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Konrad Buczkowski, Paulina Wiktorska ■

Crime in the subsequent adult life of former juvenile offenders: Selected aspects of the impact of political transformation in Poland on a return to delinquency by adults who were juvenile delinquents in the 1980s and 2000s¹

Przestępczość w losach życiowych dorosłych – dawnych nieletnich sprawców czynów karalnych. Wybrane aspekty wpływu transformacji ustrojowej w Polsce na powrotność do przestępczości nieletnich z lat 80. i 2000.

Abstract: This article presents an analysis of criminal repeated activity by minors who committed criminal acts in the 1980s and in the year 2000. On the basis of long-term follow-up studies carried out on two age groups, it presents selected aspects of the extent and nature of this type of crime, as well as the percentage of minors who continued their criminal activity. The data which the analysis was based on came from criminal records in the National Criminal Registry, collected in 2017 for both previously sentenced groups. The comparison of the two generations of minors and their criminal careers is interesting in the context of the social, political, economic, and legal reality in which they began their criminal activity. Moreover, it is interesting to investigate to what extent the political transformation that took place in Poland at the turn of the 1980s /90s translated into repeating juvenile delinquency of the two groups of juveniles brought up in different social realities. The thesis

Dr Konrad Buczkowski, The Institute of Law Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland, k.buczkowski@inp.pan.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-3083-0393

Dr Paulina Wiktorska, The Institute of Law Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland, wiktorska.p@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-0414-7355

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proposed herein assumes that the construction of a deviant identity is connected with a weakening of the social ties characteristic of anomie, which accompanies sudden changes in our environment.

Keywords: juvenile, crime, long-term follow up studies, developmental criminology, life course criminology, return to crime

Abstrakt: Artykuł prezentuje analizę przestępczości powrotnej nieletnich, którzy popełnili czyny karalne w latach 80. XX wieku i w roku 2000. Na podstawie badań katamnesticznych przeprowadzonych na dwóch grupach wiekowych w tekście przedstawiono wybrane aspekty dotyczące rozmiarów i charakteru tego rodzaju przestępczości, a także ukazano, jaki odsetek nieletnich kontynuuje aktywność przestępczą. Źródłem danych, na podstawie których dokonano analizy, były odpowiedzi na zapytania o karalność pochodzące z Krajowego Rejestru Karnego, zebrane w 2017 r. dla obydwu grup wcześniej notowanych i poddanych badaniu nieletnich. Porównanie dwóch pokoleń nieletnich i ich utrzymywania się w przestępczości jest interesujące m.in. w kontekście rzeczywistości społecznej, politycznej, ekonomicznej i prawnej, w której rozpoczynali aktywność przestępczą. Interesujący ponadto jest fakt, w jakim zakresie transformacja ustrojowa, jaka dokonała się w Polsce na przełomie lat 80. i 90. XX w. przełożyła się na charakter powrotnej przestępczości nieletnich z dwóch grup młodzieży wychowanej w innej rzeczywistości społecznej. Proponowana przez nas teza zakłada, że budowa tożsamości dewiacyjnej jest powiązana z osłabieniem więzi społecznych charakterystycznym dla zjawiska anomii, które towarzyszy gwałtownym przemianom otaczającej nas rzeczywistości.

Słowa kluczowe: nieletni, przestępczość, badania katamnesticzne, kryminologia rozwojowa, kryminologia drogi życiowej, powrotność do przestępstwa

Introduction

The issue of repeated crime is a problem raised in many studies and research papers and is of particular interest to criminal law, criminology and correctional studies (Zygmunt, 2008, 223). One of the more interesting aspects of this phenomenon is the return to criminality by young people who have committed a criminal act as minors or as juvenile offenders.² The lower limit of liability in Polish criminal law is 17 years of age and, in exceptional cases, 15 years of age (Bojarski, 2008, 138–141).

The term ‘juvenile delinquency’ is commonly used in criminological literature (Błachut, Gaberle, & Krajewski, 2006, 317–319). It is a conventional notion because, at most, a minor can only commit a punishable act due to the fact that they cannot be ascribed guilt (a constitutive element of the notion of a crime), and they cannot manifest demoralising behaviour. The authors of the text also use the term juvenile delinquency, which refers to dysfunctional behaviour in its broadest sense, and for which there has been a formal reaction from a juvenile court.

² The following authors have written more extensively on this subject: Szelhaus (1969); Ostrihanska, Szamota and Wójcik (1982); Krawczyk (1992); Klaus (2009); Woźniakowska-Fajst (2010, 2011); Wiktorska (2012); Rzeplińska (2013); Włodarczyk-Madejska (2017).

