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Women and Crime — Cherchez La Femme

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A FEW years ago people were chuckling over the foreword to a booklet entitled "THE POLICEMAN . . . PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE." The booklet contained two chapters from my Master's Thesis¹ and was intended to assist women seeking positions in our field. Since the material was documentary and somewhat analytical and academic, I felt that it needed a "light touch" so I asked a man who had recently married a policewoman assigned to our Bureau to write a foreword, quite certain that he would be particularly appreciative of all of us. Let me quote from that foreword.

"I remember a time—in the not too distant past—when I had a vague idea that all policewomen must be slightly larger than 10-ton trucks and stronger than Bushman, that king of all gorillas. I visualized them as experts in Judo, marksmanship, rough and tumble, catch-as-catch-can and fisticuffs, whose sole duty it was to smash that obnoxious breed of male human known as the masher.

"Then I met a policewoman . . . and fell in love with all women on the force! (Please believe me . . . that first policewoman, who is now my wife does not have her pistol trained against my head as I write).

"Space will not permit a complete listing of the qualities which combine to make policewomen—in my opinion, at least—a very special and very admirable group. Let it suffice to say that a good policewoman, imbued with the philosophy her work demands, is a keen and understanding student of life, a diligent and tireless worker striving always to make this world a better place, and a true crusader in the never-ending battle against crime and its causes."

Just as they may find a chuckle in the first paragraph, perhaps all women peace officers may find something indefinitely warm and inspiring in the last part.

Cherishing every instant of my 19 years as a member of the Chicago Police Department, (serving simultaneously as crime prevention coordinator for the Municipal Court the past 6 years) I find something significant, as well as inspiring in those words. Facetious though it may be, the opening description does point up a common

misconception concerning policewomen. After reading that verbal caricature, I recall with warm satisfaction the respectful admiration generally experienced by women for their work and the appreciation of the sense of dedication they bring to it.

When we speak of "dedicated service," it must inevitably remind us of the outstanding example of this quality which is our heritage from California's Mrs. Alice Stebbins Wells. How proud of her we must be!

Women Police Appear

Appointed to the Los Angeles Police Department in 1910, the first woman officially classified as "policewoman," Mrs. Wells pioneered much of the preventive-protective philosophy of police service, played a dominant role in the national movement for policewomen to perform those specialized police services relating to women and juveniles, and was unquestionably a major influence in gaining recognition of the potential value of policewomen.

Civic pride and loyalty—plus the fact that I shall soon be returning to my beloved city—impel me to point out that, while Mrs. Wells was first to be officially designated a "policewoman," the city of Chicago had 18 years earlier (in 1893) placed Mrs. Marie Owens, widow of a police officer, on the rolls as a "patrolman."

Mrs. Owens' duties included visiting the courts and assisting police officers with cases involving women or children. She was carried as a patrolman for 30 years, and finally retired on a pension.²

In Portland, Oregon, during the 1905 Lewis and Clark Expedition, Mrs. Lola Baldwin was appointed, with police powers, to deal with certain problems involving girls and young women. She became the first director of an agency which ultimately became a division of the police department.

A great step forward was taken when policewomen were appointed and opened up to women a new profession where they had so much to contribute to the protection of women and children. Now, more than 150 cities have followed and today there are more than a thousand policewomen serving communities all over the country. There are more than 2,000 women serving as deputy sheriffs, and in the Federal departments with police functions—such as the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Immigration. The number of policewomen engaged in police departments today amounts to about one percent of the total police officers, though many women are engaged in the cus-



Dr. Lois L. Higgins



About the Author . . .

LOIS LUNDELL HIGGINS, A.B., M.S.W., LL.D., Director of the ILLINOIS CRIME PREVENTION BUREAU, is internationally acclaimed for outstanding work in the field of crime prevention and delinquency control. Dr. Higgins has been widely credited with having alerted the nation to the mounting menace of drug addiction, with testimony given before the U. S. House of Representatives Ways and Means Subcommittee, April 1951, and also before the Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce of the U. S. Senate, June 1951.

A tireless lecturer, she has appeared on numerous radio and television programs and has addressed professional and lay groups throughout this nation. She has conferred with Police Chiefs throughout Europe and the West Indies recently.

