

CORRUPTION, PROSTITUTION, & REFORM:  
POLICING OF THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

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CORRUPTION, PROSTITUTION, & REFORM:  
POLICING OF THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

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In loving memory of  
my grandmother,  
Georgina Nava

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## ABSTRACT

Semi-regulated prostitution, the oldest profession, was viewed as one of the most problematic issues of the Progressive Era. The relationship between law enforcement systems and the business of prostitution significantly influenced the formation of progressive reform movements that advocated for the amelioration of policing and eradication of vice. Policing of the nineteenth century was incredibly flawed, with little to no organization, and was left vulnerable to internal corruption. The booming business of prostitution became a primary interest of police systems as the desire for power and money rose. The vulnerability of police systems and corruption of officers supported the increasing toleration of vice and eventually led to its regulation in society. As the spread of vice became increasingly overwhelming for both government and progressive reform movements to bear, various committees in urban cities were set in motion to publish vice commissions. Vice commissions addressed the numerous problems occurring in society on account of semi-regulated prostitution and corrupt law enforcement systems, along with the negative effects they posed on the moral development of a city. Continuous criticism of policing procedures prompted the establishment of the professionalization movement. This historic movement was dominated by a demanding reform agenda that epitomized the professionalism foundation of the twentieth century, a foundation that has impacted the success of law enforcement agencies today.

## Introduction

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries called for extensive transformation and urbanization of American life. The American economy was on the rise and new technological industries were being established. As for urbanization, the American population had multiplied due to foreign immigration of southern and eastern Europeans.<sup>1</sup> Waves of immigrants began to complicate local criminal justice systems as intense population growth combined with an increase in ethnically based organized crime. Despite the growth of the nation, a great deal of Americans were perturbed by the demographic changes occurring in their cities. According to historian Mitchel P. Roth, “more than twelve million people migrated to America between the years 1890 and 1910,” causing much dismay to native-born Americans.<sup>2</sup> As a result, such Americans became engaged in “progressive reform movements to reestablish order and consider new ways to make the justice system more responsive to a changing America.”<sup>3</sup> Advocacy for professionalism in American law enforcement was so significant that progressive reform movements began sweeping the nation, in turn originating what is historically known as the Progressive Era.

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<sup>1</sup> David B. Wolcott and Tom Head, *Crime and Punishment in America* (New York: Infobase Publishing Inc., 2010), 121-128.

<sup>2</sup> Mitchel P. Roth, *Crime and Punishment: A History of the Criminal Justice System* (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 198-210.

<sup>3</sup> Wolcott and Head, 121.

## The Progressive Era

The Progressive Era (1890-1920) also known as “the birth of modern America” was also “the birth of modern crime and punishment.”<sup>4</sup> The era advocated for social activism and law enforcement reform in order to purify the government and eliminate overwhelming corruption. Progressives “opposed the political machines, sought improvements in government, and desired a change in American morality.”<sup>5</sup> The Progressives were children of the Gilded Age and mostly upper middle class, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. They “attempted in some specific way to alter institutions and beliefs characteristic of their culture in that period.”<sup>6</sup> Progressive reform movements hoped to harmonize, uniting as one to reestablish law enforcement organizations and society through the amelioration of governmental attitudes and behavior.

Progressive reformers dedicated their time and efforts to multiple social problems on their political agenda, one of them being the improvement of law enforcement policing conditions. Law enforcement at the time was decentralized and undisciplined “with limited legal authority, loose structures of command, and control.”<sup>7</sup> According to historian Robert M. Fogelson, the Progressives recommended the following changes for law enforcement: “(1) the departments should be centralized; (2) personnel should be

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<sup>4</sup> Wolcott and Head, 121.

<sup>5</sup> Wilson R. Palacios, Paul F. Cromwell, and Roger G. Dunham, *Crime and Justice in America: Present Realities and Future Prospects* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2002) 93-96.

<sup>6</sup> John C. Burnham, “The Progressive Era Revolution in American Attitudes toward Sex,” *Journal of American History* 59 (2013): 885, accessed December 10, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Wolcott and Head, 125.

upgraded; and (3) the police function should be narrowed.”<sup>8</sup> Centralization of police departments would create a hierarchy of control designating specific roles to officers down the ranks, guaranteeing professionalism within the organization. Upgrading police personnel suggested extensive training and discipline for current officers and future recruits in order to ensure unity and efficiency. Lastly, the narrowing of police functions indicated that officers must completely focus on crime control and enforcement rather than on other service activities unrelated to crime. The Progressive reform movement was quite ambitious, however it was necessary for improving society and creating professionalism in law enforcement organizations, a characteristic that police departments in the nineteenth century lacked.

### **Policing of the Nineteenth Century**

Police precincts in America spread quickly across the nation in the latter years of the nineteenth century. Major cities such as New York and Boston began to adopt the English militaristic model of policing. Police officers of the nineteenth century were often chosen for their political connections and “political service,” owing their “allegiance to the ward bosses” and advising captains.<sup>9</sup> In New York City, a \$300 fee to one of the most influential political machines, Tammany Hall, was the only requirement to secure a job in the force.<sup>10</sup> Although officers at the time had well-paying jobs of \$900, earning about double the pay of a factory worker, they often lacked job security. The lack

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<sup>8</sup> Palacios, Cromwell, and Dunham, 94.

<sup>9</sup> Palacios, Cromwell, and Dunham et al, 92.

<sup>10</sup> Jay Stuart Berman, *Police Administration and Progressive Reform: Theodore Roosevelt as Police Commissioner of New York* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987) 71.

of job security was due to the influence of corrupt political machines, which determined an officer's employment, based on political events and elections. The policing system as a whole lacked any standards for hiring, training, and education. "Lack of intelligence, poor health, and a criminal record were no barriers to employment."<sup>11</sup> Personnel standards were nonexistent and men of all backgrounds and conditions were quickly handed a badge and a baton. New recruits were sent to the streets without training and with the security of their rule books, if any existed. During this time, training programs did not formally exist and often times did not succeed past a few years. In 1913, an investigation of the New York police precinct discovered that tests were not distributed to recruits and they were automatically passed into the system.<sup>12</sup> The lack of effective organization and training caused a great deal of complications for police officers patrolling their beats.

The most significant drawbacks of policing in the nineteenth century were the lack of communication and the lack of supervision. Patrolmen worked an excessive amount of hours and were spread thin across cities, often patrolling a beat as long as four miles on foot.<sup>13</sup> Patrolling beats was inefficient due to the lack of communication with other patrolmen and supervisors. If officers came in contact with crime, they were unable to relay information up the non-existent communication chain. During this period most precincts also did not have any form of transportation to emergency scenes nor a way to take criminals to jail. This meant that all policing procedures were completed on foot, even dragging an offender to a jail two miles away. Since there was also no form of

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<sup>11</sup> Samuel Walker, *The Police in America: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw Hill Inc., 1992) 8-14.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Walker, *A Critical History of Police Reform: The Emergence of Professionalism* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1977).

