

# CHEAP AMUSEMENTS



*WORKING WOMEN AND*

*LEISURE IN TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY NEW YORK*

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 **TEMPLE UNIVERSITY PRESS**  
PHILADELPHIA

my. The next three chapters are case studies of dance halls, excursions and amusement parks, and the movies. These examine in detail the commercialization of working-class amusements and how they articulated and popularized working-class youth's cultural practices. These studies suggest that working women had an impact on the evolution of popular amusements toward "mass leisure" and the new cultural attitudes toward gender and sexuality embedded in them. Finally, Chapter Seven looks at cultural transmission in the other direction, examining the efforts by middle-class reformers to impose their Victorian notions of wholesome leisure on working girls and their failure to forestall the commercial and heterosocial culture.

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## THE HOMOSOCIAL WORLD OF WORKING-CLASS AMUSEMENTS

Americans in the late nineteenth century perceived New York City's population as split into two classes, typified by the ostentatious mansions of Fifth Avenue and the squalid tenement slums of Mulberry Bend. Images of the elite "400" and the impoverished "other half," created by photographers and poets, cartoonists and crusaders, indelibly shape our understanding of the metropolis. Yet this picture oversimplifies the complex texture of Manhattan's culture, particularly that of its working-class inhabitants. The social worlds of the poverty-stricken day laborer, unionized craftsman, stylish young saleswoman, and boardinghouse keeper were often dissimilar, and diverged further according to ethnic and religious background. Patterns of working-class leisure were likewise kaleidoscopic: a neighborhood's facilities for recreation ranged from sparse to numerous; Old World celebrations and home-centered conviviality competed with commercial amusements; long hours of arduous labor left many without leisure, while others enjoyed the city's variegated nightlife.

As Jacob Riis graphically demonstrated, poverty was a pervasive fact of working-class life in turn-of-the-century New York, whose population was heavily dominated by immigrants and their children. In the 1880's, a majority of Manhattanites lived at the subsistence level, and the depression of the 1890's brought further hardship to the laboring poor. Already overcrowded working-class districts in lower Manhattan swelled with a massive influx of eastern

and southern Europeans. Although living standards rose after 1900, many barely survived, uncertain of employment, scrambling to make ends meet.<sup>1</sup>

The income of laboring families varied considerably. Two extensive budget studies covering the period from 1903 to 1909 indicate that the typical working-class family, comprised of four to six members, earned on average eight hundred dollars a year, or fifteen dollars a week. In fewer than 50 percent of the households was the father the sole means of support. "An income of above \$700 or \$800 is obtainable as a rule only by taking lodgers or by putting mother and children to work," observed Robert Coit Chapin in his investigation of working-class expenditures. Unusually high rents, resulting from urban density, consumed the wages of the poor. Food was usually purchased daily, at higher cost than buying in bulk, and diets were often limited in variety and nutrition.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, working-class standards of living clearly improved in the period from 1880 to 1920, particularly after 1900. A British study in 1911 warned not to confuse the lower East Side's density with squalor: "Poverty is not much in evidence; shops are bright; there is no lack of places of amusement; restaurants of some pretension are not hard to find."<sup>3</sup> Many were able to move out of the crowded slums of lower Manhattan to uptown addresses and newly built tenement apartments. The death rate dropped 30 percent in this period, a sign of improved sanitation and health conditions. Skilled workers in particular made important gains in wages and hours of labor, having organized many of New York's major industries, including the engine-operating, printing, building, and metal-working trades. The American-born children of Irish and German immigrants who had poured into Manhattan in the nineteenth century were coming of age and gaining a modicum of social mobility. Even the migrants from eastern Europe and Italy had established their communities on a firmer footing by 1900, the Russian Jews in particular organizing an extensive cultural and political apparatus.<sup>4</sup>

### **FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT**

Since housing, food, fuel, and clothing consumed most of their income, the working-class family as a unit could afford only the cheapest of amusements. Chapin's budget study indicates careful and

limited outlays for entertainment and relaxation, particularly among low-income families. For the laboring poor, leisure activity was brief, casual, and noncommercial. "In the evening they sit in front of the house," Chapin observed of one family, while the members of another "never go any place at all except to the woman's parents, who live across the way." Even among families earning more than seventeen dollars a week, inexpensive excursions and theater trips were the rule. These were more often occasional treats than regular events; a family might visit the amusement resorts at Coney Island or Fort George once or twice a summer.<sup>5</sup> Among the Greenwich Villagers whom Louise Bolard More studied in 1907, the poorest families spent nothing for recreation; even more prosperous households averaged only thirty-five cents a week for entertainment.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, a 1914 investigation of West Side families found that "amusement cost them very, very little and was extremely circumscribed," consisting primarily of walks, visiting friends, and reading the penny press. When these families did spend money on recreation, typically they attended moving picture shows or rode the trolleys for a nickel or, more infrequently, went to a dance or theater. As late as the First World War, working-class families spent only 2.4 percent of their earnings on amusements.<sup>7</sup>

The most common forms of recreation, especially among families living on the margins of self-sufficiency, were free. Streets served as the center of social life in the working-class districts, where laboring people clustered on street corners, on stoops, and in doorways of tenements, relaxing and socializing after their day's work. Lower East Side streets teemed with sights of interest and penny pleasures: organ grinders and buskers played favorite airs, itinerant acrobats performed tricks, and baked-potato vendors, hot-corn stands, and soda dispensers vied for customers. In the Italian community clustered in the upper East Side, street musicians and organ grinders made their melodies heard above the clatter of elevated trains and shouting pushcart vendors, collecting nickels from appreciative passers-by. Maureen Connelly, an Irish immigrant, remembered listening to the German bands that played in Yorkville and the men who would sing for pennies in the tenement yards. "Something was always happening," recalled Samuel Chotzinoff of his boyhood among lower East Side Jews, "and our attention was continually being shifted from one excitement to another."<sup>8</sup>

This multilayered world allowed different groups to construct their own amusements. For many, the after-dinner stroll to a park or window-shopping on Grand Street or the Bowery became a ritual. "Every night the brightly lighted main thoroughfares, with their gleaming store-windows and their lines of trucks in the gutters, provide a promenade for thousands who find in walk and talk along the pavement a cheap form of social entertainment." Sunday diversions might even include visits to tenement construction sites, "to wonder at and admire the light rooms, the bath tubs, and the other improvements."<sup>9</sup>

Parks, too, were a popular form of entertainment for working-class families, particularly among the average wage-earners, who could ill afford excursions or theater trips. An outing to Central Park on a Sunday was considered a special family treat, while the neighborhood parks, squares, and playgrounds were places for daily relaxation. On hot summer nights in Jackson Park, close to the East River, "the men were in their undershirts. The women, more fully dressed, carried newspapers for fans. Hordes of barefoot children played games, weaving in and out of the always thick mass of promenaders."<sup>10</sup>

Although working-class tenements were usually cramped and dark, the home also served as an important social center for family recreation. In the lower East Side, Jewish kinfolk and neighbors gathered together in tenement kitchens for everyday socializing and observance of religious holidays. Christian families likewise celebrated yearly festivals, decorating their rooms according to the traditions of their homelands at Christmas and Easter. Neighbors from the Old Country joined together for regular social evenings in the home, as in this typical Hungarian gathering:

In the Grubinsky kitchen they sit in a circle, husbands and wives together. Martin Grubinsky and his wife are each at work on cane weaving. The babies play on the floor in the middle of the circle. Perhaps a pail of mild beer is handed around once or twice, but not too often.<sup>11</sup>

Italian friends often met in the home to drink homemade wine, play cards, and socialize. House parties for birthdays or other occasions

were also popular. In the West Side Irish districts, revellers enjoyed popular songs, fancy dance steps, masquerading, minstrelsy, and alcohol at the typical house party. Similarly, high spirits in one East Side tenement caused a neighbor to complain, "They all had a jollification together in the upper rooms, drinking, music and dancing about till late."<sup>12</sup>

