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CLASSIFICATION OF PRISONERS FOR PURPOSES OF TRAINING WORK AND PAROLE¹

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The modern study of the criminal is divided rather naturally into two major schools, the one anthropological in its interests and emphasis, and the other sociological. The distinction is well stated by Ferri, who says: "Crime is the result of manifold causes, which, although found always linked into an intricate network, can be detected, however, by means of careful study. The factors of crime can be divided into individual or anthropological, physical or natural, and social. The anthropological factors comprise age, sex, civil status, profession, domicile, social rank, instruction, education, and the organic and psychic constitution. The physical factors are race, climate, the fertility and disposition of the soil, the relative length of day and night, the seasons, meteoric conditions, temperature. The social factors comprise the density of population, emigration, public opinion, customs and religion, public order, economic and industrial conditions, agriculture and industrial production, public administration of public safety, public instruction and education, public beneficence, and, in general, civil and penal legislation." This theory of Ferri might be paraphrased somewhat as follows: The criminal shows more or less imperfect physical or anatomical constitution and more or less defective mental makeup. Economical or environmental circumstances bring this man into a situation to which he is unable to react adequately. He responds with his most natural reaction, which may or may not be anti-social. Such an individual reacts inadequately to very many situations throughout his lifetime, but it is only when this reaction is of such a nature that it brings him into conflict with the law that he becomes a criminal. The treatment, therefore, calls for the combined efforts of physician, psychologist, and teacher. This man must be made physically well. His mental complexes and defects of character must be straightened out and he must be given the practical tools and spiritual attitude which are necessary for successful economic adaptation.

¹Read at the American Prison Congress, Detroit, October, 1922.

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The history of criminology shows four different points of view toward the treatment of criminals. These are in historical succession, (1) retribution or punishment, eye for eye and tooth for tooth; (2) protection of society, involving the safe custody of the criminal; (3) reformation, considered principally from the standpoint of moral and educational instruction; and (4) correction, the modern comprehensive point of view which demands the scientific study of the individual in relation to his environment, the causes and effects, and the systematic measures for combating these.

In the present paper we shall consider the treatment of prisoners from the last standpoint, of correction, by which we shall mean the complete and comprehensive study of the prisoner as an individual and of his environment, the principal causes and contributing factors leading to his criminality, and the specific measures which must be systematically followed to correct the abnormalities discovered.

Correctional treatment in the past, where successful, has been an art rather than a science, and where unsuccessful, has followed the method of trial and error rather than of system and follow-up. The striking or outstanding characteristics have overshadowed some of the more subtle, yet equally important, causes of crime and methods of correction. In this paper I wish to present the outline of a system of classification which is so comprehensive that no factors are overlooked, so systematic that all the complex of causes in each case shall be properly combined, and so definite that the measures for corrective treatment shall seem necessary and inevitable. It is not my purpose to question the present methods of sentence and commitment, or the problems of a central clearing house to which prisoners might be remanded by the courts before sentence for purposes of study and classification, but to describe the kind of correctional treatment which is now in operation in the correctional institutions of New Jersey. The fact that every phase of this plan is already in operation in some of our institutions and the plan in partial operation in the others will spare me the criticism of impracticability. It is an experience that I am describing, rather than a theory, a condition as well as a plan.

I like to think of correctional treatment in terms of an analogy drawn from medicine. When a person is afflicted with a contagious disease, or an ailment which is a menace to his neighbors, he is quarantined from the general social body. A physician is called in to treat the case. Before prescribing treatment the physician makes a thorough study of the individual, not only of his present symptoms, but of his previous history and those influences which have contributed to the

development of the pathological condition. He sums up this study in terms of a diagnosis, in which he indicates the contributing causes. Generally speaking, diagnosis leads almost automatically to methods of treatment which are fairly well standardized for the several diagnostic syndromes. It may be, however, that the circumstances call for specialized treatment, specifically designed to meet the particular conditions presented by the individual.

Our plan of correctional treatment is similarly founded. We study the prisoner from every angle. We cover his personal history with a view to understanding the predisposing factors; we study his environment to learn the immediate contributing causes of his crime. We make a diagnosis of the principal cause or causes and specify the contributing factors. We are then in a position to see exactly what the individual needs in order to be socially rehabilitated. We then make sure that our institutions are provided with the facilities required for this purpose. We go further and aim not only to fit the individual for return to his environment, but to prepare the environment for his return. The study of the individual must always include the interaction between himself and his environment. Our problem is essentially one of social relations in which the individual himself is but one of a complex of influences.