<sup>13</sup> Walker, 9.

communication, unsupervised officers often times released offenders to avoid such responsibilities. When the first form of communication, the call box, was invented in the late nineteenth century, patrolling officers were able to contact supervisors at the station house. Although communication was readily available, most officers abused their power and devised methods of looping through the system by unhooking the phones or lying about their location when call boxes did not have embedded locators.<sup>14</sup>

In regards to supervision, police precincts lacked a hierarchal chain of command. Supervision of patrolling officers was incredibly limited and weak when executed. Although supervisors patrolled the same beats as their patrolmen, it was difficult to track the men under their command in such a large area once they departed from the station house.<sup>15</sup> When patrolmen were supposed to be patrolling their beats they most likely were handling personal business in the saloons and barbershops. Nonetheless, police precincts of the nineteenth century very much lacked professionalism as superior officers failed to maintain key components of organization and patrolling officers evaded responsibilities, effectively leaving law enforcement organizations vulnerable to corruption.

According to historian Mark Haller, corruption was one of the paramount provinces of the latter nineteenth century local government with law enforcement being just one part of the problem.<sup>16</sup> American cities were characterized by “vice and illegal economic enterprise,” as law enforcement officers fulfilled important social and political ends to corruption.<sup>17</sup> Nonenforcement of the law was without a doubt the most significant form of corruption. Leisurely enforcement of the law promoted bribery of policing

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<sup>14</sup> Walker, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Walker, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Haller, “Historical Roots of Police Behavior: Chicago 1890-1925,” *Law and Society Review*, 10 (Winter 1976); 303-324.

<sup>17</sup> Wolcott and Head, 125.

officers that, in turn, made society vulnerable to semi-regulated prostitution and gambling. According to historian Eric Monkkonen, “police officers collected payoffs from illegal vice or after-hours operations, in turn ignoring or going easy on illegal activities.”<sup>18</sup> Bribes or grafts were paid to police officers to provide protection to illegal business running underground gambling rings, promoting prostitution, or selling alcohol after hours. Corrupt officers divided the daily bribes among each other and sometimes corrupt supervisors. Since “police officers worked alone or in small groups, there were ample opportunities to shake down peddlers and small businesses.”<sup>19</sup> Lower level officers often followed the lead of superior officers to maintain employment and profit from hefty bribes. Nearly all of the officers and supervisors in their precincts were supporting corrupt acts crossing over into the early twentieth century of the Progressive Era.

### **Semi-Regulated Prostitution**

As previously mentioned, semi-regulated prostitution was one form of corruption that hindered the efficiency of law enforcement organizations. “Historians have shown the long connection of police corruption with prostitution.”<sup>20</sup> During the Progressive Era, social reform movements referred to semi-regulated prostitution as “white slavery.” The term “white slavery” will be used interchangeably with the term “prostitution.”

“White slavery” refers to the procurement by force, deceit, or drugs, of a woman or girl against her will for prostitution. This term was coined as coerced prostitution from

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<sup>18</sup> Eric H. Monkkonen, *Crime, Justice, History* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2002) 151-187.

<sup>19</sup> Palacios, Cromwell, and Dunham et al., 94.

<sup>20</sup> Monkkonen, 187.

1885 to 1914. The era of white slavery prevailed as a vicious manifestation and horrid sexual exploitation of women. Society's hypocritical ignorance, third party greed, and law enforcement corruption all equally contributed to the persistence of violent prostitution through the early twentieth century. The business of semi-regulated prostitution and its close-knit relationship with law enforcement organizations and government officials was one of the most shocking conspiracies in the history of the Progressive Era.

Despite the ongoing exploitation of women and illegality of the act, prostitution continued to function as a dominant business throughout major city establishments. American cities had grown to view ill-famed settings, such as brothels, as common features of development. Law enforcement agencies policed cities in a variety of ways whether it be through toleration, segregation, or repression. In the earlier decades of the Progressive Era, prostitution and the existence of ill-famed establishments were often tolerated. Toleration of such exploitation permitted the continuation of illegal business across the city. Law enforcement agencies turned their cheeks in regards to criminalizing prostitution, often supporting the business by accepting protection bribes. As prostitution began to pose greater significant complications to cities, government officials and law enforcement agencies began segregating prostitutes and brothels into specific areas of the city. These areas became known as red light districts. Such a label was given as establishment adorned their door entrances with red lights to signify active businesses. The last method of policing prostitution, repression, was applied as law enforcement agencies received pressure from local governments and vice commission publications. Repression of prostitution led to the eradication of red light districts and the

establishment of stringent legislation prohibiting ill-famed business. These various ways of policing prostitution were not only influenced by local governments, but also by pressures of progressive reform movements. As previously mentioned, progressive reform movements were ambitious in improving society and worked consistently to do so.

The rise of social purity reformers, a subgroup of the Progressives, emerged to protest urban vice from the 1880's to early 1900's. Social purity reformers advocated for spiritual peace, salvation, eradication of prostitution from society, alcohol prohibition, legal reform, and betterment of living conditions. "Chief among the advocates for reform were middle-class women and church-related organizations."<sup>21</sup> Several purity reform organizations included the Young Men's Christian Association, Women's Trade Union League, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Several state and national legal reforms were passed due to the social purity reforms' glorious efforts. Such legal reforms include the adoption of seduction laws, Comstock laws (anti-obscenity laws), and age of consent laws. Seduction laws made the act of enticing of any chaste woman into sexual intercourse to be illegal in thirty-seven states. The Comstock laws prohibited the advertising of anything illustrating the body in twenty-four states; including but not limited to pornography, anatomy books, and artwork. Age of consent laws established the crime of statutory rape by rising the age to consent to sexual interactions. Previously to the passing of the age of consent laws, the implied age of consent was approximately ten years of age; most age of consent laws established the age of consent between sixteen and eighteen years of age. The social purity reformers of the Progressive Era not only were successful in promoting change before the turn of the twentieth century, but also exposed

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<sup>21</sup> Roth, 198.

the contours of the business of semi-regulated prostitution through nationwide, publicly released declarations.

Just as in any organized establishment, there was a hierarchy of personnel in the business of semi-regulated prostitution. The hierarchy inside a brothel from top to bottom included the owners, procurers, protectors, madams, customers, and prostitutes. The business of semi-regulated prostitution was seen as a man's territory because they were key players in seducing girls and also retaining the majority of the profit. Men were divided into two classes, the procurers and the protectors, which at times overlapped. Both the procurer and protector were given the rank of cadet within the organization. Cadets for the most part started off in the organization as young boys handing out business cards for quarters advertising particular brothels. At the age of twelve the boys had become aware of the ins and outs of the business and had developed a cynical view of life. Then by the age of seventeen the boys had become acquainted with the immorality of vice and had begun their journey of procurement and degradation.<sup>22</sup>

The procurer's leading venture was to find an attractive girl, possibly virgin, seduce and sweet talk her, then proceed to inviting her on a respectable date or offering her a steady job. From there a series of events would occur depending on the cooperation of the procured girl. In a date situation, the couple would go to dinner at a fancy restaurant and then make their way to the dance hall. At this point the procurer would attempt to intoxicate the girl and if all else failed he resorted to drugging her beverage and taking advantage of her from that point on. In a job offer situation, the two would make their way to the alleged job establishment. When the girl realized her predicament she would try to flee the scene, but would be snatched up by the cadets, forced into a

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<sup>22</sup> Theodore A. Bingham, *The Girl That Disappears* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1911), 37-49.

room, then possibly beaten, drugged, or even bound to a bed. In either situation the woman was unknowingly tricked and coerced into the ring of forced prostitution.