The close quarters of the tenement house engendered particular forms of sociability. Immigrant neighbors who had not learned—or could not afford—the American notion of privacy congregated in the hallways, left their doors open to talk between apartments, and used the airshaft to facilitate conversation. For Italian women, settlement worker Lillian Betts observed, a "tenement house hall in New York is the substitute for the road of her village."<sup>13</sup> The tenement yard was often a focal point of neighborhood interaction, particularly when catalyzed by singers and musicians, as one East Sider observed:

After they had practised a time they would play dance music, and all the girls and boys in the flats would go in the yards and dance. How the people did enjoy that music! Every one would be at their windows listening. Sometimes they would play old song tunes, so soft and so beautiful. Then the people would clap their hands; it was inspiring in a neighborhood like that.<sup>14</sup>

As a recreational space, the home often brought together working-class wives and husbands. George Bevan's extensive 1913 study of male recreation indicates that married men spent about half their leisure time with their families. Men who labored long hours tended to pass their evenings at home recuperating from toil, while those who worked an eight-hour day spent Saturday afternoons at home. Indeed, two-thirds of the skilled workers reported that they took their recreation with their families, either at home or on outings. The behavior of these craftsmen and mechanics may well have been influenced by the popularization of domestic ideals in the labor press, which not only affirmed women's place in the home but advocated a close family life.<sup>15</sup>

Although this evidence suggests that informal, everyday leisure often was enjoyed within a familial context, closer examination indi-

cates that much working-class social life was divided by gender. Highly skilled workers may have accepted the canons of domesticity, but other men frequently took their recreation apart from wives and children. Investigators of Italian children's home life, for example, found that their fathers were rarely at home during the caseworkers' evening and weekend visits, except during the dinner hour. In the households of the West Side, an area dominated by American, German, and Irish families, "the husband comes home at night, has his dinner, and goes out with the 'men,' or sits at home to read his paper."<sup>16</sup> Even when unemployed, one immigrant woman observed, Rumanian men never stayed at home but went to play cards at the union hall.<sup>17</sup>

A detailed 1914 study of thirty-four families indicates more specifically the differential and segregated quality of leisure for women and men. On Sundays, men would attend baseball games, go fishing, or take outings, while their wives stayed at home or took the children on walks or to local parks. In one Irish American family, for example, the wife sat on her front steps, gossiped with neighbors, and took her children to the park and to free movies at the local settlement house. In contrast, her husband on Saturday night went out "for a shave and afterward treat[ed] his friend at one of the saloons," while on Sunday he went out for a meal. A native-born couple with two young children spent about three dollars a year on theater trips and a nickel a month on streetcar rides, but their regular recreation was segregated: "On Sunday the husband goes to Rockaway beach for an outing. The mother and children take walks as a rule." While many of the wives surveyed went to church or did housework, "a great many of the men spend Sunday morning reading the Sunday papers."<sup>18</sup>

### **WORKINGMEN'S LEISURE**

Workingmen could turn to a highly visible and extensive network of leisure institutions to which women had marginal or problematic access. Many of these forms of amusement were commercial ventures and included poolrooms and billiard halls, bowling alleys, shooting galleries, and gymnasia. Others were organized by working-class men themselves. Baseball teams, for example, were

formed by workingmen's clubs, factory employees, and street gangs throughout the tenement districts. Urban spaces such as cigar stores, barber shops, and street corners were colonized by men as hangouts for socializing and relaxing. The most popular forms of workingmen's recreation, however, were the saloon, lodge, and club, places in which male camaraderie resonated with working-class economic and social concerns.<sup>19</sup>

Dominating the physical space of most tenement neighborhoods, the saloon exemplifies workingmen's public culture. Over ten thousand saloons were in business throughout greater New York in 1900. Saloons tended to be spread out along the wide avenues that ran the length of Manhattan, as well as such commercial downtown streets as the Bowery. The mixed land use in most working-class neighborhoods ensured that saloons, located on the ground floor of tenements and close to factories and businesses, would be central meeting places for men. Most street corners had at least one bar catering to local patrons. In the 15th Assembly District, for example, an area bounded by 43rd Street, 53rd Street, Eighth Avenue, and the Hudson River, almost one-half of the ninety-two street corners were occupied by saloons, and sixty-six taprooms were scattered along the blocks.<sup>20</sup>

Alcohol obviously provided a major attraction for working-class customers who sought to forget tedium, toil, and poverty. George Bevens found that men who labored the longest hours, and thus had the least leisure time, paid the most visits to saloons. Similarly, men who earned low wages disproportionately attended saloons. Noted one mechanic: "Men who get small wages and are in uncertain employment become easily discouraged when they think of the needs at home. . . . They go to the saloon to drown their despondency and trouble."<sup>21</sup>

More important, the saloon united sociability, psychological support, and economic services for workingmen. Their bright lights, etched glass, and polished fixtures, their friendly atmosphere, appearance of abundance, and informal conviviality marked a sharp contrast to crowded tenements and exploitative workplaces. Workers packed saloons on the Bowery and Division Streets on their way home from the factory, seeking "a 'half-way' stopping place where, over a schooner of beer, the men talk over their work of the day and

plan for the evening. . . . At nightfall these places are thronged four or five deep about the bar."<sup>22</sup> A man could get a free lunch with a five-cent beer and enjoy the good fellowship of the barkeep and patrons in the bargain. If he wanted a job, a loan, or simply the news, the workingman headed for the saloon. Italian men, for example, met in waterfront cafes on President Street to drink wine and play cards as they waited for information about incoming ships and day labor jobs on the docks. One regular informed Lillian Wald that "the fellows just kind of talk about jobs when they're sitting 'round in the saloons, and sometimes you pick something up."<sup>23</sup>

For newly arrived immigrants, saloons offered a wealth of important services to help in the adjustment to the New World. One saloon, for instance, advertised that it supplied Serbians, Croatians, and Hungarians with a large meeting room, money barter, steamship tickets, employment, board, and lodging. In another advertisement, the owner of a hall and bar assured his countrymen of a well-organized social life:

Popular wine-beer hall and coffee house.  
The well liked meeting place of Hungarians. . . .  
Comfortably arranged furnished rooms.  
First class Hungarian kitchen.  
Billiard, also dance hall, comfortable  
for meetings further for weddings and  
balls. Those from the country receive  
proper elucidation.<sup>24</sup>

Although the saloon was often termed the "poor man's club," most workingmen also frequented a fraternal society, mutual benefit association, or lodge. Such voluntary organizations combined recreation and camaraderie with economic services, including protection against sickness, disability, and financial emergencies. These forms of working-class self-activity were necessary adaptations to an industrial society that had few social welfare provisions. Some of these were church-sponsored associations, such as the Workingmen's Club of the Church of the Holy Communion. Founded in 1873, this club sought "to promote social intercourse and brotherly regard among its members," while offering medical treatment, monetary assistance in times of illness, free library facilities, and a proper burial.<sup>25</sup>

Even more common were the mutual benefit societies and lodges organized by immigrants. Insurance was considered a primary obligation of the breadwinner, and contributions to mutual aid associations were often heavy.<sup>26</sup> German immigrants formed *Unterstützung Vereinen*, sickness and death benefit societies, which were organized by occupation or place of origin. Numerous Italian societies, estimated at from two to three thousand, thrived in greater New York, each composed of immigrants from a single town or island. The *Società di Mutuo-Soccorso Isola Salina*, a typical benevolent order, limited its membership to those born on the island and required an initiation fee based on age. For monthly dues of one dollar, the member would receive a physician's attention, a steamship ticket to Italy for medical reasons, a funeral, and death benefits paid to his widow.<sup>27</sup>

The Jewish East Side was similarly "honey-combed with Clubs and Societies," ranging from national organizations and large Hebrew orders to numerous small societies consisting of emigres from a particular locality. The *Kehillah*, or governing structure of New York's Jewish community, estimated in 1918 that over one million Jews were involved in fraternal orders. While the "ancient form" of organization, the burial club, was still common, it observed, a number of societies had developed into "Vereinen" or "Friendly Societies," which not only buried the dead but provided sick benefits and loans: "This form of mutual aid received *in this world* by the members themselves has become extremely popular among the immigrant Jews, many of them belonging to two and more societies."<sup>28</sup> These immigrant voluntary societies not only addressed serious needs but also provided an outlet for sociability and entertainment. The yearly lodge balls and picnics, organized to raise money for charitable purposes, were often the central social events of working-class community life.

