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Rudolph Alexander, Jr.  
*Ohio State University*

Lola Butler  
*Ohio State University*

Patricia Sias  
*Ohio State University*

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# Women Offenders Incarcerated at the Ohio Penitentiary for Men and the Ohio Reformatory for Women from 1913–1923

Rudolph Alexander, Jr.,  
Lola Butler  
and  
Patricia Sias

The Ohio State University  
College of Social Work

*Unquestionably, women offenders have been subjected to discrimination by the criminal justice system. However, the quality and extent of the discrimination have been the subject of debate. Early male scholars wrote that women offenders were treated chivalrously and leniently. Later female scholars have disagreed and contended that under so-called chivalry women offenders were punished more severely, especially for sex crimes. World War I had a national influence on women imprisoned in reformatories for prostitution, as federal legislation was passed to suppress prostitution and related behaviors. This paper examines qualitative and quantitative data from 1913 to 1923, especially data on the women committed to the Ohio Reformatory for Women, the extent of the influence of World War I, and whether feminists' analysis of women's incarceration holds. The authors conclude that the War had some national influence on women incarcerated for prostitution, but little or no influence with respect to women imprisoned in the Ohio Reformatory for Women. The findings also challenge feminist scholars' recent view of women's incarceration, at least with respect to Ohio.*

Undoubtedly, discrimination has existed in the criminal justice system with respect to some female offenders (Champion, 1990; Schur, 1984). The nature and extent of this discrimination, however, has been the subject of different views. At one time, male scholars wrote that women, for the most part, have benefited from chivalrous treatment by the criminal justice system (Pollak, 1950; Robinson, 1922). Later, feminist scholars have countered that women even under so-called chivalry were

subjected to longer periods of incarceration than men (Armstrong, 1982; Sokoloff & Price, 1982). Additionally, other feminist scholars have written that the discrimination perpetrated upon women by the criminal justice system has been more pronounced with respect to sexual behavior (Klein, 1982; Rafter & Natalizia, 1982).

However, these latter views may be somewhat limited and provincial because early literature reveals that many women's reformatories were built during World War I and soon thereafter when a growing concern emerged about the effect of both venereal diseases on men preparing to go to war and on women's and infants' health. Believing "immoral" sex to be the culprit, society began a somewhat aggressive campaign to eliminate sexual immorality by incarcerating women prostitutes for reformation. To the extent that women were the primary targets of this campaign, discriminatory practices occurred in apprehension, trial, and imprisonment. However, this does not indicate widespread discrimination against women for all offenses (Armstrong, 1982; Cain, 1990).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the historical records on women offenders incarcerated at the national level, but especially in Ohio from 1913 to 1923. This period was selected for several reasons. First, the Ohio Reformatory for Women was completed and began accepting women offenders on September 1, 1916. Before the opening of the reformatory, women had been imprisoned in a segregated section of the Ohio Penitentiary, a prison for male offenders. Because basic data exist on microfilm at the Ohio Historical Society from 1913, analysis can be made of the types of offenses that led to imprisonment. Also, analysis can be made of sentence length and actual incarceration. If feminist scholars are correct, the data should support their view that violations of sexual norms were punished more severely and constituted the priority of the criminal justice system.

Second, analysis during this time-frame should reveal the impact of World War I, which began in 1914 and lasted to 1918, on admissions at both the Ohio Penitentiary and the Ohio Reformatory for Women. Observations can be made regarding types of women imprisoned before, during, and soon after the War. In addition to the microfilm, the Ohio Historical Society

possesses original letters to and from the superintendent of the women's reformatory. These letters, along with other primary and secondary accounts, should illuminate the national and state policies that might have had an impact upon women incarcerated at the Ohio Reformatory for Women.