Her articles on narcotics, juvenile crime, pornographic materials, crime prevention and control, police problems, etc., have appeared in many magazines and journals. Winner of numerous academic, civic, professional awards, she is honored by a long list of "first woman to."

She is an active member of the International Assn. of Chiefs of Police; an associate member of the Illinois Assn. of Chiefs of Police (member of Legislative committee); honorary member of the Indiana, Arkansas, North and South Carolina Law Enforcement Officers Assn. of the Kentucky and Arkansas Fraternal Order of Police; Chairman of the Advisory Board of the National Police Officers Assn. of America; member of the American Assn. of University Women; Kappa Gamma Pi, National Honor Society; International Federation of Catholic Alumnae; American Congress of Corrections; and appears in American Catholic Who's Who.

She is the happily married wife of Frank J., a civil service employee, and proud mother of Frank Jr., student at Holy Cross College, Worcester, Mass., and the Univ. of Vienna, Austria, and Mary Lois, student at Nazareth Academy, La Grange Park, Illinois.



Dr. Lois Higgins, a guest speaker at the 49th annual convention of the Iowa Association of Chiefs of Police, confers with Chief Harry Kreig during a lull in the meeting. The convention was held on Oct. 17 at Waterloo, Iowa.

todial, clerical and administrative phases of police administration who are not "police officers" in any sense. This number of policewomen, however, will grow greatly in the near future, due to their success in professional duties and the essential character of the duties they perform.

These early appointments of policewomen—for such they were regardless of the titles given them—were significant evidence of growing recognition that certain police services should logically be performed by women.

There was growing recognition, too, of the police department as a vital line of social defense, as properly concerned with some social aspects of crime prevention and delinquency control as with the detection of crime and apprehension of criminals.

Preventive Services Initiated by Women Police

These developments led to the establishment of some specialized service sections within police departments, subsequently headed or staffed, generally, by policewomen. It is a fact that the initiation of such services, known commonly as "protective and preventive functions" is linked to the advent of women police. As a matter of fact, they paved the way for many of today's executive positions, many of which are now held by men, and are an integral part of police organizations. The men, therefore, obviously respect the innovation!

Police Matrons—Vital to Service

While we pay a justifiable tribute to the policewoman, let us not ignore the police matron. The records reveal that the post of police matron was established in 1845, or 65 years before Mrs. Wells was officially classified a policewoman.

I would like to pay a much deserved tribute to these "unsung heroines" of the police department. No less than the policewoman, they perform a necessary and important function, being charged with supervision and care of women held in custody. The good matron has the same sense of dedication and sense of pride in her work as the good policewoman. There are many cases of record where the attitude and actions of a police matron have decisively and beneficially influenced a woman held in cus-

today. Not infrequently, a police matron is "the sweet ministering angel" whose ministrations will never be forgotten.

Just as the functions of each are different, so, usually, are the entrance requirements or pre-requisites for examination. I mention this distinction, because history records instances where superior officers have, perhaps without proper consideration of function and qualification, sought to combine or interchange the duties of policewomen and matrons, notwithstanding the civil service requirements, ordinances, or statutes in a given community.

Quoting from a study I made several years ago:

A glance at the qualifications for women police set up by the police chiefs themselves will show the high standard that is sought for women police. As far back as 1916 the International Association of Policewomen recognized the need for, and advocated certain minimum standards for policewomen. At the Twenty-Ninth Convention of the Chiefs of Police in San Francisco in 1922, these early educational requirements were further defined and standardized. They were unanimously adopted as a basis for the appointment of women police officers. These standards, as they were set up and approved by both the International Association of Policewomen and the International Association of Chiefs of Police, included:

1. Graduation from a four-year course in a standard high school or the completion of at least fourteen college entrance units of study and not less than two years' experience, recent and responsible in social service or educational work;
2. Graduation from a recognized school for trained nurses requiring a residence of at least two years; or
3. Completion of at least seven college entrance units of study or two years in a standard high school and not less than two years of responsible commercial work involving public contacts and responsibilities, tending to qualify the applicant to perform the duties of possessing the equivalent of a college education through experience such as secretarial work.¹

We must recognize that there is no acceptable substitute for adequately trained, competently functioning personnel at every level of police service—men and women.