The protector was a prostitute's "friend, even her lover sometimes, and he was her master at all times."<sup>23</sup> Protectors (pimps) made it an objective to hold strong positions within the political powers to ensure easy access to corruption and avoid conviction. They ensured that their girls had a sufficient amount of patrons for business, that run-ins with law enforcement were quickly resolved, and that the girl had money upon release from prison. A prostitute's protector was in most cases her legal husband. The greatest concern between the judicial system and protectors was that under much fear the white slaves would not turn against their masters and risk the deadly consequences. The prostitutes primarily refused to testify against or accuse their protectors of forcing them into prostitution. They were aware that doing so would result in great punishment and excessive debts once returned to their brothel.

Madams tended to be former prostitutes who had worked their way up the ranks through seniority. They were usually older women who no longer had a young and innocent appearance to lure in well-paying customers. Madams controlled the debt system designed to trap white slaves in a never-ending cycle of debt bondage. The debt system prohibited women from leaving the brothel until all debts were paid off to the madams. Debts included the costs of luxurious clothing, room and board, alcohol and food, travel, and medical expenses. A madam's main concerns were providing customers with beautiful, pure, and vulnerable girls while avoiding a shutdown of the brothel from municipal sources.

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<sup>23</sup> Bingham, 61.

Customers were, of course, men. Customers included casual workingmen, rich dignitaries, politicians, and policemen. Names of customers were kept private from the outside world and noted in brothel records for the sake of reputations. Documentation or interviews with customers have been lost to the historical record due to the destruction of records during raids. Customers were entertained with alcohol and the best girls in the brothel. Higher payments were given to exotic girls from foreign countries and to those who were notorious for performing unique sexual acts.

Typical targeted girls were foreigners from France, Italy, Germany and other European countries. A majority of the girls did not know English nor did they know their way around the city. These immigrants were completely vulnerable and open targets for coerced prostitution. Bingham said, “it is part of the system to keep them ignorant of the language, ignorant of American customs, and ignorant of their rights under American law.”<sup>24</sup> Along with foreigners, local, native-born girls were also procured, “girls who were out of work, and suffering privations, girls who were dissatisfied with their home surroundings, girls who were romantically inclined and dreamt of an elopement or marriage at first sight, girls who had a great longing for the glare of the footlights, or silly girls who were foolish about cheap feathers and finery.”<sup>25</sup> Most of these girls were living in single parent households, were poor and desperate for money, had come from an abusive home, or were simply blinded by the over-attention given by the procurer. Ignorant girls, who had not succeeded in education, mostly country girls, were also searched for by the procurers. Although these women were tricked, forced, and coerced

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<sup>24</sup> Bingham, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Clifford Roe, *The Girl Who Disappeared* (Naperville: World's Purity Federation, 1914), 12.

into such acts of vice, prostitution would have been the only option for earning a substantial amount of money at that time.

Once the procured girls came to the realization of their new immoral lifestyles the possibility of returning home often became impossible. These girls feared that they would be harshly criticized by a judgmental society who habitually supported a sexual double standard. Unlike men, ruined women were labeled as tramps and socially banished from society. Those few that had to return home were forced to hide their luxurious clothing and jewelry from their parents. In one instance according to Jane Addams, a young girl was earning wages for clothing by prostituting herself in an ill-famed saloon. She would store her clothing with the saloonkeeper's wife so that she could continue to conceal her work from her mother. "She demurely returned to her family for supper in her shabby working clothes and presented her mother with her unopened pay envelope every Saturday night."<sup>26</sup> Involuntarily prostituted women and girls were unable to bear the thought of shaming their parents who were under the impression that their daughters were off in America married, educated, or employed. A majority of girls believed that they were a disgrace to the family name and that their only contribution would be through sending money as financial support.

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<sup>26</sup> Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 39.

## Vice Commissions and Policing

Now that various aspects of the semi-regulated prostitution business have been explained, the ties to law enforcement organizations can be noted. The issue of police corruption was the major concern in connection to semi-regulated prostitution. Grafting was an instance when political figures receive bribes usually in the form of money in return of a political favor. Law enforcement officials, to extensively boost their salaries, used bribes selfishly. As purity activist Clifford G. Roe noted, “Those whose business it was to uphold the majesty of the law were helping those who violate the law.”<sup>27</sup> Police officials would accept money from brothel madams and cadets in order to ensure protection from other respectable agency officials. Extensive bribes were tempting enough for such officers to ignore acts of white slavery and prostitution in their communities as long as their names remained untarnished.

Cases of corruption were unveiled in large vice-filled cities such as Chicago, New York, Minneapolis, and New Orleans. According to the Chicago Vice Commission, “it can be shown that the police have abused the discretion given to them by the people; that through their connivance, the Social Evil is fostered and allowed to grow through bribery and corruption.”<sup>28</sup> Bribes were paid through brothels to policemen so that heads were turned when cases of vice appeared. Protection money was also paid to inspectors and captains to prevent shutdown through other agencies. In regards to the city of Chicago, when vice was under investigation, police officials were asked by the General Superintendent to create a list of all houses of ill-fame and all establishments which have

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<sup>27</sup> Roe, 193.

<sup>28</sup> Vice Commission of Chicago, *The Social Evil in Chicago* (Chicago: Gunthorp-Warren Printing Company, 1911), 145.

business ties to them, including but not limited to saloons and hotels. Police officers managed to make their way to multiple brothels and vice establishments and make count of locations that were considered ill-famed. The presented list was of course incomplete, with only less than a quarter of establishments being inspected and listed. It was believed that either the inspectors and captains were ignorant of what was occurring or that information was purposefully being withheld from discovery.<sup>29</sup> However, it was suggested that those houses or establishments that did not provide law enforcement officials with bribes or refused to increase the percentage of bribes soon became targets for a likely shutdown by the police.<sup>30</sup> Cleverly, the General Superintendent became aware of the statistics regarding the houses and establishments of ill fame during his own field research and had initially sent his officers out as a test of honorability. As the police officers proceeded to their second round of brothel shutdowns, at least three quarters of the houses were acknowledged. The second report on houses and establishments of ill repute was sufficient according to the Superintendent's records. An accurate statistic regarding the amount of women and men involved with such vice was also recorded in the second report.

Although not directly mentioned, it was known from previous instances that any opportunity for corruption was accepted by weak and greedy police officers with agendas to abuse their power. As previously mentioned, the inspectors and captains were most guilty for initiating corruption within the department while lower ranked officers followed orders. Grand sums of money and complete access to prostitutes were incentives to refrain from ratting out cooperating brothels and third party establishments.

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<sup>29</sup> Chicago, 150.

<sup>30</sup> Chicago, 150.

Since bribes had been paid, it was a corrupt official's responsibility to ensure that information regarding such locations did not reach hands of upper level supervisors. When the police officials were dispatched for a second time, his own reputation was now being threatened which led to the release of previously unavailable information. Despite the correction, the miscommunication of the presence of vice points out a weakness in the law enforcement organization and their relationship to semi-regulated prostitution.

Aside from protection bribes, police officials also had the capability of gaining social and sexual access to prostitutes. One Chicago investigator reported an instance of police corruption that occurred at a saloon located on Wabash Avenue. Two farmers and two prostitutes were having drinks at the saloon when overcharged on their tab; the two men were ejected from the establishment for questioning the waiter. The customers proceeded to obtain help from two police officers. After speaking to the waiter, the officers threatened the men, forcing them to leave. The officers then returned to the establishment "holding their hands over their stars, they went to the rear closet, took their uniform coats off, and put on ordinary coats, which were much too small for them."<sup>31</sup> They sat down with the prostitutes and refrained from paying for their drinks. In this case, the police officials most likely promised to protect the saloon in exchange for connection with the two prostitutes.