### The View of Women Offenders During the Early Reformatory

The belief that reformatories were exerting unfair social control over women during the late 19th and early 20th century may be based on a misinterpretation of the concept of social control (Rothman, 1983). Rafter (1983), for instance, argued that New York Reformatory for Women's two main purposes were controlling women sexually and vocationally. But, as David Rothman has noted, the term social control is used frequently in critical discussions and frequently abused because writers do not explain the context in which it is used. The term was originally coined to convey harmony and cooperation, but in the 1950s and 1960s, it was transformed into a definition meaning repression and coercion. Likewise, cooperation and harmony were transformed into concern and conflict. With respect to prisons and reformatories, social control took on a pejorative meaning. The failure to identify the context in which social control is used is an abuse of the term, says Rothman (1983). Therefore, asserting that women's reformatories were used to repress women's sexuality is partly right. However, the broader question is: did society have a greater rationale in incarcerating female offenders?

Venereal diseases seem to have been a major concern of society in the early 1900s. According to Dr. Lena Beach, Superintendent of a Minnesota reformatory, World War I had properly forced society to deal with the issue of these diseases (Beach, 1923). Venereal diseases resulting from prostitution threatened war preparations (French, 1919; Falconer, 1919). The government became so concerned about the effect of prostitution on the war effort that it passed a federal law in 1918 called the Chamberlain-Kahn Bill, that made it a federal crime to engage in prostitution near a military establishment (Falconer,

1919; Moore, 1919). This law was used in 1918 to incarcerate 19 young women from Greenville, South Carolina (Falconer, 1919).

Although the war effort was a key concern, certain social welfare concerns existed regarding the suppression of prostitution. As French (1919) wrote "for military efficiency and for social welfare, prostitution must go" (p. 12). The social welfare concerns were reflected by the effect of venereal diseases on women's health. For instance, Anderson (1918) wrote that gonorrhea carried serious health problems not only for enlisted servicemen but also for women and fetuses.

In the public mind, the chief cause of venereal diseases was sexual immorality. As Dexter (1927) wrote, "all venereal diseases originated from sexual immorality" (pp. 194-195). Dexter stated that ideally sexual relationship should be within marriage, but this goal was unattainable. Nonetheless, he stated that there "is no reason why every possible effort should not be made to reduce the volume of prostitution and immorality, since every such reduction would immediately show itself in a reduction of venereal infection" (Dexter, 1927, pp. 194-195).

Although attributing venereal diseases to sexual immorality seems rash, data gathered from several statistical studies had supported this view. For instance, a review of one study showed that 89% of 466 females incarcerated at Bedford Reformatory had either syphilis or gonorrhea (Dexter, 1927). A New York venereal clinic reported the sources of infection among its clients as follows: 37% street prostitutes, 19% house prostitutes, 15% unknown, and wives 2% (Dexter, 1927). These data supported the view that immorality was the chief cause of venereal diseases. As a result, the consensus was social welfare policy should be geared toward attacking this immorality.

President Wilson, in accordance with this policy, allocated from his War Emergency Fund money to provide rehabilitation for women who were a threat to the military. The job of administering this program was given to the Section on Reformatories of the War Department's Commission on Training camp Activities. Funds were made available through it for hospital treatment of prostitutes in an effort to eliminate the problem of servicemen's infection. Detention hospitals were established in some states, but the women were hospitalized only during the

time of their infection (Falconer, 1919). Thus, recidivism was a recurring problem.

Recognizing the wastefulness and futility of treatment because of the recidivism rate, treatment officials concluded that "the work of the venereal hospital must be linked by a strong social service work to a larger program. The patients must be passed on to something definite; be it to a job under close probation, or to a period of training in an institution" (Falconer, 1919, p. 6). Hence, the reformatory promised needed control and plans were initiated to expand both the number of reformatories for women and the quality of the few that existed.