Our program of classification calls for a period of study of each prisoner immediately after admission to an institution, during which period the prisoner and his environment are studied from every possible angle. The man himself is examined by the physician, the psychiatrist, the psychologist, the chaplain, the head teacher, the industrial supervisor, and the social investigator.

The physician inquires into the man's physical makeup from the standpoint of physique, health, and physiological constitution. He obtains such information as will indicate the causes of crime from the point of view of physical constitution, such as chronic infirmities, acute disease, toxemias, constitutional abnormalities (both organic and functional), general health, and so on.

The psychiatrist inquires into the condition of the nervous system, personality makeup, and sanity. He obtains such information as will indicate the contributing influences of nervous pathology, defective personality, emotional disturbances, conflicts, perversions, maladjustments, psychoses, psychopathies, epilepsies, dementias, and so on. In cooperation with the physician, he determines the importance of syphilitic infection and the use of alcohol or drugs.

The psychologist examines the man from the point of view of intelligence, aptitudes, character, and emotions. He determines particularly the prisoner's individuality from the point of view of intelligence level, intelligence type, temperament, emotion, judgment, inhibitions and desire. In co-operation with the head teacher he determines the degree of literacy and educational capabilities. In co-operation with the industrial supervisor he determines motor aptitudes and trade skill. In co-operation with the psychiatrist and physician he determines feeble-mindedness, constitutional instability, and the psychological aspects of psychopathy, including defective personality, judgment, emotional deterioration, mood, and the like. He determines the level and type of the individual from the point of view of such mental processes as memory, association, and reasoning power. The psychologist further evaluates the importance of his findings from the point of view of color, race, and nationality.

The head teacher examines the man from the point of view of his knowledge and educability. He inquires particularly into the degree of literacy and capability for advancement, academic interests, social ambitions, and suitability for training in the clerical and semi-professional occupations.

The industrial supervisor studies the man from the point of view of his previous occupational history, his present trade or industrial skill, and his industrial capabilities. He inquires particularly into the present degree of trade skill which the man possesses, his occupational ambitions and their relation to his environment.

The chaplain studies the man from the point of view of his social attitudes, standards, and responsibilities. He inquires particularly into the man's previous church and spiritual relations, his social and ethical ideals, and his degree of individual responsibility and trustworthiness. He determines particularly the relation of the man's spiritual, moral, and social attitude and associations as predisposing or contributing factors.

The social investigator, sometimes the Bertillon officer, disciplinarian, assignment officer, or parole officer inquires into the man's history and previous record from the standpoint of family history, personal history, school history, industrial history, criminal record, marital or family relations, and economic status. He studies particularly the environment and immediate neighborhood from which the prisoner is drawn, with a view to determining its influence in the causation of the crime and its resources from the standpoint of rehabilitation. He makes special recommendations as to the changes

which must be brought about in the environment before the man is returned to it, or recommends a permanent change in environment. He serves all the previous mentioned specialists, obtaining for them such information as they separately require and supplementing this with such unexpected information as he may be able to obtain.

As a result of their several inquiries into the makeup and history of the individual and his relations to his environment, each specialist presents a written report from his particular point of view. This report covers, first, a statement of findings or data; second, an analysis of their relation to the causation of the particular crime for which the prisoner is admitted; and third, specific recommendations for corrective treatment. These several specialized reports are then abstracted and compiled, and, together with the complete reports, are presented with the individual prisoner at a classification meeting. At this meeting the several specialists are individually present, and hear the reports from the different points of view. Discrepancies, omissions, or contradictions in the reports are evaluated and the reports harmonized as completely as may be. The principal causes of the crime, the importance of contributing factors, and the measures for corrective treatment are then determined by the committee as a whole. These determinations are then used as a basis for making specific, though tentative or provisional recommendations as to the minimum requirements to be met before the prisoner is eligible for parole, and the expected time limits within which these requirements are to be met. Objectives are set from the several points of view and a daily schedule, based on specific assignments is made. These recommendations are then transmitted to the assigning officer, who is directed to see that they are carried out. Any changes which he may find it necessary to make, either with respect to assignment, schedule, or objectives, must first be passed upon by the classification committee of specialists. The final classification may be delayed pending further inquiry or the acquisition of further data, or because of incompleteness, or uncertainty of diagnosis. In any case, at the time of assignment a date is fixed for reclassification, at which time the prisoner is expected to reappear before the committee, accompanied by the initial reports and such additional examinations, new information, and institutional progress records as may be available. At this time the experience of the institution from every point of view is presented. The original objectives or pre-parole requirements and time limits, original schedule, and assignments are revised or modified.