The sooner we recognize, accept and build from that fact . . . the sooner shall police service achieve the dignity and essential status of an honored profession.

Police Work—Self Preservation

No other service group is more essential in organized society than that charged with maintaining law and order. It is society's thoughtful response to the law of self-preservation.

Women in Crime

Dr. Edward A. Fitzpatrick President Emeritus of Mount Mary College and I, have been collaborating on a textbook in Criminology. The following material is largely from the manuscript in preparation:

Because women constitute a little more than half of our population and because of their strategic social position in the home, it is doubly important that we understand their PART in crime and their potential in the PREVENTION of crime.

EXTENT AND NATURE OF WOMEN'S CRIMES: Number of Arrests of Women. Let us begin with the simple fact of the number of female arrests reported in the Uniform Crime Statistics for 1954. Eleven per cent of 1,688,555 arrests were females, in other words, practically ten times as many males as females were arrested: Arrests by Sex in 1954.

Total Arrests	1,688,555	100%
Male Arrests	1,503,172	89%
Female Arrests	185,383	11%

Women Committed by Courts to Federal and State Institutions

More significant than the number of arrests of females is the number and character of women prisoners in penal and correctional institutions. Let us look at the situation for a single year (1950). During that year, 3,298 females were committed by courts and received in "prisons." Of this group, 2,552 had committed felonies; and under misdemeanors 150 females were committed for juvenile delinquency and 596 for other misdemeanors.

Female Prisoners Received from Courts, 1950

	Fed. Inst.	State Inst.
Total	3,298	475
Felonies	2,552	452
Misdemeanors Juv.		
Delinquency	150	13
Other Misdemeanors	596	10

Women Committing Felonies: The situation with reference to the females received from the courts convicted of felony is thus summarized in the report of the Prisoners in State and Federal Institutions: Female Prisoners, 1950.

"Only 3.6 per cent of the prisoners confined in State institutions at the end of 1950 were females. However, apparently reflecting the shorter sentences they tend to receive, they comprise a larger proportion—5.2 per cent—of the prisoners received in these institutions. For Federal institutions the percentages were comparable but smaller; females comprised only 2.7 per cent of their year-end population, and 3.3 per cent of their court commitments.

a. **Offense.** The principal offenses of female felony prisoners received in State Institutions were, in order,

larceny, forgery, manslaughter, aggravated assault, and murder. Those accounted for 59.0 per cent of felony commitments of females, as compared with only 38.9 per cent for males. For males the five leading offenses, also in order, were burglary, larceny, robbery, forgery, and aggravated assault. Thus three offenses—larceny, forgery, and aggravated assault—were among the first five for both females and males. The two aggressive property offenses, burglary and robbery, accounted for 37.9 per cent of commitments for men, but for women only 9.1 per cent. On the other hand, for women three offenses against persons, manslaughter, aggravated assault, and murder, accounted for 24.3 per cent of commitments; but for men, only 12.0 per cent.

b. Sentence length. Female offenders are likely to be sentenced to shorter terms than are male offenders. For example, 64.6 per cent of female felony prisoners sentenced to State Institutions, but only 50.5 per cent of male, had definite sentences of under 3 years. Similarly, 40.2 per cent of females, but only 24.7 per cent of males had maximum indeterminate sentences of under 4 years.

c. Age. Female prisoners tended to be slightly older than male. The median ages of felony prisoners received from court in State and Federal institutions were 28.5 years for females and 27.3 for males. And only 35.2 per cent of the females as compared with 40.6 per cent of males were aged under 25 years.

d. Race. Females were represented in greater proportion among Negro prisoners than among white. Among Negro felony prisoners received in State and Federal institutions, 5.5 per cent were females; among white, 3.4 per cent. Among female felony prisoners, 40.4 per cent were Negroes; among male, 29.2 per cent.

e. Foreign-born. Only 39 or 2.1 per cent of the 1,853 foreign-born white prisoners received were females. And only 4 of these 39 females were born in Mexico, although 1,104 of the 1,184 foreign-born males were of Mexican birth. The greatest number of foreign-born males were of Mexican birth. The greatest number of foreign-born female felony prisoners—17—were born in Canada.