The War Department seems to have had some effect on the building of reformatories for women. Prior to World War I, six women's reformatories existed in the United States. Six more were built during the war, and six more followed soon afterward. Five of the post-war six reformatories were built in 1920 (Freedman, 1981). Basically, women's reformatories were to provide custody, preservation of health, reformation of character, education for self-support, and prevention of progression to hardened criminals (Rogers, 1917). Other innovations were family group housing, mental and physical examinations, all women staff, admission of infants, indeterminate sentences, and parole (Rogers, 1929). Indeterminate sentences generally given ranged from a minimum of one year to a maximum of three, five, ten, or twenty years depending upon the offense (Gillin, 1926; Haynes, 1939). These intervention practices resulted primarily from recommendations of penologists and social workers (Rogers, 1917).

However, some correctional administrators and penological scholars during this period questioned the mixture of felons and misdemeanants in reformatories, especially as more reformatories for women were built. Yet, the reason for the mixture for both men and women offenders was not difficult to understand. According to Robinson, when society shifted from the Classical School of crime control to the Positivistic School, the distinction between a felony and a misdemeanor became unimportant. The Classical School emphasizes letting the punishment fit the crime, and the Positivistic School emphasizes letting the punishment fit the offender. Robinson wrote "in view

of the kinds of crimes which women commit, it is probable that the woman guilty merely of a so-called misdemeanor, for example, soliciting on the street, is more apt to be in need of the reformatory discipline than is the one guilty of a felony" (Robinson, 1922, p. 128). Accordingly, a woman convicted of immoral conduct may receive the same indeterminate sentence as a woman convicted of manslaughter.

Having established the broader parameters of female offenders who were viewed as a threat to society, the authors of this paper now turn to the State of Ohio.

### The Ohio Reformatory for Women

#### *Organizational Structure*

The Ohio legislature, following the lead of other states, passed legislation in 1911 to build the Ohio Reformatory for Women in Marysville, Ohio and thereby ceased the practice of incarcerating women offenders at the Ohio Penitentiary for Men in Columbus, Ohio. The initial paroling authority was the Ohio Board of Administration on recommendation of the superintendent. For paroling purposes, offenders were classified as either Class A or B. Class A offenders could not be paroled under five years, and they constituted the most serious offenders. Class B offenders were eligible as follows: First offenders could be paroled after two months in the reformatory, second offenders after four months, and third offenders after six months (Rogers, 1917). In Ohio, for the most part, sentences were "fixed" within a range. For instance, forgery was punishable by 1 to 20 years, grand larceny 1 to 7 years, contributing to delinquency or neglect of a minor 2 months to 3 years, manslaughter 1 to 20 years, and second degree murder or first degree murder with a recommendation of mercy carried a life sentence. However, if a woman was sentenced to life imprisonment, she was eligible for parole after 5 years (Ohio Board of Charities and Corrections, 1913). This was considerably less than men sentenced to life imprisonment, who had to serve at least 25 years before being eligible for parole (Opinions of the Attorney General of Ohio, 1913).

Regardless of the sentence given (excluding cohabitation or delinquency), the law required a woman to serve at least a year. Her release was based primarily on her conduct (Forsythe, 1933). But before parole was granted, input from the community was solicited through notification in the largest newspaper of the inmate's home town or where the crime had been committed. The notice ran in the newspaper once a week for three consecutive weeks. Upon learning that the required notices had been given, the parole board considered releasing the inmate (Forsythe, 1933). If the woman was paroled, her final discharge from institutional control was the date her maximum sentence expired. For instance, if a woman was sentenced to 1 to 3 years in 1916 and was paroled in 1917, her final discharge from institutional control would have been in 1919. However, this final discharge date could be shorter, provided the field officer and superintendent concurred.

Ohio, like four other states, established a minimum age for women offenders admitted into its reformatory, but no maximum age. As Robinson stated, "the removal of the maximum age limit for women is in line with our known policy of dealing more leniently with women" (Robinson, 1922, p. 129). Theoretically, sentencing an offender to a reformatory is less punishing than sentencing to a prison or penitentiary. Thus, by sentencing all women offenders to reformatories regardless of age, there was no need to send them to penitentiaries, either to all-women penitentiaries or women's sections of male penitentiaries (Robinson, 1922). The minimum age was set at 16, and included women convicted of both felonies and misdemeanors (Growdon, 1931; Ohio Board of State Charities, 1913).

