

SUMMARY STATEMENT

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This session in the field of criminal statistics, which is the first scheduled by the American Statistical Association for some years, is timely and has given all of us an opportunity to take stock and to consider just where we stand and what must be done from now on to make real progress towards measuring and accounting for crime and criminal offenders in this country.

After listening to this series of excellent papers which have touched upon most of the major problems relating to statistics of crime and correction, it would seem somewhat presumptuous on my part to attempt to summarize or even review the many significant points which have been called to our attention. It may serve a more useful purpose if I attempt to underline briefly some of the continuing major problems in this field of statistics from the point of view of our California experience.

As far as I know, the California Bureau of Criminal Statistics is the only state bureau in the country that has been given a maximum responsibility for the collection of all available information relating to crime and delinquency within the state served. Over the past fourteen years we have had some measure of success in developing state crime statistics, due primarily to the genuine interest and concern of both state and local agencies engaged in criminal law enforcement and correction who have supported, encouraged, and fully cooperated with us in all the efforts that have been undertaken to collect statewide information in their fields. Despite this favorable situation, we candidly admit that we are far from the point of having developed adequate, acceptable, and useful criminal statistics.

I would like to suggest that the sources of data for all phases of criminal statistics are to be found in the agency records of three operational areas: law enforcement, administrative process of criminal justice, and corrections.

Police Statistics

In my opinion, our weakest statistics are in the police or law enforcement field. This is most unfortunate because it is in the primary law enforcement agency to which offenses are first reported that the crime problem first comes to public attention. These agencies take the first steps towards investigations of offenses and the apprehension of persons who are criminal offenders. It is here that the most complete picture (in terms of what is known about crime) is possible. Yet our information of crime at the police level has been, for the most part, put together in gross general terms, obscuring a real understanding of either the volume of specific kinds of crime that are

occurring, or the kinds of persons who are first brought into the criminal process as alleged offenders.

The organization of our efforts to control criminal justice in this country has a great deal to do with these limitations. Law enforcement is primarily a local responsibility. There are literally hundreds of policing agencies in most states, and probably over 10,000 in the nation, but it is the records and information in the hands of these agencies that must supply the primary information concerning criminal offenses and criminal offenders. To obtain uniformly defined and classified data from these innumerable sources is a difficult task. The efforts that have been made in this direction on a national basis are well known as the Uniform Crime Reports series. Since 1930 the Federal Bureau of Investigation has sought to collect information on a certain series of crimes reported, from many thousand local police agencies, on a monthly basis in summary form. In addition, other information on arrests is collected, usually on an annual basis. This collection has severe limitations simply because, despite uniform directions, it is impossible to collect information from so many sources with the uniformity desired. The differences that occur in definition and classification in all of the various states only add to the problem of obtaining information in common terms. Yet, this is the only method that has been used to date. This method is used also by the California Bureau of Criminal Statistics to obtain information on crimes reported and felony arrests from the 400 law enforcement agencies that exist in the State of California.

Not only is summary information, under these circumstances, limited and restricted as to its comparability, but it does not permit description and analysis of the data in detailed terms. Individual offense or arrest reports are always superior as a method of obtaining information. It would seem that if we are ever to know in realistic and accurate terms how much crime we have, what its real nature is, and what kinds of persons are involved in these offenses, the next step is to devise methods of obtaining this information on an individual reporting basis. There should be another thorough-going study of police records today, such as was made in the late Twenties preceding the development of Uniform Crime Reports. It is our hope that in California during the next decade we can carry on experimentation of this nature and take definite steps in the direction of individual crime classifications.

Process of Criminal Justice Statistics

In the area of the process of criminal justice, we, today, in 1960, are not as advanced

as was the case during the decade of the Twenties when some of the great major crime surveys demonstrated how to account for criminal offenders from the point of apprehension through the various steps of the selective process that we call the administration of criminal justice. Mortality tables were developed that showed how many and what kinds of offenders were released by law enforcement agencies and each of the successive steps of prosecution. It will not be possible to develop this kind of information unless there is an individual accounting of each offender at the law enforcement level and a procedure established whereby he can be traced through the process of hearing, trial, and conviction. We do have, today, an accurate accounting of individuals who were prosecuted in the general trial courts of California--the superior courts--but we cannot identify these same people at the point of arrest or in preliminary stages of prosecution.

A project is now being carried on in the State of California which will serve as an experiment in this direction. Because the narcotic problem is one of extreme concern, and facts relating to narcotic offenders are meager, the Bureau of Criminal Statistics was authorized a year ago to set up a reporting system which would account for all persons arrested by law enforcement agencies on any narcotic charge. The Bureau obtains from law enforcement agencies an individual copy of the original arrest report and any supplemental reports pertaining to each offense and offender. Also, received is a copy of the criminal record that is developed by the State Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation upon receipt of the arrestee's fingerprints. This is a project, therefore, that begins with the individual arrested. The attempt is made to obtain all further information as to how this person was handled and what was the final outcome or disposition of the charges. A major difficulty that is encountered here, and will be encountered in any attempt to obtain information on the outcome of prosecutions is the lack of any systematic reporting by courts handling misdemeanor offenders. This is a problem that is common, I know, to all states and areas. It is much easier to build a reporting system at the felony level in a state than it is to cover dispositions from the numerous courts that dispose of misdemeanants. Such information, though, is most essential, not only to account for the final disposition of a person arrested, but also to be transcribed to the identification records so that when a person's record is issued by the FBI, state identification bureau, or local police agency, such entry indicating an arrest will carry also information concerning the disposition made of the arrest. Far too often this information is never reported and the criminal record will contain pages of arrests with little indication whatever of what happened to the individual in many of the arrests reported.