Certain terms have been used since the 1930s in Polish criminology – child criminality, criminal juveniles, and criminal child – although from a formal and legal point of view, they relate to acts prohibited by law which carry a penalty, committed by perpetrators who cannot be blamed due to their age. Such persons are excluded from the criminal law system based on the idea of punishment – retribution – which it is considered more appropriate to apply educational and corrective measures (Woźniakowska-Fajst, 2010, 15). A formal reaction towards minors in the event of their demoralisation or committing of criminal offences is possible under special laws separate from criminal legislation. Systems for controlling the deviant behaviour of minors vary from country to country, but they all share the principle that any actions taken against minors should primarily educate and not punish (Konarska-Wrzosek, 2013).

The aim of this article is to analyse repeated juvenile delinquency by minors who committed criminal acts in the 1980s and 2000s.³ The percentage of former minors continuing their criminal activity and the size and nature of this phenomenon were described on the basis of follow-up studies. The data on which the analysis was based came from criminal records in the National Criminal Registry (NCR), retrieved in 2017 for both previously examined populations. This comparison between the two generations of minors and their persistence in crime into adulthood is interesting in the context of the social, political, economic, and legal reality in which they started their criminal activities.

The focal point of life-course criminology (most often used to explain multiple returns to crime) is change in its broadest sense (Loeber, 1990), closely linked to the moment in a person's life when they first become involved in criminal activity or when they abandon criminal activity at a certain stage in their life. In Polish criminology, the process in which an individual becomes involved in or gives up criminal activity is most often placed at the level of the individual's functioning in their immediate environment (Kotowska, 2019, 75). Three dominant paradigms are indicated in criminology: individuals, norms, and events (Błachut, 2007, 43), and it is assumed that the perpetrator of a crime acts with free will but is also determined by social factors (Tyszkiewicz, 1997). Therefore, it seems interesting to compare the development of 'criminal careers' of former minors against the background of selected problems from the political transformation that took place in Poland in the early 1990s.

The construction of a deviant identity is linked to the weakening of social bonds that is characteristic of the phenomenon of anomie, which accompanies a rapid transformation in environment. Factor analysis indicates that the level of juvenile and adolescent crime is very significantly related to the phenomenon of anomie (Celmer, 2013). The process of socialisation in the minors who had cases in juvenile courts in the 1980s took place in a different reality than that of the respondents

³ The detailed selection of both samples will be discussed during the analysis later in the article.

in the 2000s. Human socialisation is a process that affects a person throughout their lifetime, but is particularly intense during the period of entering adulthood. It takes place in various spaces of everyday life and forms the basis for constructing an individual's personality and identity of acting (Wrzesień, 2017, 286–287). One of the identities formed may turn out to be a deviant identity (Podgórecki, 1976), leading in certain situations to the development of a 'criminal career' model (Macleod, Grove, & Farrington, 2012).

The predominant structure of an individual criminal career looks first at the envelope of the offending pattern, the initiation and termination of the career, and then at the pattern of offences within that envelope. The characteristics of those offences would be the mix of crime types, their frequency, and the way that mix varies over the course of the career. (Macleod, Grove, & Farrington, 2012, vii)

The issue of criminal careers is most often included in the area of scientific research carried out as part of developmental criminology, and some researchers consider this trend to be uniform (Blockland & Nieuwebeerta, 2010, 52; Farrington, 2003, 221–256), while others see a certain dichotomy in the understanding of this term, distinguishing between 'developmental criminology' and 'life-course criminology'. Developmental criminology puts much more emphasis on psychological factors, while life-course criminology focuses primarily on sociological factors (Kotowska, 2019). Developmental criminology does not deny the voluntary nature of an individual's decision to engage in criminal activities, while simultaneously appreciating the influence of a variety of factors that are not extremely deterministic. Developmental criminology focuses primarily on the problem of the direction in which a person's motivations change during their life and influence the decision to commit crime (Carlsson & Sarnecki, 2016, 16). A particularly interesting question posed by developmental criminology is why some people continue their criminal activities (criminal careers) for longer than others, and why some simply abandon them at some stage in their lives (Carlsson, 2014, 16).