The activities of workingmen's voluntary organizations intertwined with the world of the saloon. Fraternal lodges and clubs regularly used the second-story halls and back rooms of saloons for meetings and entertainments. In Magyar Hall, a saloon patronized by Hungarians and Czechs, the "upper floors are occupied for meeting rooms, where different societies [sic] and workmen circles meet."<sup>29</sup> A survey of 702 clubs found that almost 70 percent met in saloons or neighborhood halls that sold liquor. Such clubs and other

organizations paid a nominal rental fee to the saloon owner, but their members were expected to frequent the bar. Trade unions followed a similar practice in their meetings: "It is understood and expected that the members of the union will patronize the bar and will 'take it out in trade.'"<sup>30</sup> The close relationship between the commercial interests of the saloon and the voluntary associations of workingmen provided a foundation for the public social life of working-class communities.

At the same time, the interlocking network of leisure activities strengthened an ethos of masculinity among workingmen. This male culture is most clearly revealed in the social practices of the saloon. With the exception of German beer halls, saloons were defined primarily as homosocial worlds where men gathered to debate politics, commiserate over work and family obligations, and wrangle over sports. At one saloon, for example, a chalkboard prominently displayed baseball scores, and a "half dozen men [were] in here talking baseball."<sup>31</sup> Bars often encouraged rowdy behavior and vulgar language less acceptable in other areas of social life. At the Odd Fellow's Hall in St. Mark's Place, "one of the saloonkeepers . . . entertained us with disorderly songs and poems in [the] German language," observed a vice investigator from the Committee of Fourteen.<sup>32</sup> At another saloon, the behavior of the bartender and patrons rivalled a vaudeville turn:

[The bartender] is a hot headed Irishman. He took a seltzer bottel and sqwoiter it on th[e] sleeping fellow the latter got up and went to the bar and filled his mouth with beer from one of the [glasses] and spewed it at [the bartender] dousing him about the face. [He] swor[e] at him and the fellow took the whole [glass] and doused him with it. It was but low comedy with t[h]em the [re] was no ill feeling. It was their gentle way of supplementing words with action without getti[n]g real mad about it. This is about the way [the bartender] runs the place. Very disorderly I should say.<sup>33</sup>

Mutuality among workingmen was affirmed by the custom of treating rounds of beer or games of billiards to one's mates. Treating was considered a courtesy between men and a symbol of respecta-

bility. As one reformer recalled of the pre-Prohibition days, "A kind of obligation of honor was created which required the individual to continue drinking until everyone in the group he was part of had the opportunity to treat everybody else."<sup>34</sup> Barkeepers encouraged this practice by offering drinks on the house and herding men into large groups in order to swell the size of the rounds.

Gambling often played an important role in the social life of the saloon. At the Sport Cafe, a "resort for respectable Italian workingmen" near Pennsylvania Station, men shot pool and played cards for drinks. The stimulus of high stakes drew men to the back room of another saloon:

The room was filled and at every table 3 or 4 men were playing cards and were stand[ing] up in [the] centre of room and around the tables watching them, they must have been playing for pretty big stakes, there was a lot of excitement here[;] some of the players almost got into a fight.<sup>35</sup>

Within this homosocial world, rituals of aggression and competition became important mechanisms for male bonding.

The presence of widespread prostitution also defined saloons as male worlds. Vice investigations of the day provide ample evidence that respectable working-class drinking coexisted with soliciting in the back room. George Kneeland's extensive study of prostitution found that in one-seventh of the 765 bars studied, streetwalkers met customers in the back rooms. The majority of these places were located along Third and Eighth Avenues from 14th Street to 125th Street, both major commercial arteries in working-class districts.<sup>36</sup> At Staunton and Dunleary's saloon, on the corner of Eighth Avenue and 17th Street, workingmen quietly nursed their beers and played cards, while the back room "appear[ed] to be a hangout for street walkers."<sup>37</sup>

#### **WORKING-CLASS WIVES' RECREATION**

In contrast to this male public culture, the leisure activities of married women were more limited and confined. While workingmen had a broad network of ethnic, class, and commercial institutions

available to them, their wives often experienced a dearth of pleasure in their lives. Louise Bolard More's study of Greenwich Village is typical of investigators' observations: "The men have the saloons, political clubs, trade-unions or lodges for their recreation, . . . while the mothers have almost no recreation, only a dreary round of work, day after day, with occasionally a door-step gossip to vary the monotony of their lives."<sup>38</sup> One of the few detailed descriptions of married women's leisure reveals its ephemeral quality, orientation to the home, and reliance on informal kin and friendship networks for sociability:

Many women spend their leisure sitting on the steps of their tenement gossiping; some lean out of the window with a pillow to keep their elbows from being scraped by the stone sills; others take walks to the parks; some occasionally visit relatives or friends; and there is, once in a while, a dinner party; but, on the whole, except for the men, there is little conscious recreation.<sup>39</sup>

The constraints on married women's leisure time were in large part shaped by the work rhythms of the home. The scheduling of household chores, of cleaning, cooking, and child care, did not permit the clear differentiation between work and leisure experienced by most workingmen, whose labor was timed to the factory clock and the bosses' commands.<sup>40</sup> These scheduling problems were compounded by inadequate plumbing in the tenements, poor municipal sanitation, and the inability to afford simple labor-saving technology. When asked by an interviewer if her mother had worked for a living, Maria Cichetti's reply catalogued the non-waged labor of working-class wives: she had used a coal fire to heat her irons, handled big iron pots in cooking, chopped wood in the cellar, baked her own bread, and borne thirteen babies.<sup>41</sup> Many women also took in boarders to make ends meet, multiplying their household burdens.

Women's work continued long after men's had ceased. In a typical evening scene in an East Side home, while "the mother is attending to her household work, the father is reading a paper, or he may be watching the children at play."<sup>42</sup> A common form of working-class recreation involved reading and discussing the news, particularly the Sunday editions of the *New York Journal* and the *World*,

but "the women have no time to read the papers, except the fashion or society notes, or some famous scandal or murder case."<sup>43</sup> Women had to fit their entertainment into their work, rather than around it. Washing the laundry, supervising children at play, or shopping at the local market, women might find a few moments to socialize with neighbors. "Many women do their washing in this yard," noted a middle-class tenement inspector. "Besides being the playground of children, it is the gathering vestibule for gossip and exchange for profanity."<sup>44</sup> Given the task-oriented nature of their work, married women's leisure was intermittent, snatched between household chores.

Indeed, a family's leisure often *became* work for women. Between child care and food preparation, outings, picnics, and parties were hardly relaxed times for mothers. Maria Cichetti, for example, recalls that when her mother took the children to Central Park for a "treat," she was occupied with making certain they looked presentable and would not disgrace the family in their adopted country by picking the flowers or walking on the grass.<sup>45</sup>

The distribution of resources among family members also restricted women's participation in recreation. As we have seen, household budgets allowed only small sums for family recreation, but a substantial portion of the breadwinner's income was allocated as spending money for personal use. Husbands retained the right to remove whatever spending money they desired before contributing the rest to the household. Workingmen spent about 10 percent of their weekly income on personal expenses, the bulk of it on beer and liquor, tobacco, and movie and theater tickets. While some husbands removed only transportation and lunch money from their pay envelopes, others abused their privilege: "The husband brings his wages to his wife at the end of the week or fortnight. He gives her the whole amount and receives back carfare and 'beer' money; or he gives her as much as 'he feels like' or 'as much as he has left after Saturday night.'"<sup>46</sup>

