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THE ADMINISTRATION OF POLICE JUVENILE SERVICES IN THE METROPOLITAN REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

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EDITOR.

This is a study of the response of big-city police departments in the early 1960's to their problems with juveniles. The study was designed to focus on the general administrative context as well as problems of police juvenile services that are peculiar to the metropolitan region. In this respect, then, and in the recency of the data, the findings published here may be viewed as supplementing the interesting and valuable reports some years ago of the U. S. Children's Bureau¹ and the American Municipal Association.² The problems that are confronted by police juvenile services in a metropolitan region are often intensified because of the sheer size and heterogeneity of the community. Problems of delinquency are accentuated by the mobility of juveniles. In these respects, the administration of police juvenile services is complicated by the fact that the problems often tend to outrun the jurisdictional boundaries of numerous established police authorities in a region.

In late March and early April, 1961, 22 of 30 large American city police departments returned questionnaires dealing with the administration of their juvenile services.³ The respondents repre-

sented all geographic sections of the continental United States. Collectively, the 22 cities were the centers or component parts of metropolitan regions with a total population of 48,526,762 in 1960. The individual regions ranged in population from 262,199 of metropolitan Albuquerque, to the 10,694,633 of metropolitan New York City. The data supplied by these cities reflect the extent and nature of the juvenile offenses with which they deal, the ways in which they dispose of juvenile cases, organization for police juvenile services, the extent and nature of specific delinquency prevention programs, and the extent and nature of cooperation for police juvenile work among the various governmental components of the metropolitan regions. Although this study focuses on the administration of police juvenile services, it is obviously not intended to suggest that the juvenile unit is able or ought to try to function in isolation from the rest of the force. Problems of organization, recruitment and training of personnel, crime prevention and inter-jurisdictional cooperation tend to involve an entire department.

¹POLICE SERVICES FOR JUVENILES (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1954). This report included a statistical review of police services for juveniles based on a questionnaire circulated in 1952 to the members of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, 611 police jurisdictions responding.

²J. L. LEVIN, HOW CITIES CONTROL JUVENILE DELINQUENCY (Chicago: American Municipal Association, 1957).

³This was a 73% return. The 22 cities were: Albuquerque, N. M., Berkeley, Calif., Chicago, Ill., Dallas, Tex., Detroit, Mich., Fort Worth, Tex., Houston, Tex., Indianapolis, Ind., Los Angeles, Calif., Miami, Fla., Minneapolis, Minn., New York, N. Y., Norfolk, Va., Oklahoma City, Okla., Philadelphia, Penna., Phoenix, Ariz., St. Louis, Mo., San Diego, Calif., San Francisco, Calif., Sacramento, Calif., Washington, D. C., and Wichita, Kan. The questionnaires were constructed and circulated by George Michael Murphy in connection with his investigation of police juvenile services

EXTENT AND NATURE OF JUVENILE OFFENSES

It is generally acknowledged that juvenile offenses constitute a major police problem. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has reported that for 1953, 14.7% of all offenses were committed by persons under 21 years of age. Five years later the number had increased to 19.7%. For 1960, the F.B.I. has reported that in 2,400 cities with a total population of 81,660,735, 22.4% of all persons

in the Miami, Florida, metropolitan region. On the Miami situation, see his ADMINISTRATION OF POLICE JUVENILE SERVICES IN DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA (Tallahassee: unpublished Master of Science in Public Administration thesis in the Robert Manning Strozier Library of the Florida State University, 1961).

TABLE 1

ELEVEN MOST FREQUENTLY CITED JUVENILE OFFENSE CATEGORIES, OTHER THAN TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS, FOR 22 METROPOLITAN CENTERS, 1959-1960

Offense Category	Per Cent of Cities Citing
Larceny	70
Auto Theft	50
Burglary	50
Disorderly Conduct	40
Runaway	35
Malicious Mischief	25
Vandalism	20
Liquor Violations	20
Robbery	15
Sex Offenses	15
Assault	15

arrested were under 21 years of age.⁴ Juveniles commit nearly every type of offense against persons and their property, but the bulk of police activity is confined to about a dozen categories of offenses. The 22 metropolitan centers reported that for 1959-1960 their largest juvenile offense categories, other than traffic violations, were those enumerated in table 1. Additional offense categories cited by one or more of the cities as being part of their most recurrent problems with juveniles were curfew violations, incorrigibility, arson, loitering, vagrancy, truancy, breaking and entering, and weapons violations. It should be noted that according to the F.B.I. the major proportion of all such serious offenses as auto theft, burglary, and larceny are committed by persons under 21 years of age. Larceny, auto theft, and burglary were most frequently cited by the 22 cities as their largest juvenile offense categories. Beyond these three, however, the pattern of most frequent juvenile offenses becomes quite variable from one city to the next.

DISPOSITION OF JUVENILE CASES

The cities were asked to report the number of juvenile cases handled in 1959 and 1960, and to indicate how many cases were warned and dismissed, referred to the juvenile court, or referred elsewhere. The 22 cities reported that for 1959, 50% of the cases were warned and dismissed, 31% were referred to the juvenile court, and 19% were referred elsewhere. For 1960, 53% of the cases

were warned and dismissed, 35% were referred to the juvenile court, and 12% were referred elsewhere. Actually, these averages conceal great variability in the disposition of juvenile cases. For example, for 1959, one city reported 12% of its cases warned and dismissed, 81% referred to juvenile court, and 7% referred elsewhere. Another city reported 82% of its cases warned and dismissed, 10% referred to juvenile court, and 8% referred elsewhere. These two cities reported dispositions of cases in 1960 nearly identical to their reports for 1959. It would appear that the previously noted variability in the patterns of juvenile offenses extends to the ways in which cases are customarily handled.