f. Marital Status. Female prisoners are much more likely than male prisoners to be married, widowed, or divorced, and accordingly less likely to be single. Only 25.3 per cent of female felony prisoners received in 1950, as compared with 45.5 per cent of male were reported as single. Larceny and forgery were the two leading offenses for female felony prisoners, but, of these two, larceny was much the more frequent for single women, while forgery took the lead for those who were married, widowed or divorced.

g. Regional distribution. Both in the country as a whole, and in the North Central region, 4.1 per cent of the felony prisoners received in State Institutions were females. In the Northeast the percentage was higher, 6.5 per cent, and in the South and West, lower—3.7 per cent and 2.9 per cent, respectively.

Women and the Death Penalty. During the 25 years from 1930 to 1954, during which the information has been collected, 29 females were executed. The total executions by the civil authority

during this period was 3,363. This makes the execution of an average of one female a year, just less than three-fourths of one per cent.

Women Sentenced to Jails. The ordinary jails in which women as well are detained, and serve brief sentences are frequently open to criticism though in some cities and states, sanitary and custodial care has greatly improved in buildings more suited to the purpose. The womens' section of mens' prison and reformatories are, too, ill adapted to the rehabilitative care of women offenders. Separate womens' reformatories have been established in some states.

One Federal and 29 State institutions are specially organized to receive women prisoners only. In Alderson, West Virginia, the Federal Reformatory for Women in 1954, there were 556 prisoners at the beginning of the year, 484 new prisoners were received and 472 discharged, leaving 868 at the end of the year.

In State Correctional Institutions the general situation may be briefly summarized in its more general features, according to Henrietta Additon in *Women's Institutions in Tappan's Contemporary Correction*, McGraw Hill, 1951.

1. Though women constitute just more than half the population of the United States, they constitute less than 5% of the prison population.
2. The Principal crimes of women relate to drugs, sex and forgery. In Federal Institutions women are committed for forgery four times oftener than the proportion of men.
3. The continued confinement of women in sections of men's prisons is undesirable.
4. The grounds of women's institutions are attractive, unprisonlike.
5. The housing facilities are very satisfactory in the women's institutions due to the relatively small numbers committed.
6. Programs of admission are humanized, transport of prisoners is done without handcuffing, an orientation period for guarantee, to learn more about the individual in a reception cottage, prior to deciding a program for the inmate.
7. All prisoners have the many privileges of the community life, which, however, may be lost by misbehavior.
8. An effort is made, in spite of difficulties, to provide an educational program, general or vocational in character; recreational programs, well developed in some institutions; and a religious program, although none of the women's institutions have a full-time chaplain.
9. Older forms of punishment such as cutting hair, special clothing, reducing food rations, have been abandoned for a system of loss of privileges.
10. 'Many women institutions' says Miss Additon, 'with all their deficiencies, are in a better position to press forward on the rehabilitation front than are the institutions of men. There is less emphasis on the security features, for the public is less fearful of women "criminals." These features combined with the small number of women committed make some of the women's institutions ideal spots for experimentation, which could later be extended to men.'

A Woman's Reformatory at Alderson, West Virginia. The Alderson reformatory is a revelation of what the reformatory should be in the custodial care, the rehabilitation, the vocational director and the personal growth of offenders. "Because it is and always has been administered by women," says the brochure on the institution, "because it was constituted for and by women, it has certain feminine characteristics which set it apart from similar institutions for men."

Women Parolees. Women parolees when they return to the community are "marked people." The attitude of disapproval toward them is stronger than it is toward men. Violating parole, even as men do, can be explained partially in that most women return to jobs as domestic servants, referred to sometimes as "protected" employment—in which they feel a sense of inferiority and limitation upon freedom of their time and often violate their parole by leaving this employment without notice to parole officers. Parole departments have made a serious effort to help women, particularly during the early weeks of adjustment.

The number and percentage of women paroled from year to year centers about 50% of those discharged. The number of women who violate parole from Federal institutions and are returned as violators is small indeed, but the number of women violators of parole from State institutions is absolutely and proportionately much larger.