The term 'criminal career' in the academic literature is understood in different ways. The word 'career' itself means a sequence of professional roles that an individual performs over his or her lifetime. This term essentially assumes that the successive roles imply advancing specialisation and increased professionalism and prestige, without excluding downward professional and social mobility. The essence of research into careers is to determine certain typical, recurring circumstances and problems related to their course. There are two career lines: subjective and objective. The former is tantamount to the identity felt by an individual, while the latter touches upon the external aspect, concerning the official position, external evaluation of lifestyle, relationships with the law, and functioning in a public institutional complex (Marshall, 2005, 142). As far as a criminal career

is concerned, the basic division is the one between a 'criminal career' and 'career criminals' (Błachut, Gaberle, & Krajewski, 2006, 312). The first term is used in the study of the sequence of crimes committed by the same offender in the monitoring of subsequent adult life by repeat offenders, while the second is understood as the choice of a specific path or life identity, consisting of a permanent connection with the criminal world, which may also occur as a result of stigmatisation or selective action of the agencies of formalised social control; thus, it cannot be excluded that, despite committing a crime, such persons may not be convicted. The studies under analysis are more in line with the notion of a 'criminal career' because their subject is the formally registered return to crime of people who committed crimes during their childhood.

It should be stressed that in criminological terms, a return to crime is not synonymous with recidivism in the sense of criminal law. Recidivism in criminal law means a return to criminality which calls for certain legal consequences under the law, resulting in more severe punishment (Wróbel & Zoll, 2010, 526–530).

The concept of recidivism is also used in punishment criminal law, where it is thought to be penitentiary. Recidivism in the penitentiary sense 'defines such a return to committing an offence which results in the repeated serving of a prison sentence' (Wróbel & Zoll, 2010, 526). Such recidivism is conditioned by the offender 'climbing the ladder' through successive levels of the institutional system of crime prevention and the formation of the social identity of the recidivist (Szczepanik, 2015, 13). A penitentiary recidivist is simply defined as a criminal who is serving at least a second mandatory sentence of imprisonment.

A criminal career, as already mentioned, is usually conditioned by both exogenous and endogenous factors (Tyszkiewicz, 1991, 123–125), which, according to various theories, have a larger or smaller influence on its formation. As the impact of social changes on the size and structure of crime has long interested sociologists and criminologists (Kossowska, 2013, 73), the authors decided to compare the data on the continuation of crime by minors who started their criminal activity in the 1980s, i.e. started on the path to a criminal career during the fundamental social changes resulting from the transformation in Poland, with those who began in 2000. The process of deregulating previously preferred norms, values, and behavioural patterns and replacing them with new ones is a natural process associated with social changes that usually lead to anomie. This phenomenon is most often understood as a temporary inability of society to maintain the functions of control and a lack of identification with the standards in force, causing the objectives of social activities to decompose and leading to general chaos (Durkheim, 2005). The trajectories and turning points in the development of criminal careers – concepts which have been proposed in developmental criminology (Piquero, Farrington, & Blumstein, 2007) – are not questioned in this paper, but it did seem interesting to us to look at the issue through the prism of political transformation, which could play a key role in the fate of the minors under study – all the more so

as the systemic, political, economic, and social changes were also accompanied by changes in the relationship between parents and children, which resulted in a break in the intergenerational transmission of culture (Wrzesień, 2015).

1. The social background of the 1980s and the beginning of the 21st century

Minors who committed criminal acts in the 1980s, as well as those who came into conflict with the law in the 21st century, lived in times of difficult social and political changes in Poland, which caused a decrease in the efficiency of the state's control functions and chaos in the normative order, resulting in a redefinition of values at the level of micro-social structures most relevant to the socialisation process.

The years 1980–1989 were an exceptionally difficult time for the country: it was a period of decline in the Polish People's Republic, when political structures and the centrally controlled economy were slowly disintegrating, and when the communist authorities made a last-ditch effort to save the system. It is also a time of serious economic and political crisis, which resulted in an unprecedented outbreak of social conflict (Buczkowski, 2015). The year 1981 ended with the introduction of martial law, which not only drastically reduced civil rights, but also paralysed the economy. The abolition of martial law two and a half years later was unable to prevent the erosion of the system.⁴

As Konrad Buczkowski wrote,

the socialist state – contrary to official propaganda – was not an area in which society lived prosperously, where the educational system was at a high level, where the equality and freedom of citizens was guaranteed, or where crime rates were low. On the contrary, according to estimates since the 1970s, 40% of the Soviet population and 20%–30% of the Polish population lived below the poverty line. The shape and organisational structure of the socialist economic system was a combination of legal and informal elements, forming a parallel economy to the official one. The developing “parallel economy” was intensely fought by the state by criminalising behaviour considered – from its point of view – to be harmful. (Buczkowski 2017)

⁴ As Ryszard Bugaj wrote, ‘Soon after the peak of martial law, the legitimacy of reforming the socialist economy began to erode rapidly.... Wojciech Jaruzelski's team initially rebuilds the authoritarian system in the political sphere, but does not give up on a “reform of the socialist economy”. The market monetary balance temporarily improves as a result of the price increases under the guise of the rigours of martial law. However, despite the liberalisation of central planning and a kind of “modernisation” of the command and control mechanism, the resource-intensive trends in the economy could not be stopped’ (Bugaj, 2010, 17).