ORGANIZATION FOR POLICE JUVENILE SERVICES

As the importance of police juvenile services has gained recognition there has been a tendency to assign them to higher and more autonomous status in the department by separating them from the functional units to which they have traditionally been assigned. Although traditional patterns of organization are still predominant, 27% of the cities reported that the juvenile unit commander is answerable directly to the chief or superintendent of police. The commonest arrangement, reported by 46% of the cities, has the juvenile unit within the detectives or investigation branch of the force. The remaining 27% of the cities reported, variably, that their police juvenile services are administratively under operations, patrol, special services, or traffic.

The strength of the units ranged from a low of 2% to a high of 8% of the force, with the average for the 22 cities at 4%. These are reasonably close to the "very rough rule . . . that the unit should be 5 per cent of the force," suggested by the International City Managers' Association.⁵ All of the cities select their juvenile unit personnel from within the department with uniformly high qualification requirements. Ninety per cent of the cities have some kind of specialized training for the officers of the juvenile unit. The kind of training provided, however, is variable. More than one-half of the cities report in-service training programs in the field of police juvenile services, and nearly one-third report some additional training, such as sending selected personnel to Delinquency Control Institutes or the traditional man-to-man training of new personnel on the job.

⁴ Federal Bureau of Investigation, UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, for the years indicated).

⁵ MUNICIPAL POLICE ADMINISTRATION, 5th ed. (Chicago: International City Managers' Association, 1961) p. 214.

The most frequently cited Delinquency Control Institute was that of the University of Southern California, although it was also apparent that similar programs have been in process of development at other universities.

PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The police departments were asked if they have specific juvenile delinquency prevention programs. Eighty-six per cent replied that they have and 14% that they have not. Of those with programs, only 44% indicated that they have extensive preventive programs going beyond preventive patrol to include such activities as officers lecturing in the schools; meetings with parents; establishment of police-student councils; speeches to youth organizations, civic, business, religious and service organizations; P.A.L. clubs; participation in various youth recreational outlets; and cooperation with other community organizations concerned with juvenile problems. One department described such a program but indicated that it is new and not yet fully operational. Twenty-two per cent of the cities indicated that their preventive programs consist only of preventive patrol. The remaining one-third of the departments reporting specific programs indicated little more than programs of bicycle safety and juvenile division contact in addition to preventive patrol.

EXTENT AND NATURE OF COOPERATION

The diversity of local police jurisdictions and the frequent mobility of juvenile offenders in the typical metropolitan region tend to complicate the administration of police juvenile services. It has been argued that centralization of some or all police activities in a given area will produce the most efficient organizational response to the problem. There have been counter-arguments that decentralization is both desirable and inescapable, and that cooperation among units is therefore the most effective organizational response to the problem. The unlikelihood of a centralized approach was emphasized by the responses to the questionnaire. Two-thirds of the cities do not believe a Central Police Juvenile Bureau offering preventive and/or investigative services to all jurisdictions in the region would be possible at this time. A number of the cities that disagreed with this general judgment already have some degree of centralization of police juvenile services. For example, one city indicated that it has had a centralized system since 1943. Another city in-

dicated that it has a central file system for the 54 police departments in its metropolitan region, and another reported that its Crime Prevention Bureau maintains a central index registry for the thirty or more police agencies in the county.

On the other hand, all but two of the cities believed that a cooperative prevention and investigative effort between departments in a metropolitan region is possible at this time. Forty-one per cent of the cities reported some kind of cooperation already in existence. One city replied that there has been discussion and agreement that cooperation is necessary, but no action had as yet been taken. Metropolitan associations of police juvenile officers are the commonest vehicle of cooperation. The kinds of cooperative action that these associations have promoted include more extensive use of central juvenile indexes, exchange of central index information among all agencies, the development of uniform methods of reporting monthly statistics, exchange of information on techniques, establishment of new and improved procedures, recommendations for changes in legislation, and dissemination of information regarding in-service training programs, delinquency control institutes, conferences, and other developmental programs in the fields of law enforcement and corrections.

CONCLUSIONS

Improvements have been made during the past decade in the administration of police juvenile services in metropolitan regions. Faced with juvenile offenses that are variable from city to city both as to extent and nature, our major cities have been evolving variable but effective systems for dealing with their problems. Organizationally, the trend is toward structural differentiation of the juvenile unit and specialization of the juvenile officer role. Personnel of the juvenile units are everywhere drawn from the force with high qualifications. Nearly everywhere these personnel undergo some continuing form of specialized training.

In the disposition of cases, the mythical "average" city warns and dismisses about one-half of its juvenile cases, refers about one-third of them to the juvenile court, and refers the balance elsewhere. However, many of the cities actually refer most of their cases to the juvenile court, while others warn and dismiss most of their cases. In this study the reasons for such highly variable disposition of cases remain obscure.

In programs of prevention and inter-jurisdictional cooperation, which would seem to lie at the core of effective metropolitan response to the problems that confront the police juvenile services, much has been accomplished but much remains to be done. It is encouraging that 44% of the 22 major cities covered in this study are developing harmonious programs of prevention which involve the police juvenile unit with the many other com-

munity organizations concerned with the problems. It is also encouraging that in the absence and unlikelihood of centralization, and despite some inter-jurisdictional friction, 41% of these cities have developed cooperative arrangements among the juvenile units of the various police agencies in the metropolitan regions. There is reason to believe that wherever it is appropriate other cities may soon begin to follow these leads.