Specific Female Crimes? Otto Pollack has written a challenging book—"Criminality of Women." An interesting discussion of the specificity of female crimes notes only prostitution as the particularly feminine offense—and this is a criminal offense "only in the United States." Although both men and women have committed another offense—either fornication or adultery, the women are accused of "prostitution." Practically, therefore, there is little difference in the offenses that men and women commit—BUT says Mr. Pollack, there are certain characteristics of the crimes committed by women:

1. The way in which crime is committed
 - a. By subtlety rather than by violence
2. The victims they chose:
 - a. Children, particularly infants, husbands and lovers
3. Persons with whom they cooperate
 - a. Usually a member of the family
4. Part played in crimes (of violence)
 - a. Not as perpetrators but as instigators, decoys or watchers. pp. 155-56.

Personal and Social Characteristics—The Biological and Psychological Make-Up of Women

Women are generally physically weaker than men, but they mature earlier. Biologically there are certain manifestations of their important function. Intellectually, they are the equal of men, except that we note in the distribution of mental ability, men are found in the very highest and in the very lowest groupings. Women are regarded, usually, as less stable, emotionally, than men. Their role in the family gives them greater influence over the young.

Women's Social Roles. It was natural that in the materialistic climate of modern existence that women should be led to fall into crime, even as men have

been tempted and fallen. That they should not, except in rare cases, be associated with crimes of violence, and should participate only as decoy, watcher, and planner is also natural. It seems natural too, that her associations in the crime picture should be with sex abortion, murder of children or husband or lover and prostitution. In department and other stores, where displays are directed toward creating desires, she has often been led into shoplifting. Nevertheless, despite all of these factors, we must remember that most women, imbued with a natural, intuitive protective instinct, respond to the good things in life and are the bulwark of society!

Just as policewoman are an integral part of police service, so too are women in related work. About eight per cent of the staff of the Federal and State prisons are women. There will be increasing opportunity and demand for women as separate institutions are realized.

In the fields of psychology, psychiatry and medicine as well as in the less specialized fields—women have a real opportunity to perform work on a career basis. These services within institutions are broadening, and in-service programs makes adjustment to these positions rapid.

Women, as probation and parole officers, are essential. They are needed for supervision of women and girls and are effective with boys under 12. With reduction of work loads, and a better understanding of the problems, work as parole and probation officers offers real opportunity for professional careers. With establishment of separate institutions for women, there will be opportunities for advancement, promotion to administrative and policy-making positions. As in police work training is essential as higher standards are demanded.

Women as Jurors: Forty-three states, the District of Columbia and all Territories now permit jury duty for women.

Women as Lawyers and Judges: Women are to be found in criminal law as legislators, as judges, as lawyers. An increase of women in the Congress of the U. S. and the state legislatures is noted. In 1955 there were 10 female members of the State legislatures. There is one woman, a judge in a State Court of Appeals, and several female judges in juvenile courts. In 1940 there were 4,817 women lawyers, and in 1950 there were 6,256—constituting 3.5 per cent of the profession!

What of the Future?— Cherchez La Femme

Regrettably, no small part of our law enforcement problem stems from widespread cynicism concerning the quality of law enforcement personnel as a group. The indispensable nature of the service is generally overlooked . . . the occasional defection of an individual is overemphasized and charged against the service as a whole . . . the integrity and/or qualifications of the group are cynically reduced to a minimum.

Obviously, public education and good public relations are needed to effectively combat that cynicism. In this connection, the newly organized International organization of Women Police Officers could and should play an important role.

Indeed, elimination of that dangerous cynicism and development of a thoughtful, respectful and cooperative regard for law enforcement personnel in general should be a major objective

of every already existing police organization.

New Association

With your indulgence, I would like to comment upon the newly reorganized International Association of Women Police Officers.

I share your belief in the need for our organization and your hope that it will be an effective instrument. Long have I hoped for the reorganization of the International Association of Policewomen, which functioned so magnificently, until its president and largest sponsor died. Other women in the country have been hoping too. This is evidenced in their comments contained in my article, "Historical Background of Women Police" (Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology—Vol. 41 #6 March-April, 1951).