According to the Minneapolis Vice Commission, "to subject the police of a city to temptations to graft and favoritism, which they ought not to be called upon to meet; temptations to which, in spite of the best intentions and resolves, they have sometimes

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<sup>31</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 75.

succumbed” is no longer an issue of discretion.<sup>32</sup> The Commission admitted that Minneapolis had previous encounters with prostitution. Fellow police officers were found guilty of receiving bribes from participants in the business of semi-regulated prostitution. These officers provided protection to brothels and insured the supply of women and girls within the brothel. When prostitutes escaped for assistance, the police officers would take them into custody and return them directly to brothels. Several police officers were also found having direct sexual contact with the women and girls that they arrested. The city of Minneapolis created the commission in 1911 in order to make evident to society what had previously been hidden by the veil of government and political machines. The commission analyzed its corruption within the city and compared it to the experiences and methods of regulation of other major cities confronting the vice of white slavery. The Minneapolis Vice Commission found the Des Moines, IA, system of segregated vice was unsuccessful due to the fact that only about a quarter of the prostitute population practiced vice inside of the district.<sup>33</sup> By looking at Cleveland and Toledo, the Minneapolis Vice Commission believed that a vast quantity of assignation houses existed and sketchy, questionable women roamed the cities’ streets. The presence of these houses and women however was due to both cities’ inclination to eradicate the “Red Light” district completely. It was found that Cleveland had managed to deplete the “number of houses from 365 to 60” and that Toledo was on the verge of shutting down one of two red light districts.<sup>34</sup> Unlike other cities, Milwaukee did not tolerate public prostitution. Despite the towering population, Milwaukee managed to sufficiently repress the

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<sup>32</sup> Vice Commission of Minneapolis, *Report of the Vice Commission of Minneapolis* (Minneapolis: Press of Henry M. Hall, 1911), 83.

<sup>33</sup> Minneapolis, 85.

<sup>34</sup> Minneapolis, 88.

existence of prostitution in their society. The Minneapolis Vice Commission took the experiences and outcomes of all the investigated cities, specifically Toledo, into account and applied it to ameliorating its own recommendations for the continuous suppression of vice in their own society.

The Commission of Minneapolis recorded numerous arguments against the segregation and regulation of prostitution including police discretion, business interests, location, neighborhood problems, segregation, safeguards, complicated police problems, and source of venereal disease. Two out of the eight arguments emphasized the connection between vice and law enforcement corruption. First, police discretion entailed entrusting all aspects of vice in the hands of police officials. Complete power over the business of semi-regulated prostitution could, of course, lead to temptation, which in turn could lead to internal corruption, just as it has in other cities. Entrusting those whom were perceived as ultimately powerful and respectable was deemed ill advised, as it fosters much room for abuse and taking advantage of vulnerable populations. The vice commission suggested that a written policy must first be established and distributed throughout law enforcement agencies to ensure organization of suppression of prostitution. As noted by Judge Fish, “ours is a government of law and not of men.”<sup>35</sup> A city could not succeed under the control of various law enforcement organizations. It would only gain stability through a cohesive state of mind. Second, if Minneapolis were to segregate vice, the responsibilities of police officials would considerably increase. The creation of a red light district would complicate an official’s role since he would now be expected to become vigilant of both brothels and the newly cleansed city. Corruption could emerge as an officer focused more of his efforts towards the unregulated vice

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<sup>35</sup> Minneapolis, 84.

occurring outside the red light district. Police officials could also, as before, take bribes for protection from prostitutes working independently within assignation houses hidden throughout the city. Within the segregation model, although vice would be accepted, the overall acceptance of the suffering and brutality, which came hand in hand with prostitution, would be a further corruption in itself. As a law enforcement officer under oath, it was the duty of the officer to enforce laws created to protect the community rather than to disregard the secondary complications of suffering and degradation that stemmed from the primary issue of regulating prostitution. After analyzing the motions of fellow problematic cities, the city of Minneapolis decided to continue to suppress public prostitution rather than regulate it through the establishment of a red light district.

New York City, famous for its prestigious rise in industry and commerce, was also one of the metropolises most ravaged by vice and corruption. The Committee of Fifteen, a social purity reform group, considered the existing conditions of the city to be debauched and demoralized. The New York City Vice Commission focused on major issues related to prostitution such as past regulation procedures in European cities, sanitary control and its effectiveness, moral regulation of vice, and recommendations for ceasing the existence of prostitution. New York City clearly acknowledged that immoral activities were highly prevalent and the existence of prostitution was negatively effecting the moral development within the city. Several major problems with prostitution included excessive exposure to venereal disease, high correlation between prostitution, poverty and unemployment, and toleration of vice by numerous public establishments. The Committee stated that the first duty of the government was “to limit the number of those who seek vicious pleasures, and to prevent the furnishing of such pleasures to those who

are inclined to seek them.”<sup>36</sup> The Committee of Fifteen agreed that city and state government had failed as a force to exert its full ability in reforming the city.<sup>37</sup>

The New York Vice Commission discussed the existing conditions of New York City in 1912 in regards to the moral regulation of vice. In order to successfully regulate vice the government focused on the features of repression, prevention, and public health. The first point that the report focused on was the suppression of public debauchery, such as solicitation. The New York Vice Commission believed that if prostitution was to exist, it must be made to be less visible in public so it could co-exist with decency so that surroundings appear moral. The second point, which was agreed upon, was preventing the contact of young children with ill-famed businesses. The commission agreed that those children who were exposed to such vice were more prone to participate in similar activities upon maturation. The last point mentioned concerned the spread of venereal disease and called for an increase in the availability of treatment centers and hospitals for disease-ridden individuals. It was agreed that qualified practitioners should be available for treatment in order to control the previously diseased woman and to prevent further transmission of disease across the city. In making recommendations to governing entities, The Committee of Fifteen believed that the “so-called system of regulation is not a radical or adequate remedy for the evils connected with prostitution.”<sup>38</sup> With this being said, The Committee of Fifteen demanded that the city establish a definite policy that would result in the complete eradication of prostitution and the ultimate redemption of humanity from degradation and debauchery.

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<sup>36</sup> Vice Commission of New York, *The Social Evil* (New York City: The Knickerbocker Press, 1912), 60.

<sup>37</sup> New York, 64.

<sup>38</sup> New York, 147.

The suppression policy included three suggestions for eliminating prostitution. First, efforts must be enacted to prevent overcrowding of tenement houses where the Committee of Fifteen believed immoral behavior first originated. More suitable homes for lower class citizens must be provided in order to reduce prostitution. The Committee believed that decreasing the existence of impoverished homes would reduce the likelihood of vice occurring in such close quarters. Second, the Committee desired to banish amusement and recreation establishments such as dance halls, cinemas, and saloons that promoted sexuality and heterosocial pleasure. They believed that these establishments solely existed to market vice and that the appetite for excitement must be satisfied by more moral forms of amusement. Third, they recommended that the material conditions and working conditions of the lower class, especially lower class women be improved. Reducing the level of female unemployment would in turn reduce the necessity of prostituting oneself for income. In addition to the above suggestions, the Committee of Fifteen also proposed that an educational campaign be launched in order to forewarn minors of the dangers and consequences of participating in vice. Above all, the Committee desired a change in law, excluding prostitution from being classified as a crime. The Committee believed that a distinction must be drawn between sin and crime in order to escape from the stigma of vice. This decision did not call for leniency in morality, however it suggested that sins of sexuality should not be differentiated from all other unpunishable sins. For example, government did not criminalize the sin of adultery. Therefore, why should other sexual encounters be viewed as a crime when it is merely a grave sin? According to the Committee of Fifteen, “corruption in the police force can never be extirpated until this prolific source of it is stopped.”<sup>39</sup> This is to say that law

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<sup>39</sup> New York, 152.

enforcement had unfairly punished and stigmatized women whom are merely committing sins rather than criminal acts. Police officers had become too involved in the business of prostitution and focused on exerting control over the sin for personal gains.