The issue of spending money was a constant source of tension within the working-class family. Wives voiced opposition to men's drinking up their wages in saloons, rather than committing their earnings to the household. Women in Greenwich Village agreed that "a good husband should turn over to his wife all his wages,



receiving one or two dollars a week for his personal use."<sup>47</sup> Whatever the outcome of this weekly negotiation, the designation of the breadwinner's spending money as *personal* allowed men to pursue a social life based upon access to commercial, public recreation. Married women, however, received no spending money of their own. Although they controlled the household's purse strings, this power was mitigated by the constant pressure to make ends meet, and family needs usually governed their expenditures. Even a married woman's own income, earned by keeping boarders or taking in laundry, was usually spent on the home and family, on clothing for the children or better-quality food, rather than personal recreation. "The usual attitude toward any expenditure for pleasure," Louise Bolard More noted, "is that it is a luxury which cannot be afforded." Only after 1905, with the rise of the nickelodeon, did large numbers of working-class wives regularly enjoy commercialized forms of leisure (see Chapter VI).<sup>48</sup>

The grinding rhythms of household labor and limited access to financial resources closely circumscribed many women's social participation. "The lives of the women are very narrow," noted one observer, "and they have few interests outside their homes."<sup>49</sup> Indeed, many women sought to make the home into a center for recreation, an alternative to the saloons and streets. Working-class wives carefully decorated their small tenement quarters, even designating one of the multipurpose rooms the "parlor." Surprised observers discovered that "the comforts of life are found in the vilest tenements." Heavy overstuffed furniture, cheap lace curtains, carpets, and bric-a-brac crowded the more prosperous working-class home.<sup>50</sup> Respectability was denoted by one's furnishings, even when purchased on the installment plan. Families would get themselves into such debt that, for some, "the only recreation [was] the display of their furniture." Having a piano or organ in the front room, and lessons for the children twice a week, fulfilled the dreams of many proud mothers.<sup>51</sup> Poorer women spruced up their tenement quarters with a variety of room decorations paid for in grocer's coupons and trading stamps. Gaudily colored religious prints, portraits of Lincoln and Washington, and advertising posters mingled indiscriminately in the tenement parlor: "Pictures of every kind are prized, cheap lithographs, bill-posters, portraits of circus perform-

ers and cigaret girls, which are companioned by bleeding hearts, saints, angels and heads of Christ."<sup>52</sup>

Some women hardly left their tenement houses. In trying to attract married women to its programs, the College Settlement found it difficult to dislodge the "habit of staying indoors," a tendency fixed by the burdens of child care and housework and exacerbated by lack of money. Henry Moscowitz, a lower East Side resident and civic leader, reported that many mothers went out no more than twice a week: "Complaints, serious complaints are made, 'Why don't you come to visit me?' and they say 'We live so high up we seldom come.'"<sup>53</sup> This pattern seems to have been especially prevalent among Italian women, reinforced by the strong tradition of the sheltered female. While Andrea Bocci's father went out to a Prince Street saloon every night, her mother never went out: "If one of her friends would be sick, she would go and help them out, but otherwise she would stay at home."<sup>54</sup>

This comment reflects the tradition of mutuality and reciprocity prevalent within immigrant working-class communities, a tradition that was shared by men and women but whose expression took different cultural forms. For men, public institutions such as the saloon and fraternal lodge affirmed these values through such customary practices as treating rounds and the organization of mutual aid. These cultural forms were directly or indirectly related to workingmen's experience of industrial labor and comprised an alternative culture to competitive individualism and the values of the marketplace.<sup>55</sup> Mutuality among women was likewise expressed in ways central to their own experience, primarily through an interdependent network of kin and neighbors. Assistance in periods of need, or simply "helping out" in daily labor, was often the context for female sociability, although this was not strictly time for "leisure." The contrast between women and men may be seen in the intertwined lives of two Irish families in an upper East Side tenement: "Mrs. H. is very often in the house of Mrs. C. and they exchange many favors in the course of a day, while at night their husbands play cards and share their beer." Such cooperative housekeeping arrangements and joint social evenings were apparently quite common among families with kin ties.<sup>56</sup>

Elsa Herzfeld, in her ethnographic descriptions of West Side

families, noted the reciprocal expectations of mutual aid and sociability among female kinfolk—offering assistance during illness and pregnancies, attending funerals, celebrating weddings and christenings, exchanging Christmas and Easter gifts, organizing family dinners during the holidays, and visiting for extended periods among relatives. The intensity of these obligations was such that failure to follow social forms could cause ruptures in kinship ties. “One woman gave up visiting her only sister because the latter had failed to congratulate her when her baby was born,” noted Herzfeld, although later “when the sister died she did her utmost for the bereaved children.”<sup>57</sup>

#### **MARRIED WOMEN AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

While women’s sociability was centered in the network of kin and neighbors, there was no simple or rigid gender-based dichotomy between public and private realms of leisure. The Catholic Church, which dominated the religious landscape of New York, was one public institution figuring heavily in the social lives of many women, who attended services and participated in church organizations and celebrations. The point at which church functions, usually seen as “obligatory time,” shade into leisure time is arguable; when questioned by interviewers, Italian women, for example, recalled that their churches sponsored few social activities. Still, such events as the saint’s day festivals were public occasions for Italian women to parade the streets in colorful processions, set up shrines on the sidewalks and tenement house windows, wear elaborate dress, and eat picnic luncheons in the local parks.<sup>58</sup> Investigators did find that working-class women tended to go to church more often than men, although in many cases their attendance was hampered by child care and household chores.<sup>59</sup>

Some working-class wives also participated in the formal organizational life of their communities, although not to the same extent as middle-class women. Jewish women organized their own mutual aid societies, often as ladies’ auxiliaries to fraternal orders, as well as philanthropic, economic, and cultural agencies. The Kehillah discovered fifty-five benefit societies, nine lodges, and forty-eight other organizations run by women in 1918. Some of these, particu-

larly the philanthropic societies, were organized by middle-class Jews. Most of the mutual aid societies, however, met in the lower East Side and were led by women who lived either there or in uptown and Brooklyn working-class neighborhoods. Other Jewish women joined mixed-sex *landsmanshaft* organizations and attended their biweekly meetings.<sup>60</sup> While not all immigrant wives enjoyed such extensive participation, most were invited to attend the annual balls, picnics, and entertainments sponsored by their husbands’ fraternal organizations.<sup>61</sup>

Despite this level of involvement, most women held a marginal position in the public institutions that organized much working-class leisure. The social patterns surrounding drinking were particularly problematic for women. While the saloon may have affirmed reciprocity and class-based sociability for its male patrons, this favorable view was not shared by their wives. The area around saloons could be hazardous spaces where women were subjected to harassment by drunks and loafers: “Women therefore zigzagged from one side of the street to another, even on short walks, to avoid passing bar rooms.”<sup>62</sup> Many women never even entered a saloon. Sophia Margolis, struggling to describe the cafes where Italian men met and drank, said finally, “I don’t know much about these cafes because I never went in one.”<sup>63</sup>

For wives and mothers concerned with making ends meet, the lure of the saloon posed a threat to their families’ survival. They particularly decried the customary practice of treating rounds: “The married man who can ‘treat,’ it is generally conceded, is not fair to his family; he keeps his wages at their expense.” One settlement worker even recalled that working-class wives approached the staff for “the name of some kind of ‘dope’ which they could put into the husband’s food or drink for the purpose of making alcohol unpalatable.”<sup>64</sup> Working-class wives clearly differentiated a public and private sphere for drinking, favoring men who imbibed at home and censuring the husband who drank in saloons, away from his family. Many men went to beer saloons, observed Elsa Marek, “and they started yelling there and getting drunk and come home and the children cry, there was no money, then they start fighting.” When her husband wanted beer, however, “he went with the pail and he brings the beer home . . . so he has everything home.”<sup>65</sup>

Women who liked to drink penetrated the male sphere of the saloon in ways that were carefully delineated. Saloons were customarily divided into two sections—the barroom, with its long counter and stools, and the back room, containing tables and chairs and occasionally a music box or dance floor. It was unacceptable for respectable women to stand at the bar, and those who went unescorted into the back room ran the risk of being labelled prostitutes. By the 1910's, however, women increasingly frequented saloons, particularly if they purveyed food as well as drink. Women's labor leader Margaret Dreier Robins observed in 1913, "I know girls who have entered a saloon because they could there get a bowl of soup as well as a glass of beer for five cents, receiving in that bowl of soup better nourishment than any other expenditure of such five cents could bring them."<sup>66</sup> This growing tendency is confirmed by the Committee of Fourteen's investigation of saloons and vice. While there were prostitutes soliciting in Jack's Cafe, a middle West Side restaurant and saloon, an investigator nonetheless observed that "2 of the women that were here seemed to be respectable, they had been out marketing and had their market bags with them." A few blocks away at Ihrig's Cafe, the back room contained four respectable German couples.<sup>67</sup> Still, the presence of women remained controversial. In order to ensure their good reputations, many saloon keepers only served couples in the back room and barred unaccompanied women or men. One vice investigator recounts the story of his sitting down at a table in the back room and the boss asking him what he wanted: "I ordered a drink, he said this is no whore house, you'll have to come out to the bar."<sup>68</sup> The saloon was thus acknowledged to be a dangerous environment for women, who were "fair game" unless protected by an escort.

