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POLICE SCIENCE

CURRENT STATUS AND PROBLEMS OF WOMEN POLICE

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It is my firm conviction, as a police administrator, that women have a unique and vital role to play in American law enforcement. This conviction was confirmed and reinforced by the findings and conclusions of the Workshop for Policewomen conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police at Indiana University earlier this year. It was another important milestone in I.A.C.P.'s unrelenting pursuit of professionalization in police work. The deliberations clearly demonstrated that, although women have established a place for themselves in law enforcement, policewomen as sworn officers with full police powers remain a markedly under-utilized resource in a great many police jurisdictions throughout our nation.

In a study conducted prior to the Workshop, the I.A.C.P. surveyed 161 police departments of the largest cities in 47 states. These cities serve a total population of some 70 million, or approximately one-third of the people in our nation. Yet, it was found that there were only 1,792 female police officers with full police powers employed in these jurisdictions. Many sizable cities were found to have no women police at all. Moreover, from one jurisdiction to another, there appeared to be no discernible pattern of use of women, nor any consistency in the ratio of female to male officers. As a matter of fact, the percentage of policewomen to male officers in ten of the larger cities of the country ranged from a high of 2¼% to a low of ½% of 1% of the force. Very significantly, it was also found that most policewomen are supervised

by male officers, and that few women have command positions at any level.

In contrast to the relative limited use of policewomen, the study disclosed that police administrators appear to be employing civilian women to a growing extent for a variety of peripheral or non-enforcement duties. There were, in fact, five times as many female school crossing guards and meter maids as there were policewomen in the jurisdictions covered by the I.A.C.P. study. It was found that matron duty and a wide array of secretarial and clerical services were also being performed by women civilians. No doubt this more extensive use of civilians, in non-enforcement duties, is part of an overall trend throughout the country to conserve trained officers, both male and female, for police duties. It is a laudable development and should be encouraged. However, these peripheral enforcement roles are no substitutes for that of the policewoman, who is a duly sworn officer with full police powers and responsibilities. From the findings of the I.A.C.P. study, it is obvious that there is nationwide under-utilization of this unique police resource and that there is much room for growth and expansion of policewomen forces and functions in American law enforcement.

There was consensus among the conferees at the Workshop that the policewoman's professional status would be enhanced when the definition of the duties, responsibilities and authority encompassed in the title "policewoman" is standardized throughout police circles. Unfortunately, this title is sometimes inappropriately applied to

peripheral enforcement, or even non-enforcement tasks, and the confusion is further compounded when the policewoman function is performed under other titles, such as Deputy Sheriff, Deputy Marshal, or Youth Officer.

Those who have perused the proceedings of the I.A.C.P. Workshop, may have read the definition of a policewoman evolved by the conferees, who, incidentally, were women in command positions from the nation's leading police departments. I should like to restate that definition:

"A policewoman is a sworn peace officer, empowered to enforce all of the laws and ordinances of the jurisdiction and to detect and arrest violators, and is appointed for the increased moral protection of women and minors and for the prevention of delinquency among such women and minors, and for such other police duties as can best be performed by a woman.

Like the policeman, the policewoman is subject to the rules, regulations and disciplinary procedures of the department and is entitled to the same rights, salary, privileges and opportunities."

This concept of a policewoman as a full-fledged member of the force, on an equal basis with her male colleagues, permits use of her unique resources along the entire spectrum of police work, without diminishing the importance of her primary mission with respect to women and children.

When the role of the policewoman is so conceived, standards of qualification, selection, and training become self-evident. The high physical standards, youth and agility, emotional and social maturity that the rigors of police work require in the case of patrolman candidates, obtain for the policewoman as well. Moreover, the need for the same basic recruit training, including instruction in the use and care of firearms, is obvious. Supplementary intensive orientation should be provided, of course, in delinquency prevention and in the protective services to women and minors.

We should bear in mind the historical link between the introduction of women into the police service and community problems with wayward youth. Around the turn of the century, there was a growing concern over the treatment of young offenders, and a general effort, championed by many civic groups, to establish a more preventive, rehabilitative orientation in law enforcement and correctional circles. The female police officer, it was felt, could be a vital component in this new thera-

peutic approach. As a woman, she was seen as a less threatening authority figure and better endowed to establish understanding and rapport with wayward girls and pre-delinquents. Experience has proved this to be so.