Because of the decentralized nature of the administration of criminal justice--law enforcement agencies first investigating and arresting

offenders, prosecuting agencies being responsible for the formal accusation of offenders, courts being responsible for the trial of offenders and the sentencing of those convicted, and many correctional agencies, both state and local, for handling offenders after conviction--it is not easy to identify and follow an individual offender in this process from one stage to another. Mere name and charge are insufficient as both may be changed at different levels of the action. In order to insure a thread of positive identification that will make it possible to follow a person from arrest through final disposition and discharge, some additional record item is necessary. It is suggested that the identification number that is first issued by a central identification bureau, the FBI, a state bureau, or a local law enforcement agency, be the basis for such a record, and that this number be used on all official reports and papers relating to an offender throughout the total process. As most offenders are fingerprinted and identified at the point of arrest, it would not seem to be too difficult to record and carry some identification number through each successive stage of activity with respect to the offender.

Correctional Statistics

In the field of institutional and correctional treatment more information regarding the offender has been available than in any other phase of criminal process. Particularly, this is true of those who are sentenced to prison on whom case records which are fairly complete in terms of their individual case history, offense, and prior criminal record are developed. Also, the accounting of persons sentenced to long-term imprisonment is carefully carried out with exact data available as to the length and term of imprisonment and parole. Thus, prison statistics have been, on the whole, more complete and accurate than any others in the field of criminal justice. Because of the accessibility of information on prisoners and also the possibility of making special studies of persons under long-term incarceration, there has been a great deal of research and statistical analysis carried out, particularly in the area of parole. Such research has established rather definitely that persons who are committed to prison and thereafter placed on parole or released directly from prison, show varying patterns of subsequent criminal behavior. These patterns indicate that the type of offense, and the prior criminal conduct, are very strong predictive factors as related to involvement in future criminal behavior.

However, despite many attempts to study the effects of different programs, different kinds of treatment, different lengths of imprisonment, or different parole situations, there has been little evidence developed, so far, to suggest that these differences affect or change very much the general probabilities of criminal behavior already established with respect to offense and recidivism. It would seem that one of the reasons for not making further progress along

this line arises from the almost complete lack of knowledge of the kinds of offenders (aside from offense and recidivism) who are being studied. It is difficult to classify persons in terms of personality, early development, and measure the impact of past social experience, but it would seem that more must be done before there can be a further refinement in terms of predicting and understanding the subsequent probable behavior of persons who have been convicted of crime.

Again, it should be pointed out that a real weakness arises from our lack of knowledge of the offenders who are first originally arrested and charged with crime. If only one out of ten or fifteen is committed to long-term imprisonment, then to study only this group does not give an adequate picture of what kinds of persons and what kinds of dispositions were made of the other nine to fourteen who were charged with criminal offenses. The building of more adequate statistical data on persons coming into the crime picture through arrest and original charge is essential to the further development and understanding of the selective processes of criminal justice and of the evaluations that can be made of different kinds and methods of correctional treatment.

Juvenile Delinquency Statistics

And now a word regarding the juvenile delinquency statistical problem, which like the adult problem, involves all three source areas. There is no question that we are generally confused as to definitions of juvenile delinquency and as to our aims and objectives in handling persons alleged to be delinquent. From the standpoint of criminal statistics, it would seem necessary to separately account for those juveniles who have engaged in specific criminal con-

duct for which they would have been criminally charged if they had been adults. Further, because of the tremendous variations in attitudes towards handling juveniles, it would seem that if we are ever to have an index of juvenile crime or delinquency that we will have to establish a uniform reporting system relating to offenses above a certain level of seriousness. These would include offenses that for adults are considered felonies plus some of the misdemeanors, such as theft and assault, against which society demands protection. It would seem utterly impossible to obtain uniform information on all children contacted by law enforcement or even arrested by law enforcement for a host of activities which are generally described as waywardness, incorrigibility, truancy, lack of parental control, etc. Very little has been accomplished to date in narrowing the reporting to specific offenses, but it would appear that this is the direction that must be taken if we are ever to have statistics on juvenile delinquency that have real comparability.

Conclusion

Those of us who are working in the field of criminal statistics wish to express our appreciation to the Social Statistics Program Chairman of the American Statistical Association for the opportunity this year of having these valuable section meetings in our area of effort. The papers and discussion of these meetings certainly point up the need for a great deal more effort to be directed toward the building of definitions, more descriptive classifications of offenses and of kinds of offenders, and the accounting for individuals who are arrested and prosecuted under our criminal justice system, if we are to ever develop adequate measures of crime and delinquency.