Officially, the Ohio Reformatory for Women opened on September 1, 1916 with 29 women who were transferred from the Ohio State Penitentiary. Mrs. Louise M. Mittendorf, a former juvenile probation officer, was named superintendent of the reformatory. Ohio law specifically required naming a woman superintendent and required women as far as possible for the other staff positions (Opinions of the Attorney General of Ohio, 1916). In line with the national policy, both felons and misdemeanants were housed in the reformatory (Cox, Bixby, & Root, 1933). The superintendent determined punishment for breaking



reformatory rules, usually consisting of loss of privileges or confinement to one's room. Serious infractions, such as refusing to work or gross insolence, led to confinement in punishment cells. Extreme cases called for less rations (Cox, Bixby, & Root, 1933).

The Ohio Reformatory for Women segregated inmates by race. Three buildings were established for white offenders and one for black. White females were classified following a psychological test and placed into one of three living quarters. Women with office skills, trusties, and matrons' assistants were housed in one building. Laundresses, seamstresses, and crafters were in another; and the remaining white females in the third. Because only one building was designated for black females, they were not classified (Forsythe, 1933). The reformatory utilized the Bertillion system to identify potential recidivists for prison officials. This system, named after the Frenchman Alphonse Bertillion, postulates that "while the bone structure of the body does not change after reaching maturity, individual variations are so elaborate that a series of minute measurements provides an infallible identification" (McKelvey, 1936, p. 141). Therefore, during admissions to the Ohio Reformatory, bodily measurements were recorded and used to predict which women would likely become recidivists.

### *Institutional Programs*

The Ohio Reformatory for women provided many of the programs considered rehabilitative during this time, including the indeterminate sentence, literacy and trade instruction, and wholesome farm labor (McKelvey, 1936). Also, the reformatory allowed children up to 2 years of age to stay with their mothers (Cox, Bixby, & Root, 1933). No silent system was employed. The women could write two letters per month and receive books and magazines directly from publishers. Only immediate relatives could visit (Cox, Bixby, & Root, 1933). Records reveal that the reformatory had a type of work-release program called a "probationary system", whereby inmates were employed in private homes throughout Ohio. Wages—3 dollars per week at the inception of the program and 5 dollars later—were paid to the Reformatory weekly, monthly, or at end of service. Clothing

expenses were taken from each woman's salary and the remainder was paid to the woman at discharge. At one time, 50 to 60 women were involved in this program (Undated letter from Superintendent Mittendorf, 1919-1921). Other inmates employed in the reformatory were paid 5 to 6 cents per day, except for the women who unloaded coal from the freight cars, who were paid 10 cents per day (Cox, Bixby, & Root, 1933).

Letters from the Superintendent reveal a little about institutional life. For instance, Mrs. Mittendorf wrote a letter dated September 18, 1922 in which she acknowledged the appearance at the reformatory the previous Sunday of Reverend Adam Daum from the McCormick Theological Seminary at the reformatory to provide religious services to the inmates at the reformatory. She enclosed in her letter payment of four dollars (Ohio Reformatory for Women, 1921-1924 D-H). Another letter reveals that dental services for inmates were provided by a dentist from Marysville (Ohio Reformatory for Women, 1921-1924 I-M). The reformatory had a choir which sang in the Marysville community. At one engagement, a donation was taken and the choir voted that the money be sent to the starving children of Europe (Ohio Reformatory for Women, 1921-1924).