Given the persistence of this male culture, working-class women usually chose not to seat themselves in the saloon, but more commonly "rushed the growler," buying a bucket's worth of beer to be drunk at home. Except for one prostitute, the only women observed at The Pippin, an upper East Side bar, were a few "that came in for pints, none of them remained here or sat down at the tables or consumed any liquor on the premises." Tenement "beer parties" were a frequent occurrence, and some neighbors complained that

"with the women it was a constant parade of beer kettles from early morning until late at night."<sup>69</sup>

Working-class women also gambled, but the context in which they did so differed significantly from the male rituals of shooting pool, rolling dice, and betting on cards. Gambling in direct competition reinforced notions of masculine skill and aggression, of winning at another's expense, while at the same time it strengthened male solidarity. Women's betting took place, not against a face-to-face opponent, but in an impersonal and abstract system of chance. Women typically played "policy," a daily lottery based on picking combinations of numbers. As one newspaper account observed, "many of the players are women who live in the tenement districts and spend almost every cent they earn in playing 'gigs,' 'horses,' and 'saddles.'"<sup>70</sup>

#### **IMMIGRANT TRADITIONS AND THE "AMERICAN STANDARD"**

Sexual divisions in work, income distribution, and organizational life contributed to the differing uses of leisure time by working-class women and men. Married women remained marginal to the vigorous public culture expressed in saloons and voluntary societies. It is important to acknowledge, however, that this pattern of segregated, homosocial leisure varied among working-class immigrants and their American-born offspring. In succession, different Old World cultures took root in New York's neighborhoods and confronted new ways of organizing leisure time. The cultural patterns of working-class recreation at any given moment of New York's history were extremely complex. Some immigrants rejected the modern culture, seeing a threat to age-old customs, while their children anxiously converted to the American standard, revelling in commercial entertainment. Others accepted certain types of urban recreation, such as the saloon, or adapted traditional forms of pleasure to new conditions. Cultural exchange—food, fads, and forms of amusement—also took place among the different immigrant groups, who often lived in close proximity.<sup>71</sup>

As many recent historians have argued, cultural traditions and

"ways of seeing" indigenous to particular national groups were the lenses through which immigrant working-class families responded to a new industrial and urban environment. Familial values, attitudes toward women's roles, and resistance and adaptation to the workplace were all filtered through such traditions.<sup>72</sup> These also shaped working-class patterns of recreation. Germans, for example, encouraged mixed-sex participation in an amusement usually considered a bastion of male prerogative by taking family groups to huge beer gardens. Such beer halls, where all indulged in drink, song, and socializing, catered to respectable and well-behaved crowds of women and men.<sup>73</sup> Italian men, in contrast, took their everyday recreation apart from the family, but joined their wives and children to commemorate saints' days. The festival tradition remained an important part of Italian life in New York, an opportunity to honor the patron saint of their Old World home with parades and fireworks.<sup>74</sup>

Native-born and "Americanized" immigrant groups tended to frequent commercial amusements and spend the most money on recreation. George Bevans, for example, traced workingmen's leisure activities by national origin and found distinctive differences. German men took their leisure most often with their families. The British-born worker could usually be found in the saloon or union hall. Russian Jews were most likely to spend their evenings in didactic pursuits, at public lectures, libraries, and night schools. In contrast, American-born workingmen, who were most often sons of immigrants, used their leisure time in clubs and lodges, movies, theaters, dance halls, and poolrooms.<sup>75</sup> Budget studies reveal similar trends. Native-born Greenwich Villagers tended to allocate more of their income for commercial forms of recreation and personal spending than did foreign-born families, who supported the traditional network of home, neighbors, and church by spending their money on household goods and furniture, religious contributions, education, drink, and gifts to friends. Robert Chapin likewise found that "a larger expenditure for amusement and recreation prevails among the nationalities that have adopted most completely the American standard."<sup>76</sup>

To some extent, this "American standard" simply reflected the tendency of families with higher incomes to have larger outlays for

recreation and the likelihood that recent immigrants were on the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. For many immigrants, however, participation in urban recreation was part of the broader experience of Americanization. Even though immigrants tended to segregate themselves by national origin, the *forms* of amusement in tenement districts crossed ethnic lines: saloons, lodges, socials, dances, and excursions were common in all working-class neighborhoods.<sup>77</sup>

Forged in an urban and industrial society, these American amusements offered a novel conception of leisure to the newly arrived immigrant—the idea of segmenting and organizing leisure into a distinct sphere of activity. David Blaustein, the head of the East Side's Educational Alliance, suggested the difference between the Old World and the New:

Now to-day the immigrant becomes bewildered when he first comes here to America. As a further illustration, take organized amusement. I call it organized amusement, the way we have picnics, balls, assemblies. The people who come here mostly from eastern Europe are not accustomed to such life. If they have any amusement or gathering it is a birthday party, it is a wedding party, and a funeral; it always centers around the family. But this large scale of amusement, taking out people on excursions by the thousand—when he comes here he becomes bewildered.<sup>78</sup>

For the immigrant, traditional celebrations and everyday pleasures now took place in an unfamiliar context. On the lower East Side, weddings that had once been family affairs were held in rented halls, with dances and entertainment after the marriage ceremony. Five hundred people came to Rose Pasternak's wedding, which was held in the Grand Lyceum Hall. Observed the head worker at College Settlement, "The most sacred ceremony, the wedding, is performed in a public hall to which anyone is admitted on payment of the hat-check."<sup>79</sup>

Americanized leisure activities did not entirely supplant traditional cultural forms, but coexisted with them uneasily, providing a range of alternatives for first- and second-generation families. "The social life of the Tenth Ward is divided somewhat sharply by a line of

cleavage," explained a University Settlement reformer. "On one side is the theater, the lodge, the saloon, the dance hall, and the club; and on the other, the synagogue." Even on a religious holiday like Passover, traditional celebrations at home or in the synagogue competed with special matinee theatrical performances.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, the different cultural institutions of East Side social life often met in the same saloon or tenement house. In one Essex Street tenement, David Blaustein found dancing schools giving lessons during the day, lodges meeting at night, and religious services on Saturdays: "In other words, in the same place they worship and they dance and they meet and wrangle; and all this in one tenement house."<sup>81</sup>

Similar cultural conflicts surrounded the leisure activities of the city's other immigrant groups. Italians in New York celebrated the saints' days with enthusiasm, noted one priest, but "in the summer time they like excursions to Coney Island, Staten Island and Little Italy, and it comes hard for them to give generously to the church."<sup>82</sup> The pull of alternative cultures could be felt within families as well. In a Hungarian household where traditional Easter and Christmas customs were lovingly maintained, "Mrs. Grubinsky, true to her more American tastes, would like to go to a moving picture show occasionally with the children; but Grubinsky will not hear of that, and so she doesn't go."<sup>83</sup>