Widespread shortages of basic products, especially food, also inevitably translated into crime. It is therefore not surprising that the number of convictions for offences involving speculation (considered an economic crime under the Criminal Code of 1969) increased more than 2.5 times between 1981 and 1985, and in 1988 dropped to the level from 1981. In the 1980s, crimes against property grew in a manner similar to the dynamics of reported crime, i.e. it increased until 1984 and decreased in the following years. The number of convictions for serious crimes (indictable offences and serious misdemeanours) tended to decrease between 1980 and 1988 (Buczowski, 2015).

The turn of the year 1989, which brought about social and political change and a transformation of the country's political system, also brought new social problems. The common belief that a return to capitalism would bring an immediate improvement in quality of life proved to be completely unjustified. The economic reforms undertaken by the first democratic governments brought on a recession that had a significant impact on the transition taking place. Inefficiently managed state-owned enterprises began to collapse on a massive scale, causing the unemployment rate to rise sharply and leading to rapidly growing social inequalities and widespread poverty. The fall in state revenues caused a collapse in public services and infrastructure. The division between beneficiaries and victims of the reforms quickly led to social tensions. As Zdzisław Sadowski noted,

unemployment of this magnitude had to entail a chain of negative consequences: from poverty, through a difficult start in life for large numbers of young people entering the workforce, to unfavourable changes in morality related to the commercialisation of life, and ending in an increase in crime, including organised crime. (Sadowski, 2010, 38)

The police statistics show that the number of crimes detected increased throughout the entire decade of the 1990s, reached a peak in 2003, then gradually decreased.⁵ Looking at the structure of crime in 1990 and 2007, one can see a fairly significant decrease in crimes against property (from 80% of all registered crimes to almost 54%) and an increase in the categories of crimes against life and health (from 1.8% to 2.8%), crimes resulting from the law on counteracting drug addiction (from 0.1% to 5.5%), and crimes against the reliability of documents (from 0.7% to 5.1%). New types of crime also began to appear: economic crime,

⁵ In searching for the reasons for the increase in crime in the 1990s, Andrzej Siemaszko pointed out, among other factors, the increase in valuable goods owned by the population – influencing the number of crimes against property – the weakening of social control and the related liberalising of law enforcement agencies and the judiciary, the feeling of marginalisation of large social groups favoured in the previous system – which could have led to greater susceptibility to criminal patterns of behaviour – and the progressive stratification of society which is characteristic of a market economy (1999, 170).

organised crime, cross-border crime, tax crime, and crimes committed by foreigners (Rzeplińska, 2010, 195–198).

All of the above-mentioned changes must have had an impact on the shape of juvenile delinquency in the groups studied. So, was their subsequent criminal activity a continuation from this period or does it display some new characteristics resulting from the social changes taking place?

2. The population of minors in the 1980s

The population of minors studied in the 1980s included people with cases in juvenile courts in the period 1985–1988. The selection of case files in the study was determined by their availability. The study was carried out in the year 2000, when some of the files – in accordance with the regulations in force – had been destroyed or the data on convictions had been expunged or erased (Rzeplińska, 2013). Therefore, the study is not representative, but it seems nonetheless valuable to have.

The 1980s constitutes a set of years from before the social changes that took place in Poland in 1989. The study found that 555 juvenile offenders were in this set. It was possible to obtain 329 criminal records from 28 courts (Rzeplińska, 2013, 81). The aim of the study was to determine which group of juvenile offenders committed crimes in adulthood as well as the nature of their criminality. In order to answer this question, a checking the convictions recorded in the NCR was carried out in 2000. However, it is important to be aware that only the formal aspect of ‘adult crime’ of 1980s juvenile offenders has been investigated. In fact, on the basis of the study, we cannot state firmly what form of crime was present in the lives of minors, but can only determine the extent and nature of recorded crimes, next to which there are undisclosed crimes – the set of crimes existing in society, but not subject to formal social control (Błachut, 2007–2008, 78–79).