Incidentally, you will find that policewomen function with equal competence in police-community relations work—and perhaps, much for the same reasons. As a female representative, of the police agency, she is less burdened by public resentment of her authority, and, as a woman, she tends to project the social consciousness so essential to police-community dialogue and understanding.

In New York City, we have been using policewomen for some time to contact student groups, serve as consultants to Police Teenage Councils, Youth and Community Councils, and to staff our several neighborhood store-front community relations centers.

Now, let me hasten to mention that we have not diminished the policewoman's involvement in juvenile work. Fully 20% of our policewoman corps of 342 is detailed to our Youth Investigation Bureau. Here, the policewoman investigates reports of juvenile crime; she performs preventive patrol, frequently in the company of a male officer, checking recreation areas, bus terminals, theatres, and other locations where youths tend to congregate; she interviews youngsters who are victims of crime; and she processes cases of neglect and child abuse. We have found her to be very effective, and our experience is not unique: nationwide, more policewomen are detailed to this aspect of police work than to any other—clear evidence, certainly, of the policewoman's value in this vitally important area of police activity.

Now this brings me to the focal point of my discussion, and that is, that where the policewoman's unique resources are meaningfully applied, she can make an equally significant contribution in many other sectors of the police service. I should like to illustrate this by touching briefly on some of the functions policewomen are performing in New York City and in other jurisdictions, which demonstrate, to some extent, the scope of the policewoman's capabilities and hint at her potential for future growth in law enforcement.

Many of these functions focus on shielding women and children from criminal exploitation, and involve the use of policewomen in a number of ways. For example, policewomen are detailed to

areas where criminals, such as degenerates, pick-pockets, and shoplifters are likely to operate. When performed in uniform, such patrol is largely preventive; however, policewomen teams, working in civilian attire, have been remarkably effective in detecting and arresting such offenders. In the main, these policewomen teams operate without male reinforcements.

Policewomen are especially useful in investigating complaints of criminal practices directed against members of their own sex. Here is a typical circumstance: women, seeking legitimate employment through classified advertisements in newspapers or through employment agencies, are subjected instead to indecent proposals, or are solicited for immoral acts. In general, the victims in such cases are reluctant to lodge formal charges, because of embarrassment or fear. We have found that a policewoman, making direct contact with the suspect, under an assumed guise, is an effective—and often essential—technique for validating the complaint and obtaining the direct evidence needed for prosecution.

This technique is employed with equal success in investigating complaints of illegal practice of medicine, criminal abortion, confidence games and other swindles, fortune telling, and black market baby adoption operations.

At the Policewoman's Workshop, I learned that in many jurisdictions, victims of rape and other sex crimes are interviewed by policewomen. This practice makes good sense, for it spares women the embarrassment and further humiliation of communicating sordid details to a male officer.

Like consideration should be given to the victims of obscene telephone calls. In New York City, these complaints are referred to the Bureau of Policewomen. The experience of receiving such calls can be shattering to many women; for them, just being able to talk to a woman who is knowledgeable about the subject—and receiving advice from her—is often reassuring. Moreover, where there is a possibility of tracing future calls, or of setting up a meeting with the caller, a policewoman may be assigned to act as decoy.

The public at large does not perceive women as police officers. Nor, does the criminal. Last year, two of our policewomen, while on plainclothes patrol, arrested a pair of narcotic peddlers. Overhearing a conversation between the two men indicating that a narcotics sale was about to take place, the policewomen tailed the suspects, unnoticed,

for well over an hour—going from one location to another—and, at one point, even sitting next to them on a park bench. The drug seller and his associate never gave the policewomen a second look. The idea that an average-looking woman might be a law enforcement officer obviously did not occur to them.

This is a psychological factor that the police administrator can exploit in a number of ways. The use of policewomen as decoys is a case in point. This technique has been employed successfully in many jurisdictions to ferret out the mugger, pocketbook snatcher, and rapist. A similar technique, that of using policewomen in an undercover capacity, has been practiced in New York City for many years.

I have already hinted at the merit of using policewomen in the surveillance and tailing of suspects, and in making direct contact with alleged offenders. In these capacities, the policewoman can make an important contribution to a wide variety of criminal investigations in which illegal gambling, extortion, blackmail, criminal abortion, grand larceny, or racketeering may be involved. During a recent investigation into the strong-armed tactics and extortion practices of a ring of known racketeers, a policewoman was an important asset in tracking the movements of the suspects.