A vibrant mixture of Americanized working-class, commercial, and Old World forms of leisure could be found in most immigrant neighborhoods, offering myriad options for pleasure-seekers—and complicating the picture of sex-segregated recreation drawn here. Nevertheless, working-class men of whatever background enjoyed greater opportunities for leisure than their wives. The patterns of men's work, their rights to spending money, and their role in the political and economic life of working-class communities allowed them access to a public world of pleasure and relaxation. In addition, the association of "Americanism" with commercialized recreation and consumption may have heightened the sexual division of leisure in these years; Bevans found that American-born men spent the smallest percentage of their leisure hours with the family than any of the immigrant groups he studied.<sup>84</sup> Women's participation in public and commercial forms of leisure was narrowly defined, their

activities located instead in the home, streets, parks, and churches. The modern notion of leisure as a segmented part of social life may have been alien to them. However, one group of working-class women—single, adolescent, and usually earning wages—form an exception to the homosocial patterning of recreation in this period. Unlike their mothers, young women gained access to new forms of social life in the public arena, an experience structured and informed by their entrance into the labor force.

their audience, movie-makers developed new images of women and men in the 1910's that transcended Victorian morals and manners and were acceptable to middle-class audiences. As film historian Lary May has shown, such popular stars as Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks celebrated wholesome sexuality, personal freedom, athleticism, youth, and romantic companionship, placing these values in the context of an upwardly mobile consumer society. These movie stars, viewed in opulent picture palaces, helped to legitimate a heterosocial and expressive culture for an eager middle-class audience in search of new models of behavior. Working-class women too, Elizabeth Ewen has argued, discovered in the movies of the late 1910's and 1920's a dream world of American pleasures, consumption, and romance, a world in which immigrant and familial traditions had little place.<sup>75</sup>

Yet these envisionings were not entirely new to many working-class women, although their opulence and elite pretensions were. The screen stars and filmmakers of the 1910's reformulated cultural patterns that were familiar to the earliest viewers of the movies. Comedians like Mack Sennett and Charlie Chaplin drew upon the early one-reelers' celebration of suggestiveness, physicality, urban sexual encounters, and romance, which often turned Victorian morality into absurdity. Even Mary Pickford, the most famous actress of her day, linked herself culturally to the independent working woman. "I think I admire most in the world the girls who earn their own living," she observed. "I am proud to be one of them."<sup>76</sup> As the movies developed a middle-class audience, they transformed the cultural traditions of cheap theater and nickelodeons, which had played with the sexual expressiveness and heterosocial practices of "Americanized" working-class youth, into a new ethos of romantic companionship and mass consumption.

## REFORMING WORKING WOMEN'S RECREATION

While entrepreneurs avidly promoted working women's presence in commercial recreation, middle-class reformers assailed the noisy familiarity and tawdry glitter of dance halls and resorts. "Let us see the amusement exploiter just as he is," warned one middle-class spokesman. "With him the love of fun in the human heart is a cold matter of dollars and cents. He buys youth's freshness of feeling in return for sundry ticklings of sensation, and blights its glad spontaneities with his itching palm."<sup>1</sup> Cheap amusements threatened to inundate New York, appealing to the "low" instincts of the masses, debasing womanly virtues, segregating youth from the family, and fostering a dangerously expressive culture. Reformers imbued the everyday pleasures of working women with a moral reading that linked cheap amusements to promiscuous sexuality and heterosocial relations. The image of the flashily-dressed working woman, joking and flirting with men, spicing late into the night, enjoying a newfound sense of social freedom, resonated uncomfortably within the middle-class public.

This was a period of ferment for middle-class Americans, when new ideas about womanhood, sexuality, and leisure were actively being debated. By the late nineteenth century, the roles of bourgeois women had extended far beyond the home, to include philanthropy and reform, political activity, and professional work. This "New Woman" questioned the "natural" division of women and men's lives into separate spheres of social activity. Still, Victorian values guided most middle-class women in affirming the virtues of chastity and decorum among single women and the primacy of motherhood and domesticity after marriage. The heterosocial culture and expressive sexuality enjoyed by working-class youth,

and its commercial exploitation by amusement entrepreneurs, posed an affront and challenge to middle-class reformers. By regulating commercial amusements and creating attractive alternatives, reformers hoped that the transformation of leisure would uplift and purify the social relations between the sexes.

Cultural conflicts developed, however, as middle-class ideals of womanhood met the flamboyant working-class version of the "New Woman." Opposing views of leisure, linked to differing models of what constituted appropriate female behavior, arose along class lines as well as within them. While recreation reformers intended to limit and redefine working women's social behavior, their intentions were not easily realized. Their efforts often met with unenthusiastic responses; indifference and hostility led them to adjust their programs in light of working women's interests. In this process of social interaction, reformers' attitudes about leisure and womanhood were reformulated to accommodate—albeit grudgingly—a heterosocial and expressive commercial culture.<sup>2</sup>

### GILDED AGE REFORM

Working women's recreation became defined as a social problem in the Gilded Age, when feminists and reformers turned their attention to the plight of the working girl in the city. Urbanization and industrialization propelled young women into the nation's urban centers alone and unprotected, observed these middle-class advocates. In response, they created a network of institutions to safeguard and aid working women, including boardinghouses, employment agencies, protective unions, and travellers' aid stations. A growing concern among women reformers was the lack of wholesome leisure activities. "The street claims hundreds, the cheap dance halls, theaters and concerts offer attractions to hundreds more," observed Grace Hoadley Dodge, a leader in recreation reform, "while many sit at home in morbid despondency, feeling forsaken, lonely, sad."<sup>3</sup>

Gilded Age reform agencies tackled the problem of working women's recreation with enthusiasm, devising a vast array of activities and organizations. One of the oldest institutions for urban women, the Young Women's Christian Association, offered educa-

tional classes, a free lending library, concerts, and entertainments to self-supporting women, in addition to lodging and meals. Church organizations addressed the need for leisure by establishing clubs. The Girls' Friendly Society, a church-based group with over seven hundred members in Manhattan in the early 1890's, provided religious instruction, classes in cooking and sewing, and talks on hygiene. Its secular counterpart, the working girls' clubs, not only offered classes, entertainments, and rooms for sociability but extended insurance coverage and employment referrals to its members. Other reformers, mindful of the high rates of tuberculosis and other diseases among overburdened working women, founded fresh air funds and vacation societies that sent working women to country houses for a week or two of rest and healthful recreation.<sup>4</sup>

The reformers who made working women's recreation a social issue drew upon a complex set of Victorian ideals and assumptions. Their gender and class position served as lenses through which they alternatively perceived working women as unwilling female victims *and* as enthusiastic members of the promiscuous lower orders. In their view, working women were subject to the same tendencies toward rowdiness that afflicted their fathers and brothers. Just as working men dissipated their time and incomes in saloons and pool halls, women enjoyed a social life in public halls and the streets, where, the YWCA observed, "young girls . . . in this unconventional out-of-door life, are so apt to grow noisy and bold." Reshaping working-class cultural practices through rational recreation seemed a solution to the behavioral problems of women as well as men; well-regulated leisure, educational entertainment, and opportunities for orderly sociability would teach standards of womanly deportment and respectability, raising women as a class. The statement of purpose issued by the Girls' Friendly Society exemplifies the middle-class concern with regulating working-class behavior, with its call to "encourage purity of life, dutifulness to parents, faithfulness to employers and thrift."<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, these reformers were themselves primarily women and viewed rational recreation from a female—and, at times, feminist—perspective forged in the experience of "women's sphere" in the nineteenth century. By the 1880's, women had pushed a gender-based ideology of domesticity, moral guardianship, and

sisterhood from the realm of home and family into the public arena. Protecting womanhood and the home became public and political issues, which seemed magnified with urban growth.<sup>6</sup> Reformers and journalists often perceived New York as a center of vice, its traps set to ensnare young women into lives of sin. By the 1880's, the growing visibility of working women heightened feminist concern, and investigations of female labor paid close attention to the relationship between low wages and immorality. From this perspective, urban women were "weary and restless, honest, hardworking girls, but pleasure-loving, and needing nobler impulses for their safety," who, without protection, could be easily victimized.<sup>7</sup>