One-third of those who faced justice before the juvenile courts in the 1980s became adult offenders 22–28 years later, including 179 men and 6 women. Approximately 40% of the subjects were sentenced under special recidivism conditions. Minors from the 1980s most often (in about 60% of cases) committed crimes against property, such as theft, robbery, extortion, fraud, destruction or damage to property, taking a vehicle for short-term use, or fencing. About one-fifth (21%) were later convicted for crimes against life and health, even more convictions (24%) were for drink driving, less than 5% were liable for the crime of family abuse, and 11% for the crime of failing to pay alimony. There were also offences against the administration of justice (8%). Occasionally, there were convictions for offences under the law on counteracting drug addiction, though only 7 people out of all subjects were involved in drug crime. The subjects of the study often committed several types of crime during the follow-up period, but crimes against property

always dominated. It is interesting that about 11% of those studied had committed more than 10 crimes in adulthood, which may lead to the conclusion that they started and consistently pursued criminal careers, and certainly to the conclusion that crime was part of their lives and for some of them it may even have become part of their identity.

The population of minors sentenced by the courts in the 1980s was also subject to a follow-up study. Inquiries were made to the NCR about their criminal records in 2017, which again made subject to investigation only the extent and nature of the crimes which were recorded. The follow-up study was carried out approximately 30 years after the criminal activity of their childhood, so it concerned people aged about 40–50 years old. Out of 530 inquiries about criminal records, less than 39% of the people are listed in the NCR, while slightly more than 67% of this group are adult repeat offenders. The most frequently group of people are those listed as having been convicted of crimes against property, which is in line with general crime trends, including theft (43.9%) and burglary (36.6%). There are also crimes involving robbery (24.4%) and other crimes against property (44.4%). Crimes against life and health are reported much less frequently. Only 6 out of 250 people committed murder, which is less than 3%. Being involved in a fight or injuring others was the type of crime for almost 28% of the subjects. One-fifth of the population was listed in the NCR for insulting or threatening behaviour and 27% for falsifying documents or money.

Drug offences during the follow-up period were committed by former minors on an occasional basis: 5% were recorded for drug use and just over 2% for drug dealing.⁶ The minors from the 1980s were about 40 to 50 years old at the time of the follow-up study, hence the very low drug crime rate in this group. One could risk putting forward the thesis that even if their problems with the law were related to drugs during their childhood, then they gradually and naturally withdrew from drug use as they grew up. On the other hand, driving under the influence of alcohol was quite frequent, found in 43% of cases. While age usually translates into 'extricating oneself' from drug-related crime and drug problems in general, problems with alcohol – if any – affect a wider age group of perpetrators. Occasionally, a conviction was based on domestic violence or other crimes against family and care.

⁶ It was only after 1989 that the drug market in Poland developed, with a clear division of roles between consumers and those benefiting financially from the production, smuggling, and dealing of drugs. For minors who had court cases in the 1980s, the problem of drugs was less known than after the transformation, and the availability of drugs was much more limited. Drug crime is particularly characteristic of young people. Experimenting with various types of psychoactive substances is a result of the physiological and emotional changes taking place in adolescents' bodies, overlapping with difficulties in adapting to the expectations of the family and school environments, and conflicts within peer groups. Sometimes drugs become a way to find one's own path; sometimes they are an expression of rebellion against norms. Criminological studies have for many years indicated a trend of high risk of drug addiction among young people, particularly in those under 18 years of age (Czapów, 1976, 383).

In the adult life of the minors studied in the 1980s, new types of economic crime also emerged, which during the follow-up study reached the level of 15%. The political transformation enabled mobility of individuals outside the country, and 10% of the study population had convictions in countries other than Poland, with the majority of convictions coming from Germany and Great Britain – the two most popular countries for Poles' economic emigration. These were mostly theft, burglary, drink driving, and crimes against business. Other types of offences were not committed or were isolated cases.

3. The population of minors in the 2000s

The contemporary set, hereinafter referred to as the '2000 set', is representative of all minors sentenced for crimes before juvenile courts in Poland in the year 2000. This covers a group of 771 people aged 13–16 years, with the majority of them (550 [71.3%]) aged 15–16. This group included 79 girls and 692 boys.

Minors between the ages of 13 and 16 who were recorded in 2000 in police statistics as suspects of criminal acts numbered 56,345 people. They constituted 13.9% of the total number of suspects, which means that one in seven suspects in Poland in 2000 was a minor (Rzeplińska, 2011, 669).

The group of 15- and 16-year-olds who were subject to educational and corrective measures for their criminal acts in 2000 amounted to 16,398 people, which constituted 1.2% of the total population in that age group. A representative group of 15- and 16-year-olds who went before the Family and Juvenile Divisions of the District Court ('the juvenile courts') covered by the subject of the analysis, constituted 0.04% of the youth population at that age in Poland in 2000.⁷

After checking the test sample at the NCR in October 2005, it turned out that 13 girls (16.5%) and 320 boys (46.2%) were subsequently punished as adults, which means that by committing another crime in adulthood they continued their previous criminal career (Rzeplińska, 2007–2008, 409).