Another indication of vice occurring in the state of New York was observed by the Committee of Eighteen in the *The Social Evil in Syracuse*. According to the Syracuse Vice Commission, the purposes of the report were “to inform the citizens of Syracuse of the actual conditions relative to vice and prostitution, to awaken the conscience of the city and arouse a public sentiment that shall compel the present and all future administrations thoroughly and insistently to enforce the laws relative to prostitution and the liquor traffic, and to suggest means of reducing prostitution.”<sup>40</sup> The Committee of Eighteen hoped to end the “conspiracy of silence” by exposing the evils of prostitution and the repercussions of malignant diseases, which degradingly ravaged the human race. They believed that not only was the issue of prostitution a problem in New York, but also across the nation as it prolonged the demoralization of developing cities.

In the early twentieth century, Syracuse had a very centralized vice district in the heart of the city where brothels and other vice establishments were located. According to the American Vigilance Association, “in three consecutive blocks on East Washington St. there were eighteen houses of prostitution.”<sup>41</sup> Trains passed steadily by the red light district so that traveling men could locate vice through his “sight seeing cart” before reaching his final stop. During the investigation of the segregated district, twenty-seven parlor houses were identified and out of twenty-three houses searched there was an

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<sup>40</sup> Vice Commission of Syracuse, NY, *The Social Evil in Syracuse* (Syracuse, 1913), 7.

<sup>41</sup> Syracuse, 16.

estimated one hundred and fifty-six held prostitutes.<sup>42</sup> Such parlor houses were easily noticeable and were adorned with red lights throughout the establishment. Along with brothels, thirty-two unruly hotels were investigated. “While investigating Hotel X80 on July 5th at 5:30pm, one expert investigator encountered fast women priced at \$2 were offering hotel rooms for \$1 a turn.”<sup>43</sup> Hotel X80 was one of the more popular hotels in Syracuse where prostitutes escorted their customers after encountering them at local saloons and restaurants. One of the most malignant sources of vice were the numerous saloons within the vice district. According to a United States Census for 1910, with a population of 137,249 residents there was approximately one saloon for every 358 residents in Syracuse, much higher than the saloon to resident ration in New York City.<sup>44</sup> Saloons were quite popular during this time and vice reformers believed alcohol increased promiscuity between prostitute and customer relationships. The immoral influence of alcohol led to the imminent prohibition in the 1920’s.

Exploiting women had become an economic revolution of pleasure. The Committee of Eighteen believed that they could transform the course of morality by introducing young people to moral recreation establishments such as churches and schools. They urged for the enforcement of prostitution laws and liquor sales by the government and demanded that the overwhelming evils of society be managed by professional social workers rather than volunteer vice committees. A multitude of recommendations were made to the Syracuse state authorities, city authorities, the Bureau of Health, and the Board of Education. Several of these recommendations included that brothels be declared a nuisance and that a penalty be placed on establishments allowing

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<sup>42</sup> Syracuse, 19.

<sup>43</sup> Syracuse 34.

<sup>44</sup> Syracuse, 38.

prostitution on site, that the number of saloons be reduced, and that the city implement a “Tin Plate Ordinance,” meaning that all above stated establishments had a single street entrance bearing the name of the building owners who could be held responsible for the conduct that occurred within the building (especially important since property owners earned a significant amount of the proceeds generated from brothels). Additional recommendations included that both men and women were held for trial when arrested for disorderly conduct, that all amusement establishments refrained from connection with prostitution, that women be incorporated in the police force, that the Bureau of Health developed methods to control venereal diseases and collated statistics to ensure efficiency, and lastly that sex education be taught in public school. The Committee of Eighteen, along with the American Vigilance Association, was extremely adamant on eradicating the existence of prostitution in Syracuse and went to great lengths to unveil the conspiracy of silence regarding immoral acts to the public and other afflicted urban cities.

The Massachusetts Vice Commission of 1914 was a general report addressing the business of prostitution, the prostitute herself, issues of venereal disease, and law enforcement encounters. The first order of business was to “investigate the white slave traffic, so called,” and to determine by what means and to what extent women and girls were induced or compelled by others to lead immoral lives.”<sup>45</sup> Through the investigation of state conditions, the Commission was determined to address the primary objectives of both the Mann White Slave Act and the Massachusetts White Slave Act of 1910. It was

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<sup>45</sup> Vice Commission of Massachusetts, *Report of the Commission for the Investigation of the White Slave Traffic, So Called* (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Co., 1914), 7.

the Commission's objective to accurately outline the above stated issues to the people and government of Massachusetts.

Similar to other vice commissions, Massachusetts was also overwhelmed by establishments of vice such as, parlor houses, saloons, hotels, and dance halls. Although there was officially no system of segregation in Massachusetts's cities, investigators believed that segregated vice district were centralized in populous areas of various cities. While investigating the conditions of Massachusetts, "108 parlor houses were in active operation" in several cities.<sup>46</sup> The business of prostitution was believed to be conducted similarly to those of vice districts in other states. Unlike other states, Massachusetts had a strict policy prohibiting prostitution and liquor sales in saloons and cafes. The Commission, however, uncovered the existence of 110 different cafes and saloons that were solicited by numerous prostitutes seeking to secure customers.<sup>47</sup> Not only did investigators discover establishments of vice, they were also solicited by "171 different prostitutes...for immoral purposes."<sup>48</sup> Investigators, like any other customer, would have been taken to disorderly hotels where the business of vice was promoted. In Massachusetts, it was reported that 126 hotels were implicated in sustaining immoral acts.<sup>49</sup> Such hotels were purposefully built for prostitution and continuously rented out rooms to paying customers. Uncommon to most vice commissions, two address books were obtained by investigators with the names and addresses of 201 customers of two parlor houses located in one Massachusetts city.<sup>50</sup> Written proof of brothel customers was

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<sup>46</sup> Massachusetts, 9.

<sup>47</sup> Massachusetts, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Massachusetts, 15.

<sup>49</sup> Massachusetts, 18.

<sup>50</sup> Massachusetts, 24.

often nonexistent, because madams feared that such bona fide information would be revealed during raids and expose the men's' privacy.