There is a real need and an opportunity for this International Association of Women Police. While in the West Indies interviewing Chiefs of Police, and later in Europe, I had the opportunity to meet with the women also. Discussing the subject with Sgt. Sylvia Meyers and her women in Jamaica, with Mary Hilton in London, with Francoise Guillermet in Geneva, Switzerland, they voiced approval and hopes. Last December 7 (1955) while lecturing to a group of Police officials (male) representing 13 countries and 4 continents. (at Purdue University—School of Public Administration) it was encouraging to note their response and their promises to assist in stimulating interest in an International Association of Women Police Officers.

Policewomen—and police departments, of course—of other nations are confronted with the same problems of delinquency, youthful crime, public cynicism and apathy, with which we are plagued! An effective International Association would serve as a clearing house for information. Through it the wisdom and experience of the policewomen of all member nations will be pooled for the common benefit.

Let's Have a Code of Ethics!

Such an organization could take the lead in the formulation and adoption of a universal code of ethics—which, in my opinion is an ESSENTIAL PRELUDE TO THE ATTAINING OF PROFESSIONAL STATUS. I most sincerely believe that this should be the FIRST order of business, with the new organization.

Although many attempts have been made, adoption of a universal code of ethics for police remains a dream. I strongly urge that the new women's organization formulate and adopt a Code, perhaps patterned after that of the Federal Bureau of Identification—and then give it the widest possible publicity!

I must repeat my belief that it is an essential prelude to professional status for police service, and that Law and Medicine remained "jobs" until transformed into professions after adoption of codes of ethics.

Juvenile Crime

Mention of the FBI calls to mind a recent statement by J. Edgar Hoover. Addressing the 50th Anniversary banquet of the Boys Clubs of America, Mr. Hoover reported that police had arrested 576,000 juveniles in 1955, and that Juvenile crime had registered an 11 per cent national rise over 1954.

This shocking rise continues the unbroken string of years in which the rate of increase in juvenile crime has

exceeded the rate of increase in the juvenile population. Those who would minimize the seriousness of our juvenile problem should carefully consider the implications in the accelerating crime rate.

"I am concerned," stated Mr. Hoover, "with the record which shows that last year juveniles between the ages of 10 and 17 were involved in 62 per cent of all arrests for automobile thefts, 53 per cent of all arrests for burglaries, 47 per cent of all arrests for larcenies, and 21 per cent of all arrests for robberies.

Is there any thoughtful person who does not share Mr. Hoover's concern with that record? Is it not a matter of special concern to policewomen, generally identified so closely with crime prevention and delinquency control?

I say to you, in deadly earnestness, that it should be—it must be!—a matter of deep concern to every woman—young or old, married or single, housewife or career woman—as well as to our male colleagues.

This 'juvenile problem' is so complex in character, so universal in its menace, that all women can and must take an active part in its solution. Its menace extends to our total population, and women account for more than half of that population!

Women and Crime! Women should be so completely antipathetic that no woman could rest until she had struck a telling blow against crime and its causes.

Cherchez la femme! Does not the shameful record hurl a challenge which we, the women—and most emphatically, we the policewomen—dare not ignore?

Our answer must be a resounding "Yes!" We must recognize and accept that challenge . . . knowing full well that the future of our society . . . is the stake for which we fight!

We, the women in law enforcement and related fields, must form the vanguard, but we must exert every effort to bring all American men and women actively and vigorously into the crusade against crime. It is indeed encouraging to know that an International Juvenile Officers' Association will come into existence March, 1957, in Oakland, California. Given the opportunity, our Womens' Police Officers' group will work closely with this proposed Association. As a matter of fact, many policewomen are juvenile officers and many of us will be members of both associations.

William Faulkner says of his work which won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1950:

"A life's work is the agony and sweat of the human spirit, not for glory and least of all for profit, but to create out of the materials of the human spirit something that did not exist before."

So, too, must all women—especially women in police services—in the agony and sweat of the human spirit, not for glory and least of all for profit, try to make—and sometimes try to re-make—out of the actual flesh and blood, mind and soul of concrete human beings—the very special something that did not exist before! Working with our fellow officers—male and female—in all our efforts, I wish us Godspeed.

References

1. Higgins, Lois *Policewomen's Services in the U. S.—Historic Development and Evolution of a Training Program.* Master's Thesis, Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois, February, 1947.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Higgins, Lois *Women Police Service Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology of Northwestern University, Vol. 1, No. 1, May-June, 1950 pp 101-106.*