For the '2000 set', another follow-up study was carried out in 2010. This time, it covered 760 people. The follow-up period was nine years. After reaching the age of 17, 390 former minors, i.e. 51.3% of the people included in the study who went before the juvenile courts in the year 2000, were convicted of crime. This group was aged between 20 and 28 years old at the time of this follow-up study, with the majority of the perpetrators – as many as 80% – being between the ages of 24 and 28, i.e. people who were in the period of the most criminal activity (Rzeplińska, 2013, 81).

⁷ In 2000, the number of young people aged 15 and 16 years was 1,336,100 people, i.e. 3.5% of the total population in Poland (GUS, 2003, 106).

The follow-up study carried out for the purposes of this research consisted of a second check of the 2000 set in the NCR statistics in 2017. The follow-up period was therefore 15 years from the first check in 2001, 12 years from the check in 2005 (the 2005 follow-up) and 7 years from the next check in 2010 (the 2010 follow-up).

The newest long-term follow-up from the year 2017 (the 2017 follow-up) included 752 people from the original 2000 set. The smaller data set was due to the inability to verify data concerning the remaining former minors, resulting mainly from discrepancies in personal data, including in particular in their PESEL (personal identity) numbers, which are the basis for sending inquiries to the NCR, and the data contained in this registry, which could not be removed at the verification stage, as well as the recorded deaths of some of the participants.

The NCR data in the 2017 follow-up show that as many as 487 people from this group (almost 65%) were listed in the registry as having been convicted of crimes, of which more than 26% were chronic offenders. It should be noted that within the framework of the 2005 follow-up, 333 people (43.2% of the population from 2000) were recorded in the NCR, and that 390 people (over 51% of the study group) were listed in the 2010 follow-up. This variability in the period of successive follow-ups shows that people who for many years after committing a punishable act as minors remained out of the system – i.e. they did not commit crimes – during their adulthood (this refers to people between 27 and 35 years of age), subsequently had problems with the law which ended in a conviction.

A sentence of conditional imprisonment was imposed on more than 53% of the convicted people. In this group – in almost 42% of cases – the sentences were executed due to violations of the individuals' probation.

As regards the types of crime committed by former minors in the 2000 follow-up, in the 2017 follow-up crimes against property still prevailed: thefts were recorded in 46% of cases, burglaries in almost 40%, and robbery in almost 33% of cases. The remaining offences against property constituted over 43% of convictions.⁸

The most common crime against life and health by far was injury or participation in a fight (a joint category), which occurred in over 32% of cases. Murders were committed in five cases (1%), and the subjects were convicted for the remaining crimes in this group in less than 1% of cases.

In almost 29% of cases the conviction was due to an insult or a criminal threat.

Only a small proportion of convictions – less than 3% of cases – were related to offences against family and guardianship (mainly family abuse) and offences against sexual freedom and morality.

Very often, adults covered by the 2017 follow-up were convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol: in as many as 36% of cases.

⁸ These percentages do not add up to 100 because individual convicts may have committed several acts at once.

A 'popular' crime for which the subjects were convicted was the crime of forgery of documents and money. This occurred in almost 22% of cases. Offences against business activities accounted for just over 9% of convictions.

Attention should also be paid to drug-related crime by convicted 'former juveniles.' They were convicted of both drug possession and drug dealing. The former accounted for 16% of cases, while the latter was true in almost 13% of cases.

It is interesting to note that in almost 12% of the cases the subjects had been convicted abroad (58 convictions). The foreign judgements mainly came from Germany and Great Britain (over 80% of cases), as well as Belgium, Sweden, Italy, and Spain, among others. Such convictions abroad are obviously not surprising due to the fact that Great Britain and Germany are the main destinations for the economic migration of Poles. As for the breakdown of the offences committed and for which the adults of the 2000 follow-up were convicted, these were mainly offences against property, participating in a fight or personal injury, driving under the influence of alcohol, and offences against business activities.

It is worth comparing the criminality of participants convicted in the 2000 follow-up which was revealed in the current 2017 follow-up with the results of the original study on this set and the two follow-ups: from 2005 and 2010. The comparison, due to the different sample sizes, only has a cognitive value, but it allows us to observe trends in criminality within the same group of people over a period of a dozen years or so.