To safeguard young women in the city, reformers created recreational spaces for working women that were patterned after familiar middle-class models, the home and the women's club. In essence, they extended women's sphere into the threatening urban environment. The programs of the Young Women's Christian Association, for example, embodied the ideal of the home as a haven of security and comfort. Acknowledging working women's need for diversion, the YWCA's leaders asserted: "What can the Christian Association do? It can build them a home—not a boarding-house—with cheerful warmth, baths, public parlors, a library with stimulating books for leisure, morning and evening worship." The "Y" could be a "House Beautiful" where young women could find the familial relationships otherwise unavailable to them in the impersonal city.<sup>8</sup> The domestic ideal also permeated the Working Girls' Vacation Society, which sent young women to a dozen country houses in rural New York and Connecticut during the summer months. Each cottage was supervised by a matron, who encouraged the girls to form a close filial relationship with her. "Just like a mother to us is a favorite expression of this feeling," they reported with pride.<sup>9</sup>

While employing images of the home and maternal protection as models for urban women's sociability, reformers were even more strongly influenced by another aspect of nineteenth-century women's culture, sisterhood. In their view, working women were too often victimized by employers and other men and needed places to find womanly support, mutual aid, and practical advice. They believed that working women would respond to the shared experience of gender despite class and ethnic differences. In a period when the

club movement dominated middle-class women's extra-domestic activities, notions of cooperation and sisterhood became central ideals of recreation reform.<sup>10</sup> Although many philanthropic organizations of the period simply patronized working-class people, the notion of sisterhood made some reformers aware of class-based resentment. The Harlem YWCA, for example, felt that bringing young ladies of leisure and working women together for evening entertainments would have positive effects on both groups: "It was thought that the best results could be accomplished by aiding all classes to band themselves together for mutual help in their social, physical, business, intellectual and spiritual interests." Working-class representatives were appointed to help in planning entertainment programs, and the leadership made personal appeals to women in factories and shops to join the Association.<sup>11</sup>

Reformers hoped that YWCA's, vacation societies, and clubs would be spaces for working women where ideals of womanhood, purity, domesticity, and sisterhood might flourish in an otherwise harsh and coarse urban environment. Their confidence in these ideals was undermined, however, by the nagging suspicion that young working-class women preferred exciting amusements to quiet, homey evenings around the hearth. The Harlem YWCA acknowledged that "the Association must provide attractions which should give the pleasure-loving girl all the brightness and entertainment possible." Supplying such entertainment, however, potentially contradicted their commitment to female self-help and an inclusive sisterhood. The quandary is apparent in the International Board's advice to local Y's on winning the working girls' support. "Meet them on the common ground of earnest Christian womanhood, share heartily with them in their amusements and let them fully realize that you not only need their help but value it," they asserted, before adding somewhat hesitantly, "—Let them sometimes bring their men friends."<sup>12</sup>

As reformers developed forms of recreation affirming middle-class female culture, they faced the problem of attracting working-class women whose lives were shaped by very different cultural assumptions. For many of them, recreation meant street life, dance halls, cheap theaters, and excursions, amusements that mingled the sexes without the presence of elders or chaperones and permitted



them a sense of autonomy and excitement. Such women met the recreation programs with apathy, suspicion, and resistance, challenging reformers' assumptions and forcing the redefinition of their programs.

### THE WORKING GIRLS' CLUBS

The working girls' clubs exemplify the recreation reform movement and the cultural conflicts it engendered. The moving spirit behind the clubs was Grace Hoadley Dodge, a wealthy young philanthropist and reformer. As a Sunday school teacher in one of the city's evangelical churches, Dodge sought a means of educating and uplifting the young working women in the parish. In 1884, she established a series of practical talks for women who labored in nearby silk factories, hoping to combine companionship with sisterly advice. Soon thereafter, the 38th Street Working Girls' Society was organized, and other clubs quickly developed in the 1880's and early 1890's. For twenty-five cents each month, working women had access to club rooms, a library, classes, entertainments, and a physician's services. The New York clubs, along with those in other cities, banded together in 1885 to form the Association of Working Girls' Societies, which managed a mutual benefit society, published the journal *Far and Near*, and held annual conventions. By 1894, nineteen working girls' clubs with 2,200 members had been established in New York City alone.<sup>13</sup>

While working-class women comprised the membership of the clubs, leadership positions were generally filled by middle- and upper-class women, who sought to apply the prevailing ideology of women's sphere and the goals of rational recreation to working women's lives. In many ways, the working girls' societies imitated the larger club movement, which by the 1880's involved thousands of middle-class women. As one observer noted, their "meetings are such as any woman's club would hold, except that they occur in the evening."<sup>14</sup> Like women's clubs, they stressed the solidarity and advancement of women, individual self-improvement, service to others, and the benefits of social intercourse. At the same time, the class differences between the working "girls" and middle-class "ladies" lent new meanings and emphases to these ideals.

Self-support, for example, became a primary goal of the working girls' clubs, formalized in their by-laws. Lillian Betts observed that "strenuous effort has always been made in some clubs to make them self-supporting; they seem almost to live for that purpose." Reformers initially sought to prevent the clubs from holding fairs and entertainments to raise money, viewing them as forms of philanthropy, but they later acquiesced, acknowledging that most members could not pay the dues necessary to make the clubs self-sustaining. Indeed, wealthy leaders often stepped in with timely gifts, rent payments, and provisions. Although few clubs achieved the ideal, self-support remained an important symbol. Not only did it strengthen moral fiber and inculcate thrift in working girls, it also affirmed sisterhood by rejecting the philanthropic relationship between the "haves" and "have nots."<sup>15</sup>

A similar concern for cross-class sisterhood emerges in the club leaders' understanding of work and self-help. Clubs sponsored an employment bureau, mutual aid society, and vocational training, but they were not viewed primarily as economic organizations. Reformers' conception of work had more to do with a critique of women's roles in society than with the specific economic and social problems of wage-earning. Like many feminists, they viewed gainful employment as a way for women to avoid the economic dependency that forced them into the marriage market. "Every girl, rich or poor, in our opinion, ought to be educated for some trade or profession, which will give her a place and standing of her own independent of marriage," observed *Far and Near*. "Then let her marry if she chooses."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, club leaders were unwilling to differentiate between paid labor and voluntarism, blurring the distinction between labor that was necessary for survival and work as a matter of choice. Grace Dodge, for example, asserted that she was a worker whose wages had been paid beforehand by her inheritance of wealth. "We women, younger and older, from every form of occupation, can meet on a common ground of sisterhood," one report claimed.<sup>17</sup>

Although the reformers affirmed self-support and cooperation among women as workers, they were cautious about exceeding the boundaries of the "natural" division of labor. Dodge, for example, affirmed that the club movement "shows the true advancement of

women not desirous for men's work or place, but remaining where circumstances have placed them, and only anxious to make the best of those circumstances by developing and enlarging the powers God has given them."<sup>18</sup> Indeed, club activities were often directed at teaching women's household and familial roles to working girls, who were perceived to be woefully unprepared for them. Customary working-class housewifery, immigrant traditions, and tenement house conditions offered poor examples of domestic life; it was little wonder that working-class daughters preferred the excitement of the streets to the execution of household tasks. The clubs would help working women through the period of adolescence, training them for the future: "One aim of the first society was that by association together, wives, mothers and homemakers should be developed, [and] that the tone of womanhood be raised."<sup>19</sup> Club leaders argued that such training not only helped the individual working woman but contributed to the overall improvement of working-class life.

Toward this end, clubs instituted cooking and sewing classes, while *Far and Near* ran regular columns on household hints, inexpensive cookery, and sewing the latest fashions on a tight budget. This emphasis is also reflected in the weekly "practical talks" Dodge gave to the 38th Street Working Girls' Society, one of the most popular activities sponsored by the club. In the 1891-1892 season, most discussions centered on household management, the nature of womanhood and familial roles, manners, health, and social behavior, with only a few talks focusing upon women's role in the workforce.<sup>20</sup>

Linked to the effort to domesticate working women came an attack on the culture of working-class youth. The literature of the clubs assailed the ill manners and suggestive behavior that seemed to erupt wherever working-class women and men met. Short stories in *Far and Near* warned of the dangers of unchaperoned buggy rides and nighttime picnics, and editorials urged that young girls not "be anxious to acquire personal popularity in the work room, if the price of it be the sacrifice of purity of thought."<sup>21</sup> Gossiping, flirting with men, using slang, chewing gum, reading "trashy story papers," and wearing ostentatious dress were all customs to be eradicated.