Her so-called "invisibility" makes the policewoman an effective counter-foil to the intricate precautions taken against detection and arrest by those involved in illegal gambling activities. Policy runners and bookmakers view unknown males with great suspicion and will not, in their presence, approach the "bank". But who would suspect the woman pushing a baby carriage, or the housewife with a bag of groceries? By donning imaginative yet appropriate disguises, the policewoman can gain admittance to the area, can establish the identity and role of the participants, and can often pinpoint the apartment from which the ring is operating.

At this point, I would like to mention a case in which, admittedly, the circumstances are unusual—if not bizarre—but where the imaginative use of policewomen, and the top-notch police work they can do is clearly apparent. Complaints were received by the Police Department that a pharmacist had drugged and raped several women, after luring them to his establishment for an alleged job interview. The law enforcement

authorities felt that additional corroboration of the suspect's *modus operandi*, as well as a sample of the drug he used, was necessary to insure an air-tight case. For this aspect of the investigation, several tall, attractive policewomen of the same general appearance as the victims were selected to make contact with the suspect as job applicants. The ruse was ultimately successful. After two unsuccessful attempts by undercover policewomen, the third received a job offer from the pharmacist, at which time, he gave her a capsule with the drug in question. In the face of this indisputable evidence, conviction followed, and a sentence of 20 to 40 years was imposed—a prime example of effective, professional investigation by well-trained policewomen.

The illustrations cited bring into focus the policewoman's intrinsic value to the investigative function. I emphasize this point, because it is in this area of police work that the policewoman remains as yet largely under-utilized. There is some evidence of expanding use of policewomen in this field, but this is mostly in the larger cities. In New York City, for example, some 60 policewomen are assigned to the Detective Division for the investigation of major crimes. Many hold advanced detective ratings, as a reward for meritorious performance. These developments, together with the policewoman's recognized effectiveness in the protective and preventive services, are manifest proof of her potential throughout the police field.

Why then have policewomen numbers remained so low?

The conferees at the Policewomen's Workshop were of the opinion that the policewoman's progress has been beset by subtle barriers, largely generated by the traditional belief held by many police administrators, that police work is essentially a man's job. Limitations in the policewoman's physical strength and endurance are often cited as liabilities to her overall usefulness. Her family responsibilities—particularly the demands of pregnancy and motherhood—are regarded in some quarters as a further impediment. Others generalize that women are more emotional and high strung, therefore less capable of sustaining the pressures of police duties.

Such objections have no empirical substantiation. They ignore the impact of training upon the

policewoman's capacity to function in hazardous situations. They ignore the findings of special studies, such as that of Dr. R. D. Gillespie, who reported that during the bombing blitz of London and Kent in World War II, nearly 70% more men than women broke down and required psychiatric treatment. Finally, they ignore important developments in our changing American social scene: I will not burden you with statistics; suffice it to say that one out of three in the American labor force is a woman, and a growing number are married.

Recently, the extension of promotional opportunities to policewomen in some jurisdictions has added new dimensions to the administrator's evaluation of the status of women in his organization. The enlightened police administrator, of course, recognizes that sound personnel practice mandates the establishment of career development opportunities for all personnel—policewomen included. How else can morale, enthusiasm, and motivation for professional development be maintained?

It is my belief that much of the resistance to the hiring and promotion of policewomen, encountered in the past, is a product of cultural bias. Strongly rooted, traditional concepts of the role and status of women in our society have tended to preclude objective appraisal of the true capabilities of policewomen in the law enforcement field. Rigid views as to their "proper status" have often determined their placement in the organizational structure and have limited the range of their use.

These concepts have no place in the modern, progressive police agency. They must be relegated to their proper niche in history, together with the bicycle, the high choke collar, and the cap and ball revolver. Today, as never before, police management policies, procedures and attitudes must be prepared to stand the test of objective analysis and evaluation. The progressive law enforcement administrator not only seeks to derive maximum benefit from the mechanical and technological devices available to him, but also strives for the most advantageous use of his personnel. In restructuring the police agency to meet the problems and challenges of our dynamic society, can he really afford to overlook, or under-utilize, so potentially effective a resource as the policewoman?