In the 2000 follow-up during the first study, the dominant offences were criminal acts (both crimes and offences) directed against property, which were committed by almost 44% of the analysed set of minors, of which only theft and burglary accounted for 25%. The perpetrators of robbery and extortion made up only approx. 14% of the study group, and of criminal acts against a person (life and health, bodily harm, or violation of bodily integrity) was almost 8%. Other punishable acts in this set concerned a wide variety of behaviours that were contrary to the norms of criminal law. A novelty in the 2000 follow-up was the appearance of violations of the act on counteracting drug addiction, the crime of document adulteration, or the offence of intentional destruction of property (Rzeplińska, 2006).

The 2005 follow-up of the set in question, in the group of juvenile boys 'punished in adulthood', showed an increase in the number of convictions for crimes against property, constituting almost 59% of all those punished in adulthood. The crimes of robbery and threatening behaviour were committed by those punished in adulthood in equal measure, at 10%. Boys punished in adulthood who were responsible for other deeds in their youth constituted 36.3% of the punished in adulthood set. As far as girls punished in adulthood are concerned, they were mainly perpetrators of crimes against property (over 61% of convictions in this group) (Rzeplińska, 2008, 646–647).

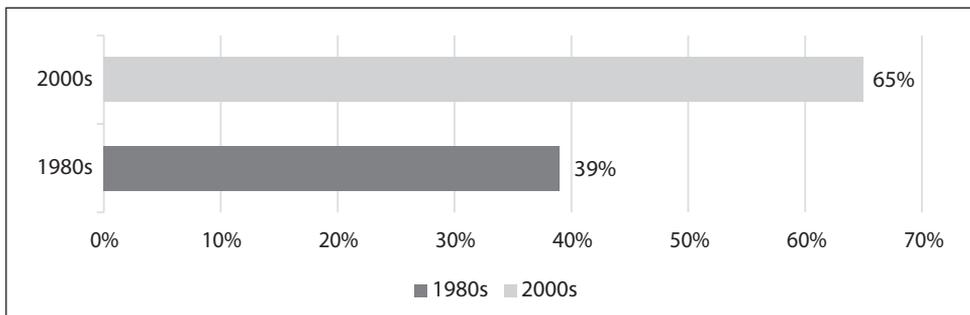
The 2010 follow-up once again confirmed that the further criminality of the 2000 set was dominated by crimes against property (theft, robbery, extortion, fraud,

and computer fraud), which together accounted for almost 26% of all the crimes of which the study participants were convicted in the first case. Sentences for the crime of theft with burglary represented over 12% of cases, for the crime of robbery 10%, driving under the influence of alcohol or while intoxicated (article 178a of the Criminal Code) was almost 14%, crimes against life and health almost 6%, and crimes against the law on counteracting drug addiction almost 3% (Rzeplińska, 2013).

4. Do changes in social macrostructures really affect juvenile delinquency?: Similarities and differences between sets, final conclusions, and 2017 follow-up

A comparison of selected crime statistics of adult offenders who had court cases for criminal acts in the 1980s and 2000s as minors confirms that criminal activity disappears with age. Among the younger subjects who were recorded as juvenile offenders for the first time in the 2000s, 35% had abandoned criminality, in the sense that during the follow-up period they were not registered in the NCR, while in the population from the 1980s this ratio was 61%. This confirms a commonly held thesis in criminology that, in general, age is conducive to the abandonment of crime and that, in the majority of people, criminal activity disappears in the long-term (Laub & Sampson, 2001). In our opinion, however, it would be too bold to draw the conclusion, based on the data analysed herein, that changes related to the political transformation did not affect the development of individual criminal careers. It would probably be interesting to analyse in more detail the structure of the crimes committed by adults who started their activity during childhood in different political, economic, and social realities, which is not yet possible with the empirical material collected so far; however, research which has been conducted

Figure 1. People recorded in the National Criminal Registry as offenders

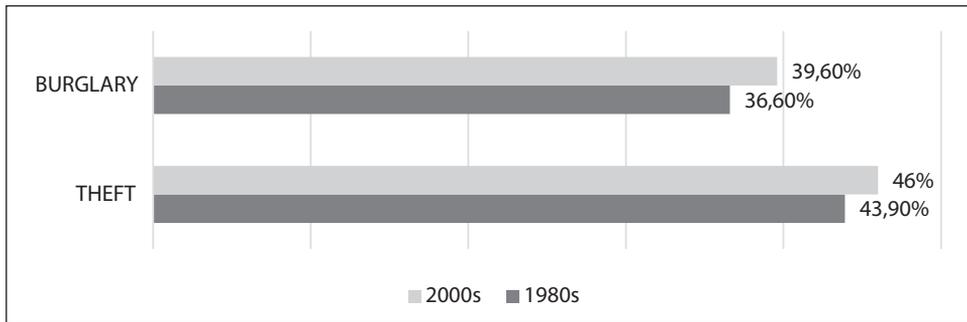


Source: National Criminal Registry

for years at the Department of Criminology at the Institute of Legal Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences is being continued. The history of longitudinal research confirms our conviction that it requires patience and humility to conduct such research, all the more so as we can already see some differences in the structure of crime on the basis of the analysed data found.