Other letters to and from Superintendent Mittendorf reveal advocacy by early social workers in behalf of women inmates. For instance, Miss Jennie A. Curtis, Visitor from the Cleveland Humane Society, and Miss Helen Howard, Visitor from Doan District of the Associated Charities of Cleveland, wrote to Mrs. Mittendorf in behalf of Miss Addie Allen, inmate in the Ohio Reformatory. Miss Allen was pregnant and both Visitors inquired about her discharge. Mrs. Mittendorf responded that Miss Allen, convicted of contributing to delinquency, had a bad record and would need to remain in the reformatory for at least a year. Miss Allen had children in the care of the Cleveland Society and was considered immoral because of her living arrangements with several men. Miss Howard further asked Mrs. Mittendorf whether direct communication with Miss Allen about her children in Cleveland would stimulate her "to make plans for their future and to retain

her interest in the children" (Ohio Reformatory for Women, 1921-1924 A-C).

### Examination of Quantitative Data on Ohio Women Offenders

In 1913, 36 women and 738 men were admitted to the Ohio Penitentiary. Of these women, 18 were white and 18 black. An examination of the entire list of offenses for this combined total of 774 does not show any women admitted for sex crimes (i.e., prostitution, aiding prostitution, soliciting, or immoral conduct). Two persons were convicted, however, of procuring miscarriages. Assuming these two persons to be female, 34 of the women incarcerated were in the Ohio Penitentiary for offenses indistinguishable from offenses committed by men (Second Annual Report of the Ohio Board of Administration, 1913). This means that women offenders were sentenced for crimes, such as property and personal offenses.

A somewhat similar pattern emerges for the years that followed. In 1914, 28 women were admitted to the Penitentiary: 11 white and 17 black. Scrutiny of the list does not show any incarcerated for sex crimes, but two persons were convicted of abortion (Third Annual Report of the Ohio Board of Administration, 1914). The following year 17 women were admitted: 13 black and 4 white. No one was incarcerated that year for prostitution or abortions (Report of the Ohio Board of Administration, 1915). In 1916, before the Ohio Reformatory began to accept women in September, 22 females were admitted to the Ohio Penitentiary: 12 were white and 10 black. One was incarcerated for "being a tramp", one for abortion, and one for procuring a miscarriage.

If the capacity of the section for women in the Ohio Penitentiary was between 30 and 40, these beds would have constituted a scarce resource. One would think they would have been for the women society thought the most odious. Yet, a review of the penitentiary records on the types of crimes committed for those inmates incarcerated does not reveal a concern for sex crimes or for women who violated society's sexual norms. If prostitution was indeed viewed as more severe than property

offenses, we should see crimes of this nature in the list of the incarcerated. The penitentiary records used to cite the above statistics do not reveal the sentence length or time served. But the Register of Prisoners for the Ohio Reformatory for Women indicates sentence length as well as admission and discharge dates, and time on parole.

This additional information on women incarcerated at the Ohio Reformatory was recorded for this analysis from microfilm of the original logs. Documented were each inmate's name, age, race, offense, minimum sentence, maximum sentence, county of offense, date of admission to the reformatory, parole date, and date of final release. Except for the county, the authors coded all of this information, in addition to recording whether the woman served her sentence without parole and, if parole was granted, whether her parole was revoked.

From 1913 to 1923, 1260 women were admitted to the Ohio Penitentiary and the Ohio Reformatory for Women, according to records kept by the Ohio Historical Society. Of this total, 73% were white and 27% black. Because over 70 types of crimes were represented, the investigators combined these offenses into categories: (1) crimes against persons (including such crimes as homicide, shooting another person, cutting, kidnapping, robbery); (2) crimes against property (including larceny, thefts, burglary); (3) crimes against the family (including contributing to the delinquency or dependency of a child, abortion, and abandonment); (4) crimes against sexual morality (which included prostitution, aiding prostitution, soliciting for prostitution, and residing in a house of prostitution); (5) crimes involving drugs or alcohol (including possession of cocaine or morphine and manufacturing intoxicating liquors); (6) crimes against the public order (including drunkenness and indecent exposure); and (7) crimes involving delinquency (involving all young women adjudicated delinquent in a juvenile court).