According to the Massachusetts Vice Commission, law enforcement was quite active in the suppression of vice. The Commission stated that there had not been any evidence of corruption in their police forces, however they agreed that in regards to brothels "police know these houses and tolerate them, provided the business is conducted quietly."<sup>51</sup> Although there was no evidence of sexual relations between officers and prostitutes in major Massachusetts's cities, officers continued to condone immoral acts, which in most Progressive reformers' eyes indicates corruption. Unlike previously mentioned Vice Commissions, Massachusetts' analysis of internal corruption is interpreted very differently. Such differences between cities, plausibly accounts for the professional backgrounds of those representing the commission board. The Massachusetts Vice Commission also characterized the Massachusetts judicial system as pristine, convicting offenders accurately according to criminal offenses involving prostitution. However according to the Boston municipal court from January to September 1913, out of 223 men arrested for fornication 192 of them were fined and only five were sentenced to prison.<sup>52</sup> Out of these 192 arrested men, 108 of them were fined only \$10 for release. In addition to a small fee, arrested men provided law enforcement officers with fictitious names preventing a proper census of a customer's repeat acts. Instances such as these are only a few of questionable municipal court data provided in the Vice Commission.

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<sup>51</sup> Massachusetts, 50.

<sup>52</sup> Massachusetts, 60.

Final recommendations of the Massachusetts Vice Commission included designating qualified officers to prosecute those participating in immoral acts, classifying venereal diseases as dangerous and contagious diseases, enacting new legislation, and modifying existing laws. In establishing new legislation, the Commission hoped to eradicate the business of prostitution to end the exploitation and trafficking of women. The newly established legislation sanctioned that all establishments of vice also be suppressed and supervised. Overall, Massachusetts effectively presented the nuisance of prostitution that engulfed developing cities such as Boston. The problem of “white slavery” was addressed and proper legislation was passed to resolve the matter.

According to the Bridgeport Vice Commission of 1916, it was reported that some evidence was found suggesting that police officials were entangled with business of semi-regulated prostitution. It stated, “in one or more instances members of the regular force were found in uniform in cabarets and dance halls where disorderly conduct was going on.”<sup>53</sup> The Bridgeport Vice Commission however disregarded this statement by noting that as a whole, the force performed honorably. Its dismissal of substantial evidence merely amplified the presence of law enforcement corruption and demonstrated a sense of denial. Although the Commission of Bridgeport could not fully admit to corruption in their city, they were able to adequately accuse special police officers of collaboration with the prostitution business. Special police officers were defined as members of the Bridgeport police force who were also employees of a dance hall owner; essentially they were police officers who moonlighted for various vice interests. Such an officer would be entrusted by authority while complying to requests of “to do or not to do, to see or not to

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<sup>53</sup> Vice Commission of Bridgeport, *The Report and Recommendations of the Bridgeport Vice Commission* (Bridgeport, 1916), 54.

see, as his employer desires.”<sup>54</sup> The Bridgeport Vice Commission accused these men of conspiring in and participating in vulgar, sexual exploits with ill-famed women.

An investigator noted several instances in which he physically witnessed special police officers physically engage in and also gloss over prostitution affairs at dance halls. On February 1916 while at a ball an investigator stated, “I saw five police officers downstairs, eating and drinking. Their numbers were-----. They did not attempt to maintain order or to interfere when fights started.”<sup>55</sup> By reading the affidavits provided by the Commission, it was implied that there were multiple occasions in which police officials were insufficient at job performance. Rather than halting the fights, the police indulged in their personal needs while consuming violence as entertainment. While at an annual ball an investigator reported that, “there was no supervision or restriction on the dancing, and improper dancing was indulged in by a great many.”<sup>56</sup> Although special police officers were to adhere to their employer’s demands, under oath of the city of Bridgeport it was his duty to ensure immoral acts were avoided at establishments to prevent temptation of initiating with women of ill repute. At this particular ball, police officers stood on the sidelines observing the vulgarity, nonetheless they made no attempt to restrict such ways of dancing which resulted in immoral behavior in most instances after the fact. As concluded by the Vice Commission of Bridgeport, both regular force and special force officers had their encounters with corruption. Whether on a large or small scale, the amount of corruption associated with officers was not the primary focus of culpability. Bridgeport’s law enforcement department’s initial encounter with

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<sup>54</sup> Bridgeport, 54.

<sup>55</sup> Bridgeport, 41.

<sup>56</sup> Bridgeport, 44.

corruption in the collaboration with the business of semi-regulated prostitution was sufficient to allot fault.

### **Advocates of Vice**

In regards to encounters with the prostitutes themselves, law enforcement officers were notorious for being untrustworthy. Women would flee from brothels in shimmering gowns pleading for aid from the police, only to be returned personally to vicious madams. Police officers refused to believe girls who confided in them the turmoil that they were experiencing down the street in a house of ill fame. They also arrested girls that they without a doubt knew were being held captive in a brothel. An arrest of a girl in turn resulted in more debt from bail and court expenses. Since the official contributed to the prolonging of a girl's stay at the brothel, he was awarded with money paid by the girl as debt. The police "knew well that the girl was merely trying to escape from her miserable existence, but with them, once an unfortunate woman always one."<sup>57</sup> Police officers based all decisions on ensuring that the women and young girls remained ensnared in the brothels. They had no remorse for the slave's life, simply continuing the cycle of degradation for personal gain. Police officers as previously mentioned also received bribes from participants in the business of vice. According to sociologist Howard B. Woolston, in 1913 a police official gained around seven thousand dollars as protection money from prostitutes. Members of authority also colluded with liquor companies by providing protection over businesses operating without licenses. Officers would collect fifty percent of each man's sales from each liquor company he bought his supply from. Police precincts developed a method of obtaining extra money from

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<sup>57</sup> Roe, 29.

prostitutes by “ordering their houses raided each Saturday night and requiring twenty-five dollars per landlady and ten dollars per inmate” to reopen.<sup>58</sup> Even though the madams and the prostitutes were paying their usual protection bribes, police officers used their authority to take advantage of the business. Madams feared that if the raids were unsuccessful, officers might threaten to shutdown the establishment all together. As one can see, the intentions of corrupt police officers was not to enforce laws in their communities. Rather their primary goal was to individually profit from the business of vice by abusing their oath and authority. To those who were corrupt, the regulation of prostitution was viewed as an opportunity for self-betterment and greed through the exploitation of innocent, vulnerable women.

Not only were police officers corrupt, but many feared that so too were judges, and politicians. As for corruption within the judicial system, purity reformers did not respect Judge Thomas O’Sullivan. In 1909, a New York judge appointed John D. Rockefeller as foreman to a grand jury investigation of George Turner’s muckraking allegations.<sup>59</sup> Many believed that the sanction of the grand jury was a trick to silence the public. J.D. Rockefeller pleaded to Judge O’ Sullivan that he “couldn’t have picked anybody who knew less about” prostitution in New York.<sup>60</sup> After seven months of investigation, Judge O’Sullivan discharged the Rockefeller Grand Jury from the investigation so that their presentment could not be filed in court. He then proceeded to summarize and completely alter the presentment so that it appeared that the jury found no evidence of white slavery. O’Sullivan filed his white slave presentment stating that

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<sup>58</sup> Howard B. Woolston, Ph.D., *Prostitution in the United States* (New York: The Century Co., 1921), 221.

<sup>59</sup> Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 89.

<sup>60</sup> Donovan, 91.

insufficient evidence of white slavery was discovered. The actual grand jury presentment stated something along the lines of “we have found no evidence of formal organizations of white slavery, however we have found evidence of individuals informally associated throughout the states in the trafficking of women for immoral purposes.”<sup>61</sup> Judge O’Sullivan’s chauvinism contributed to his participation in corruption for he feared that the city of New York would no longer be considered the “cleanest and greatest city in the world.”<sup>62</sup> He avoided recognition of the reality of prostitution in New York by preventing evidence from reaching the media and the public by men who were connected in webs of corruption throughout various political organizations, especially law enforcement and district attorneys. Sequentially, since a formal organization for trafficking technically did not exist in law, men could not be prosecuted nor could they be arrested for their involvement in the white slavery business. With that being said, procurers who belonged to the organizations were free to continue their exploitation of innocent women. Indictments of case files eventually revealed the truth behind Judge O’Sullivan’s corrupt attempt to conceal the problem of white slave trafficking in New York.