As a result of the classification meeting and group determination, the individual will be classified in one or more of the following groups:

A medical group, including the diseased, ill, crippled, disabled, aged, infirm, constitutionally abnormal, and so on.

A psychiatric group, including the neurotic, psychotic, psychopathic, demented, epileptic, inferior, peculiar, maladjusted, perverted, syphilitic, drug addict, chronic alcoholic, and so on.

A psychological group, including the gifted, bright, average, dull, inferior, feeble-minded, deteriorated, unstable, verbal-minded, manual-minded, social minded, unskilled, and so on.

An educational group, including the non-English-speaking, illiterate, borderline illiterate, classified literates, non-educable, scholastically educable, clerically skilled, and so on.

An industrial group, including unskilled, relatively unskilled, average, highly skilled, expertly skilled, vocationally educable, routine workers, and so on.

A moral group, including the amenable, the anti-social, altruistic, egocentric, trustworthy, untrustworthy, religious, skeptics, misanthropists, and so on.

A social group, including the colored, native white, foreign-born, foreign descent, chronic offenders, occasional offenders, environmentally unfortunate, economically limited, and so on.

These classifications obviously place emphasis upon the extremes of variation, either above or below the normal, on the assumption that an entirely normal man from all these points of view is rarely indeed a criminal. Each prisoner will ordinarily be found to be definitely classifiable in one or more of these groups, and his inclusion therein will indicate the principal causes and contributing factors of his criminality. The inclusion in one or more of the groups makes the prisoner automatically eligible for the several lines of corrective treatment which are provided for them. These lines of treatment may be enumerated as follows:

Medical treatment, including, regimen, diet, medication, surgery, physical training, therapies, psychanalysis, quarantine, and the like.

Scholastic education, including Americanization, grade school work, special courses, departmentalized instruction, clerical training, recommended reading, clerical or semi-professional training, and the like.

Trade training, including vocational training, trade training, industrial work, correlated trade and vocational instruction, and so on.

Moral instruction, including religion, ethics, civics, biography, and so on.

Recreation, including physical exercises, games, sports, amusements, music, dramatics, entertainments, clubs, organizations, and so on.

Community service, including industrial placement, parole supervision, financial assistance, community affiliations, home adjustments, and so on.

These several measures for corrective treatment provide comprehensively for the needs of practically all prisoners in relation to their individual circumstances, types and needs. This method of classification, as described, when put into operation in any correctional institution, immediately reveals the limitations of corrective treatment in an institution. Some facilities will be found preponderant and others totally lacking, and consistent effort to classify and assign systematically in these ways will force an institution to provide the facilities which it lacks, and to curtail the employment of other facilities which are being used blindly. With such a system it is practicable to determine in great detail the specific needs of each prisoner or group of prisoners with respect to education, training, and work, and to determine with a high degree of precision the time at which a prisoner is eligible for parole. Such treatment for purposes of parole presupposes the indefinite sentence in its broadest interpretation. In many cases the crime itself will be found to be an incident or accident requiring no other correctional treatment than the shock of the crime itself, arrest, or court hearing. In many instances the correction is to be sought really in the home, neighborhood, or general environment, rather than in the individual. A definite percentage of prisoners will be found not amenable to correction because of gross feeble-mindedness, psychosis, extreme anti-social attitude, physical defect, and the like. In such cases the indeterminate sentence may be construed as permanent custody. For the former immediate parole analogous to probation can be provided.

This plan can be extended in other states and adapted to other conditions. It should also constitute the logical basis for institutional discipline such as is provided for by credit and marking system. It is also the obvious basis for a system of wage payments to prisoners.

When we have reached that more advanced stage of scientific and humane diagnosis and treatment of prisoners which calls for individual study and classification *after conviction but before sentence*, then some procedure such as this becomes imperative.