Grouped in this manner, 27% of the women were incarcerated for crimes against property, 25% for crimes against the family, 19% for crimes against persons, and 17% for crimes against sexual morality. The remaining three categories constituted about 12% of the women incarcerated. With respect to how inmates left the Reformatory, most, 83%, were paroled; only 9%

served their sentences without parole. Of those paroled, 76% completed their parole period, 19% had their parole revoked for technical violation, and less than 2% had their parole revoked as a result of new offenses. Although the statute creating the reformatory specified the minimum age to be 16 years old for incarceration, one inmate was transferred from a Girls' Home at age 15. Ages ranged from 15 to 75, with a mean age of 27. The mean number of months for minimum and maximum sentences was about 8 and 75 months respectively. However, the mean number of months of actual time served was about 15 months. The mean time on parole or until final discharge was nearly 27 months.

Although the mean time served was 15 months for all categories of offense, introducing race as a blocking variable revealed some striking differences. See Table 1. For instance, white females served about 40 months for committing crimes against persons, compared to about 21 months for black females. This discrepancy is difficult to explain, but likely is based on racism. Because personal crimes are mostly intraracial, it likely reflects that crimes against whites were viewed more seriously than crimes against blacks. An alternative explanation is that because only one building was set aside for black females, compared to three for white females, more pressure was on the parole board to create bed space for new black inmates. However, this explanation does not hold when the time served for other categories are observed. Thus, the explanation that crimes against whites were believed to be more serious is likely correct.

However, with respect to time on parole, black females served double the length of time on parole than white females: 24 months, compared to 48. In fact, the data reveal that black females served longer time on parole than white females for all categories, possibly because the field officers believed black women needed more supervision than white women. Recalling that the Reformatory used the Bertillion system to identify potential recidivists and were taking bodily measurements, one may suspect that this system had a discriminatory effect upon black women who have different facial bone structures than white women.

Another salient difference is the length of time served for crimes against sexual morality and other crimes. The length of

Table 1

*Means of Sentences, Time Served, and Time on Parole By Crime Categories and Race*

	Minimum Sentence	Maximum Sentence	Time Served	Time on Parole
Crimes Against Persons				
White	14.25	151.40	40.32	24.47*
Black	15.38	160.25	21.09	48.15
Crimes Against Property				
White	9.33	84.52	13.96	30.30
Black	8.96	93.41	14.35	40.82
Crimes Against Family				
White	4.37	39.98	12.57	19.16
Black	3.45	36.00	13.00	23.04
Crimes Against Sexuality				
White	4.89	38.00	11.44	18.20
Black	3.76	37.22	10.21	26.07
Crimes Involving Drugs				
White	3.60	39.20	8.41	16.90
Black	3.00	36.00	9.64	17.57
Crimes Against Order				
White	7.35	36.77	10.06	14.19
Black	8.33	36.00	12.53	25.86
Crimes Involving Delinquency				
White	2.98	36.00	13.34	24.17
Black	3.00	36.00	9.05	31.37

\*All means are in months

time served for crimes against sexual morality was less than for property offenses or crimes against the family. This contradicts the assertion by some feminist scholars that women who were viewed as sexually immoral were punished more severely than they would have been for committing property offenses. In fact, the data show that the criminal justice system was a little harsher on crimes against the family than on crimes against morality. White juveniles who were delinquent were incarcerated longer than black juveniles.

An examination of the data reveals that for this ten year period, women who committed crimes against property and the family were incarcerated most often. The only exception occurred in 1921 when 29% of the women admitted to the reformatory were incarcerated for sexually related behaviors. This may have been the outcome of a political campaign, as a new governor assumed office in 1921 and who might have campaigned against prostitution. The data also show that a significant percentage of women were incarcerated for personal crimes as compared to sex-related crimes. Prostitution and prostitution-related behaviors exceed personal offenses in the general community; therefore, one would expect to see more women incarcerated for prostitution than for personal offenses. However, the data reveal that in some years personal offenses exceeded sex-related offenses and in other years, sexual-related offenses do lead by a narrow margin. These data provide evidence that Ohio's criminal justice system viewed sexually related crimes less seriously than what has been suggested by feminist scholars.