Judicial courts as a whole also represented corruption through their procedures of viewing and punishment. In court, multiple prostitutes were often corralled in front of the judge while he swiftly sentenced the women to short terms in prison or small fines. Women were not seen case by case and often missed their chance of communicating with the judge unless they could afford a lawyer. Such cases were not thorough and lacked a sense of significance to the judges. As for punishment, most penalties were ineffective due to the disorganization of the courts. “Fines ranging from \$5.00 to \$500, and

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<sup>61</sup> Bingham, 22.

<sup>62</sup> Bingham, 23.

imprisonment from thirty days to three years, or both, were permitted by the laws” in several jurisdictions.<sup>63</sup> Although the majority of convicts were issued punishment of the lesser extreme, the possibility of being punished at the highest extreme resulted in uproar. Men were also believed not to be eligible for punishment against prostitution activity. More times than not, madams and prostitutes were arrested while male customers and pimps were cut loose. When men were arrested for soliciting only about half of them were actually charged. According to research provided by Woolston, compared to the number of women and men that were arrested only a small percentage of them were convicted and an even smaller percentage actually paid their fines. In Los Angeles during the year 1916 “785 women and 433 men were arrested and brought before the bar.”<sup>64</sup> However, only 1.5 percent of the women and 10 percent of the men were fined and only 4 percent of women and 3 percent of men were imprisoned. If imprisoned the women were to serve a max of ninety-five days while the men were to serve a max of seventy days. Corruption became involved in judicial courts when the punishments issued were insufficient in providing accurate punishment for acts committed. Courts were so overwhelmed with internal corruption that the severity of semi-regulated prostitution was for the most part accepted or ignored when encountered. Judges even received bribes from the prostitutes’ protectors to ensure easy release from authority’s hands.

Another aspect of corruption was the double standard applied to the arresting and punishment of women. Since women were scrutinized as shady and immoral, they were always the first to be accused of wrongdoing. The corruption within male dominance resulted in the inequality of fair treatment between those who provide and those who

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<sup>63</sup> Woolston, 228.

<sup>64</sup> Woolston, 248.

were being provided. Both parties participated in vice, therefore they should have both received punishment for their vulgarity. It was unnecessary for a woman to serve an extended twenty-five day sentence because she was of ill repute. If anything the man should have served a higher sentence on account of he voluntarily was contributing to the exploitation of immorality. Not only did police officials participate in inequity, but also so did the leading system that prosecuted those arrested. Judge O'Sullivan and ineffective courtroom procedures were merely two prime examples of how corruption traveled up the government chains of command during the Progressive Era.

Lastly, politicians were wealthy, corrupt men who had massive pull in society that they at times influenced the fate of lower level law enforcement organizations. Politicians were well known for extorting brothels for campaign money. Greedy political machines desiring a percentage of immoral profits threatened the fate of brothels and business. Politicians who were affiliated with madams and brothels made it their duty to protect the business and prevent shutdown by the government. For example, when detectives had enough evidence to deem an establishment immoral they would enter the brothel and arrest madams, procurers, and prostitutes. The madam, in fear of a permanent shutdown, would then turn to corrupt politicians to free them from such a predicament. The corrupt politicians would then make note of all detectives responsible for the madam's arrest and have them relocated to different positions, away from jurisdictions of semi-regulated prostitution. "The object of the punishment was to hold the offender against the system out as an example to others, so that they would not dare to follow in his footsteps."<sup>65</sup> Those performing their jobs honestly under oath were punished as part of the breaking of police systems. Lower ranking officers who had little or no pull within the community

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<sup>65</sup> Roe, 195.

were then forced to abstain from investigating brothels for the possibility of shutdown. Relocations like this “existed because of the interference of politicians and their influence in city government. Policemen often got their positions through influence of aldermen and members of the common council.”<sup>66</sup> Police officers who continued to investigate brothels knew that being relocated on the job could be a consequence of their activities. They were aware that if political machines possessed enough pull, their careers could be ultimately jeopardized and the ability to work as a law enforcement officers would perish. Politicians hoped that a simple relocation would result in a now submissive officer unconcerned with tainting the process of corruption.

### **The Professionalization Movement**

The establishment of police systems in the United States was relatively new to the criminal justice system at the end of the nineteenth century. The idea of police enforcement was modeled after the Metropolitan Police of London organized by Robert Peel in 1829. Peel utilized his prior experience creating a police force in Ireland to develop a “social-control organization midway between a military and a civil force.”<sup>67</sup> The newly established police systems were militaristic, but cheaper than military power. Also, they created less indignation towards local communities and solved both tactical and political problems.<sup>68</sup> Peel’s model of law enforcement brought to question the competence of the nineteenth century’s law enforcement system. As mentioned before,

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<sup>66</sup> Roe, 197.

<sup>67</sup> Stanley H. Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>68</sup> Wilbur R. Miller, *Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York and London, 1830-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

the Progressives demanded drastic changes in law enforcement to reestablish authority within society. Peel's effective policing model combined with the Progressive's endless efforts brought to existence the professionalization movement of law enforcement organizations.

The professionalization movement consisted of a reform agenda with seven primary goals. The agenda would dominate law enforcement reform successively for several decades. The following goals were listed as: (1) elimination of political influence, (2) appointment of qualified chief executives, (3) establishment of a mission of nonpartisan public service, (4) the rise of personnel standards, (5) introduction of scientific management principles, (6) emphasis of militaristic discipline, and (7) development of specialized units.<sup>69</sup> The first two goals of eliminating political influence and appointing qualified chief executives function cohesively. The Progressive movement pushed for better organization and command within law enforcement. They believed that police officers required supervisors who were qualified and capable of commanding large complex groups. Professionalization reformers believed that hiring candidates with military or legal backgrounds would decrease the likelihood of political corruption from penetrating the new policing systems.<sup>70</sup>

As for establishing a new mission of service, reformers believed that police officers dually functioned as public servants unbiased to the corruption in the community.<sup>71</sup> The new policing mission promoted public servant duties and an emphasis on crime fighting policy. The mission of service also placed police officers under the

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<sup>69</sup> Walker, 13.

<sup>70</sup> Walker, 13.

<sup>71</sup> Walker, 13.

mayor's executive branch rather than their previous location, the judicial branch.<sup>72</sup>

Relocation of branches in the United States intended that officers were no longer responsible for civil court activities and were permitted to fully focus on crime control.

