE: A negative difference indicates an observed number less than the expected number.

excess of delinquents observed in 1964 over the number which would have been expected at 1960 rates (table 6).

Table 6 shows two general trends. First, that part of the increase in number of delinquents which was due to changes in the social class structure or to changes in the juvenile-police interaction pattern did not occur in the middle-class western area. In this area, numbers of delinquents were either less than expected or only slightly above. Second, the largest components of the increase were found among nonwhite adolescents. The first of these observations suggests that a shift of the social class structure in the eastern area did occur. The second observation suggests that nonwhite juveniles either committed proportionately more offenses than in 1960 or they were perceived by the police as doing so, or both.

### Discussion

The paradoxical increase in the number of juvenile delinquents in a city with a decreasing population appears, on analysis, to be due to a combination of many factors, all of which operated in San Francisco from 1960 to 1964. These factors do not appear to be unique to this city, and probably are responsible for increases of juvenile delinquency in core cities throughout the United States. Most of them appear to be inherent in the migration patterns which are affecting all cities at the present time.

This study suggests that so-called "middle-class delinquency" is decreasing in San Francisco. This impression is gained from the western area of the city, which is generally believed to be a stable middle-class area. The impression, however, is at variance with observed increases in delinquency in suburban areas. Data to determine if the social class structure of an area is changing can be obtained from census reports only at 10-year intervals, and no firm conclusions can be made from this study.

The basic question for a study such as this remains unanswered: that is, are juveniles committing more or different delinquent acts than they have in the past? No study based on recorded delinquency can answer this question without simultaneously considering delinquent acts which are not recorded. An examination

of recorded delinquency alone can provide conclusions only about the extent of interactions between law enforcement agencies and juveniles. However, this study revealed that, after allowances were made for population changes, a larger proportion of juveniles were being charged with delinquent acts in 1964 than in 1960. Part of the increase is probably because in 1964 a larger proportion of juveniles were in the lower social class, which is more often in conflict with law enforcement agencies than is the middle class. However, part of the increase may well be due to a change in juvenile behavior.

Approximately two-thirds of the 4-year increase was due entirely to measurable population changes. This finding emphasizes the importance of careful study of population trends in parallel with studies of juvenile behavior.

### Summary

An analysis of the increase in numbers of juvenile delinquents in San Francisco from 1960 to 1964 showed that approximately two-thirds of the increase was due to measurable population changes. These changes included an increase in the number of juveniles, especially in the high-delinquency ages of 14-19 years, an increase in the proportion of boys, and an increase in the proportion of nonwhite juveniles. The remainder of the increase may be due partly to emigration of middle-class families, but it also suggests that certain juveniles either committed proportionately more offenses in 1964 than in 1960 or were perceived by the police as doing so, or both.

### REFERENCES

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