During the ten years studied, 24 women were sentenced to life imprisonment: 15 white, 9 black. See Table 2. The mean time served was about 106 months, or less than 10 years. This is skewed a little by the fact that one woman served about 35 years after having been convicted of first degree murder with a recommendation by the jury for mercy. If this case were deleted, women sentenced to life imprisonment served only about seven or eight years, a few years after becoming eligible after serving the minimum of five years. Some of these women, as well as others serving less than life, were paroled "out of Ohio forever," meaning they could never return to Ohio.

### Conclusion

This study has discovered the influence of the War Department and World War I on inmates imprisoned for sex related behaviors. Concerned with the effect of venereal diseases on soldiers in training during World War I, Congress passed federal legislation, which the President signed, that made the practicing of prostitution near a military base or camp a federal crime.

Table 2

*Descriptions of Women Sentenced to Life Imprisonment*

Race of Inmate	n	%		
White	15	62.5%		
Black	9	37.5%		
	24	100.0		
	Range	Mean	SD	
Age	17-40	26.38	7.37	
Time Served	14.53-429.70	105.79	88.77*	

\* All in months

Monies were made available to establish detention hospitals for the treatment of infected prostitutes, but such hospitals were abandoned when some women returned repeatedly. Believing more control was needed over these women, as well as more comprehensive social services, society encouraged the expansion of reformatories for women.

Although no convincing evidence exists of the effect of the national policy at the state level in Ohio, one would expect it to have had some effect. Because of patriotism and support for the War, one would expect that the states would become more aggressive at the state level in an effort to suppress and eliminate prostitution. Yet, the Ohio data do not reflect a strong effort to suppress prostitution through use of the Ohio Reformatory for Women. Perhaps, Ohio officials allowed the federal government to take the lead in solving this problem. Perhaps also state officials, although sensitive to the importance of suppressing prostitution, believed crimes against persons, property, and family were more important for domestic social policy than sex-related crimes. The most salient finding from these data was that building the Ohio Reformatory for Women increased the proportion of white females incarcerated. When white females were incarcerated in the Ohio Penitentiary for Men, they constituted about 50% or less of the inmates. But after the Ohio Reformatory for Women was built, they constituted 73%.



In addition, these data challenge the pronouncement that women who deviated from the norms of proper feminine sexuality were targeted by the criminal justice system for harsh treatment. The data question the quality and extent of discrimination against women for inappropriate sexual behavior. The data do not support the view that the reformatory was used to repress women's sexual behavior by punishing this behavior more severely than property offenses. Crimes against the family and property were punished more severely than sex-related offenses.

Furthermore, the data do not support the view that women who deviated from society's norm of femininity by committing violent or "men's" crimes were punished harshly. In fact, the data show relatively lenient treatment for women who committed personal crimes. Although this conclusion is the result of attempting to assess "leniency" and "harshness" occurring over seventy years ago, it is supported by observers closer to this era. For instance, in 1933 Forsythe studied the records at the Ohio Reformatory for Women from 1920 to 1924 and examined closely the women who were given life sentences or 10 years to life. She cited eight cases and noted that not one was in the reformatory for 40 months and asked "why were they released before they served even half of their minimum sentence?" She concluded that the "rapid turn-over is an appalling fact" (Forsythe, 1933, p. 59). This is especially telling when one considers that male prisoners with life sentences had to wait 25 years before being eligible for parole. Thus, observers who have written that women offenders were treated more leniently by the criminal justice system may have been more correct in their assessment than others who have stated that chivalry or female deviance generally brought harsher treatment.

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