We can say that the dominant category of crimes in both groups were crimes against property, particularly theft and burglary, wherein the minors studied in the years 2000–2005 committed these crimes slightly more frequently. Property crime dominates crime in general, including juvenile crime. The small increase in this type of crime that was recorded in the follow-up study of 2017 among younger respondents may be due to the fact that they were less affected by factors influencing the abandonment of crime, but it is also possible that economic changes – connected with the freeing up of the market, improvement in the welfare of most of Polish society, or an increase in consumerism – have had only a small influence, but an increase nevertheless.

Figure 2. The most common types of crime in the groups studied



Source: National Criminal Registry

In both of the groups studied, the offence of driving under the influence of alcohol was quite common. For the population from the 1980s, it was found in 43% of cases, while for the population of the 2000s it was 36%. Minors recorded in the 1980s were slightly more likely to commit crimes related to forgery of documents and money (27%) than those first convicted in the 2000s (22%). The level of convictions of former minors before foreign courts is similar (about 10%). Out of the crimes against life and health, the most frequent were injuries or participating in a fight. Among the older participants, we noted a higher level of convictions under the condition of repeated offences.

Figure 3. Convictions with the condition of recidivism

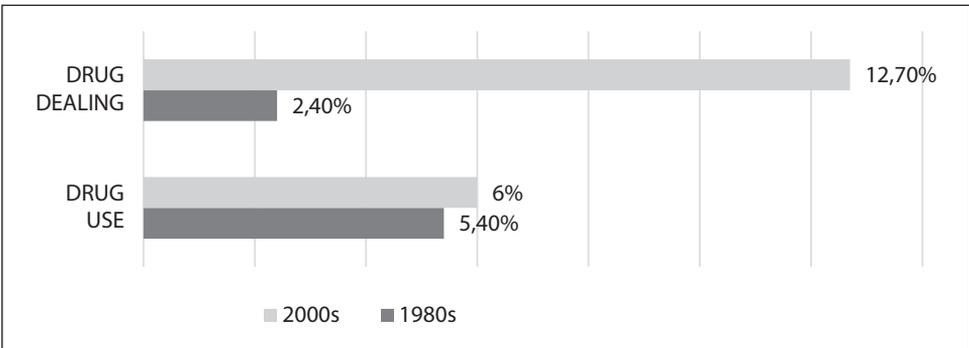


Source: National Criminal Registry

Murders occurred incidentally, while younger minors were more likely to commit offences in the form of bodily harm or participating in a fight and to make insults or criminal threats. Forgery of documents and money was more often the basis for convicting minors from the 1980s population than for the subsequent set.

There is a huge difference in drug crimes. Approximately 3% of the older former juvenile offenders were sentenced for drug dealing, and 13% of the younger set; for the offence of drug use, this was over 5% and 6%, respectively. Interestingly, the difference in drug use is small, while dealing has increased significantly.

Figure 4. Drug crime in the study groups



Source: National Criminal Registry

The recurrent criminality of former juvenile offenders is characterised by some constant trends, although there are types of crime that depend on the changing socio-political reality. Few criminals maintain a linear or fixed path in their criminal activities. 'Cycles of crime' are sometimes interrupted. This is shown in

particular by tracking the population of minors starting their criminal activity in the 2000s. Some of them give up crime and then, for various reasons – perhaps related to experiences with the justice system and ‘successes’ in criminal undertakings – they return to it again (Ouellet, 2019).

The comparison of the size and structure of crime committed during adulthood by minors from the two study groups, those who had cases before juvenile courts in the 1980s and those convicted in the 2000s, is a significant contribution to the achievements of Polish criminological research. Longitudinal analyses allow us to capture the dynamics of changes occurring in the cohorts of the study. These are studies of high cognitive value which confirm the usefulness of continuing them. It is worth noting, however, that while the minors surveyed in the 2000s constitute a representative group, the population surveyed in the 1980s was not selected via a probabilistic method, which may raise some methodological doubts when justifying the comparison of both groups of respondents. The failure to maintain the condition of representativeness in the study populations of minors from the 1980s was necessitated by the unavailability of data obtained from court case files at the time of the study.

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