Raising personnel standards insisted that basic recruitment requirements and training education were established. Unlike previous hiring standards, civil service recruits were required to fulfill standards of intelligence, physical and mental health, and incorruptible character. Although personnel standards were significant to professionalism reform, the process of executing standards moved gradually with most cities not fulfilling this goal until the mid twentieth century.<sup>73</sup>

The introduction of scientific management principles focused on centralized hierarchal chains of command. Centralized chains of command allowed for organized communication up and down the ranks.<sup>74</sup> This meant that citizens' reports to officers could easily be directed to head departments and sent back down the chain of command for necessary action. Since political machines often targeted weak precincts, reformers closed multiple precincts and focused chains of command in higher departments.<sup>75</sup>

In reestablishing control of policing, progressive reformers ordered that new policing systems would emphasize a militaristic discipline. "Although police departments had been nominally military in the beginning, in actual practice they were distinctly unmilitary in their inefficiency and lack of discipline."<sup>76</sup> Typical militaristic characteristics included the use of a centralized chain of command, training requirements and qualifications, and the utilization of martial uniforms. The implementation of

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<sup>72</sup> Monkkonen, 174.

<sup>73</sup> Walker, 13.

<sup>74</sup> Monkkonen, 174.

<sup>75</sup> Walker, 13.

<sup>76</sup> Walker, 14.

mandatory uniforms created a sense of safety for American cities.<sup>77</sup> Uniforms were a vital part of the new model because they made officers easily visible to citizens and also allowed for easy recognition by observing supervisors.

The last goal of the reform agenda promoted the development of specialized units. Such units contributed focus to social problems such as traffic, juvenile delinquency, and vice.<sup>78</sup> Previous to the establishment of specialized units, only foot patrol officers and detective units existed. Specialization also brought the employment of the first female officers, Alice Stebbins Wells of the Los Angeles Police Department and Lola Baldwin of the Portland Police Department. Alice Stebbins Wells, considered the nation's first policewoman in 1910, strongly supported the social welfare of women during the early twentieth century. In essence of crime prevention, Wells "patrolled amusement parks, dance halls, and places of commercial entertainment seeking to protect young women and girls from moral corruption and thereby prevent them from falling into lives of crime."<sup>79</sup> Similar to Wells, Lola Baldwin focused her efforts on civil service within the community. Much of her policing power was exerted in the shutting down of ill famed saloons and brothels. Although Baldwin was sworn in as the "nation's first municipally paid policewoman" in 1905, Alice Wells is widely recognized as the primary extension of a male dominated police force.<sup>80</sup> Despite the positive impact of a newly reestablished policing system, specialization units created internal complexity by expanding the purview of law enforcement organizations.

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<sup>77</sup> Monkkonen, 175.

<sup>78</sup> Walker, 14.

<sup>79</sup> Wolcott and Head, 127.

<sup>80</sup> Roth, 209.

One critical point of professionalization that the above reform movement did not discuss was the manipulation of law enforcement officers' salaries. The ameliorated police were designed to be active in patrol, receive regular salaries, and execute efficient prosecution of criminal offenders.<sup>81</sup> Regular foot patrol was expected to create effective crime prevention in the city. Apart from previous policy established by commanding constables, police officers no longer received commission for arresting offenders. Law enforcement departments were given annual salaries and were included in the city budget, therefore promoting free criminal prosecution of offenders.

The professionalization movement would not have flourished without the persistent efforts of intellectual law enforcement reformers. Two significant reformers were Richard Sylvester and August Vollmer. Richard Sylvester was the President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) in 1901. The IACP was a professional organization of police leaders striving to make law enforcement jobs professional. In 1893, the IACP originally met under the name of the National police Chiefs Union.<sup>82</sup> Richard Sylvester and IACP promoted the separation of policing from political machines, provision of tenure and job security for police administrators, centralization in control of police operations, the promotion of minimum educational standards for officers, and the establishment of training programs for new recruits.<sup>83</sup> Their efforts supported the notion of a self-governing and professional law enforcement system.

August Vollmer, considered the father of the modern police organization, was the police chief of Berkeley, California between 1905 and 1932. "Vollmer rose to

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<sup>81</sup> Monkkonen, 175.

<sup>82</sup> Wolcott and Head, 125.

<sup>83</sup> Walker, *A Critical History of Police Reform* (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, 1977) 56-61.

prominence for his requirement that prospective police officers pursue a college education in an era when high school education was not even required” by most law enforcement organizations.<sup>84</sup> In 1908, he established one of the first professional training academies in the United States for police officers. Unlike other cities, Vollmer’s academy “taught the principles of public service and scientific crime detection” and “implemented technological innovations.”<sup>85</sup> Over the following decades, similar training academies spread nationwide to major cities. By 1914, Berkley police officers were the first in the United States to patrol the city in automobiles. August Vollmer’s “emphasis on scientific policing, education, higher standards, and the centralization of police services” impacted the role of future law enforcement organizations and established focus in the progressive movement on a national level.<sup>86</sup>

During the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, new law enforcement agencies such as the (federal) Bureau of Investigation led the federal government to expand its role in law enforcement. “In the spirit of Progressive reform, Congress passed the White Slave Act in 1910 to attack the ‘moral evils’ of prostitution.”<sup>87</sup> The White Slave Act, or the Mann Act, made it illegal to transport a person of the opposite sex across state lines for immoral purposes. According to the Department of Justice, the Mann Act convicted 2,801 individuals in violation by 1920.<sup>88</sup> The Mann Act was a key element in halting the continuation of female degradation nationwide. “The change in the nature of police from an informal, even casual, bureaucracy to a formal, rule-governed, militaristic organization

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<sup>84</sup> Roth, 206.

<sup>85</sup> Wolcott and Head, 126.

<sup>86</sup> Roth, 206.

<sup>87</sup> Roth, 199.

<sup>88</sup> Roth, 200.

mirrored a deep political shift.”<sup>89</sup> Professional law enforcement departments united with federal power to eradicate the influence of corrupt political machines in society.

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<sup>89</sup> Erick Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America 1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981) 31.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, semi-regulated prostitution was a major concern of social purity reforms during the Progressive Era. Reformers faced tremendous risks and numerous obstacles in their campaigns to end white slavery and the business of prostitution during the Progressive Era. The corruption of law enforcement agencies and government were initially the purity reformers' most trivial worry, however as efforts continued they learned that political corruption would be the highest barrier to conquer. Corruption of law enforcement led to the prolongation and peril of prostitutes as women and young girls continued to suffer tremendously as corrupt officials profited from the immoral acts.

In addition, the regulation of vice conducted by law enforcement did not eliminate exploitation and violence; rather it concealed the immorality in the underworld of clandestine prostitution. As the Minneapolis Vice Commission discussed, the regulation of white slavery into red light districts only created more confusion and unanswered questions; "segregation does not segregate."<sup>90</sup> Semi-regulated prostitution eventually led to the other complications with prostitutes and patrons such as chronic financial instability, venereal disease, mental problems, and drug dependencies. The social problem of prostitution contributed to the establishment of the professionalization movement that promoted the eradication of corrupted semi-regulated prostitution through a higher qualified police force.

The professionalization movement advocated for the strict reform of police forces into cohesive, professional administrations. The agenda encompassed seven primary goals for law enforcement agencies to incorporate into their new systems including the

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<sup>90</sup> Syracuse, 87.

elimination of political corruption, the increase of personnel standards, and an emphasis on militaristic disciplines.

Although the Progressive Era of semi-regulated prostitution and white slavery exploitation had been curtailed, its existence continues to hold much significance in the history of American culture. Worldwide conspiracies such as white slavery can function as a precedent for future policy makers and law enforcement agencies grappling with the issue of human sex trafficking. Throughout the centuries, the commercialization of sex has evolved into various independent aspects such as voluntary prostitution, pornography, exotic dancing, human trafficking, etc. The sex industry will forever continue to transform, therefore governmental policy must also learn to adapt.

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