To reformers like Dodge, such practices led to unseemly and

often dangerous relations between the sexes. Working women, she asserted, treated courtship and marriage too lightly in their heedless pursuit of men, dates, and exciting entertainment. She censured working girls' preoccupation with men outside of a familial context. "Thoughts of marriage are constantly in their minds, and meeting with men and boys considered the great excitement of their life," Dodge complained, "while the duties of wifehood and motherhood are utterly unknown to them." In talks on "men friends," "how to get a husband," and "purity," she appealed to working women to set their eyes solemnly on those higher ideals.<sup>22</sup>

Dodge particularly attacked the freer sexual mores and apparent promiscuity of working-class youth, urging young women to follow explicit standards of chastity and decorum. In detail, she drew the line between proper and immoral behavior:

It is not wrong to have men friends, nor wrong to have pleasant times with them. What is wrong is the trying to attract the attention of strangers, the allowing of too great intimacies, the joking and "carrying on" which girls think fun, the being out late at night with a man, the going with them to places where you should feel blushes at the sights before you.

She particularly decried sexual intimacy among engaged couples, noting that "to keep a man's love you must keep his respect. . . . Until you are married you must not behave as if you were." Chance acquaintances with men, treating, and other interactions that placed women in positions of vulnerability were to be avoided. "It is dangerous as well as wrong to allow a man to give you money or presents of value, to accept invitations from one you do not know all about, to put yourselves in any way in a man's power," she warned.<sup>23</sup>

#### WORKING WOMEN'S RESPONSE

Disturbed by the clubs' small membership, leaders often voiced their concern about their failure to reach working women. "What have we as individuals done during the past year to bring other women, struggling with the same limitations, burdened by the same wants, needing the same aids?" one asked. "Do we feel all this, and

yet leave that great army of sisters outside our doors?"<sup>24</sup> Even more pressing than the indifference of most working women, however, was the response of the membership to female-centered reform and middle-class leadership.

The working-class reaction was complex, reflecting the variety of cultural backgrounds and social experiences of the members. From Grace Dodge's account of the 38th Street Society, working women came from several occupations: "A large majority work in carpet and silk factories, others at corsets, cigarettes, and trimmings; a percentage are in stores and dressmaking establishments; others are telegraph operators or stenographers; a few are teachers." While Dodge was eager to provide nonsectarian clubs for all working women, in practice the clubs attracted mainly American-born women, a minority in the predominantly immigrant female labor force.<sup>25</sup> Such women may have been open to the Anglo-American ideals of the reformers in a way that foreign-born women, following specific national and religious customs, were not.

From the beginning, class antagonisms between "ladies" and "working girls" plagued the clubs. Working women's suspicions of do-gooders' intentions threatened the very first meeting of the 38th Street Society. Seeking to avoid middle-class condescension, Dodge advised club leaders to be businesslike, consult the working women, and "in all respects [treat] the girls as personal friends and acquaintances." Nevertheless, interclass tensions frequently arose; as journalist Helen Campbell reported, "more than for most women, was there mutual distrust and suspicion."<sup>26</sup> Small reminders of class differences were pervasive. One club by-law, for example, advised prospective members that their occupations would be recorded so that "the officers of the clubs may be informed of the moral character of the members." Club activities slowed or ceased in the summer months—the time when working women, laid off in the slack season, could most use them—because officers left the hot city for vacation resorts.<sup>27</sup>

Working-class members complained that the leadership was not always responsive or accessible to them. In the Progressive Club, members moved to establish an advisory council, two-thirds of which would be comprised of working women. Emma Illwitzer, a

working girl, observed that her sister wage-earners "are more apt to hear the ideas and opinions of the different members expressed freely during the month than the President ever could." Some women felt awkward about speaking out, "and in that way some good ideas are lost, [and] many misunderstandings, which if spoken over might have been righted, are left unexplained." Mary Brady of the Steadfast Club agreed, stating that the presence of working women on her club's council had made a significant difference: "These six are working girls, having so much in common with the majority of club members, that they are placed in a position to know the common needs, and decide on remedies."<sup>28</sup>

Club members also ridiculed middle-class generalities about work and sisterhood, abstractions that working-class daily life often mocked. The Ivy Club, for example, criticized *Far and Near* for printing "too much that is petty about work, especially woman's work, too much that is sentimental." Deriding reformers' tendency to build up wage-earning as a giant step in the emancipation of women, they observed that the "trend of the times is to overpraise everything women do, and business women trained in business habits object to this as false and silly."<sup>29</sup> Working women's anger over class differences surfaced particularly in discussions of a proposal that club members wear identifying badges or insignia. Three out of four disliked the idea: "Why should we want to tell everyone who rides in the horse-car with us that we are working-girls and that we spend our evenings in a club-room? Are not those two things our own affair and nobody's business?" Another replied: "I did not think of suggesting anything that would advertise our position as working girls; indeed, that is quite unnecessary, as our status is as quickly recognized in public as that of the woman of wealth."<sup>30</sup>

Despite their shared aversion to middle-class patronage, working-class members were not unified in their response to the clubs' programs or reformers' messages. Rather, they formed cliques around particular subcultures and life styles linked to schooling, type of work, and ethnicity. Tensions erupted in the clubs between more and less educated women, between clerical workers and factory girls. Lillian Betts, for example, cites the case of one group splintering off from the main club:

The need of the second club had grown out of the refusal of the girls who earned five to nine dollars a week in various employments to associate with a number of girls working in a tobacco factory, and earning on an average three dollars and a half per week. This last named were rough in speech and manner, and far from stylish in dress—the standard of the elder club.<sup>31</sup>

Such differences among club members reflected the larger social and cultural distinctions prevalent among working-class women.

Cliques formed around two competing cultural styles, those who labelled themselves serious, self-reliant workers and those who identified with leisure pursuits and pleasure. The former responded favorably to reformers' call for self-improvement, wholesome recreation, and propriety. Respectability was a recurrent refrain among these members, who discussed with concern their popular image. Objecting to journalistic portrayals of working women as low and vulgar, they challenged writers to depict women from the working girls' clubs, friendly societies, and temperance unions. M. C. Mountain of the Ivy Club, for example, asserted that "New York working-girls are proverbially intelligent, moral, and contented." Another indignantly observed that "we are as proud of our honor, we are as careful of our reputation" as middle-class women. Some club members turned against those who failed to come up to these standards. Working women would never be socially accepted by the leisured class, opined one writer, "as long as it can be said with any truth . . . that their voices are loud, that their manners are careless and often rough, that their grammar is doubtful."<sup>32</sup> Using slang and chewing gum appeared to be the most heinous offenses, and cliques in some clubs enforced rules against them.

Unlike the middle-class leadership, however, some club members connected the ideals of womanhood, domesticity, and respectability to a specific working-class ideology of cooperation and the dignity of labor, an ideology most thoroughly articulated in the organized labor movement of the 1880's.<sup>33</sup> Some began to argue for an alliance between the clubs and labor organizations, claiming that trade unionism was the logical outcome of ideals of cooperation and self-improvement. In gripping language, Lizzie Burke of the Far and Near Society urged the clubs to

encourage girls to organize "Trade Clubs" of their respective calling, which would be of lasting benefit in aiding to ameliorate the condition of girls poorly paid and help release them from the grasp of the grinding "capitalists" whose object is almost to own them body and soul. . . . In conclusion, I hold that it is in strict compliance with the rules and usages of the Working Girls Clubs to foster such organization and assist in promoting the same.<sup>34</sup>

Class-conscious working women scorned reformers whose solutions to industrial problems lay in didactic lessons and harmless amusements. By the 1890's, a growing political and economic awareness led some women to abandon the clubs for trade unions and labor associations, such as the Working Women's Society.<sup>35</sup>

Fearful of class conflict, reformers initially resisted these criticisms. According to one reporter, "In many of the clubs, at that time, it was found that conversation about trade matters was not allowed." Club leaders explicitly rejected Lizzie Burke's proposal, arguing that "labor questions, like politics and religion, must be left to each member to settle for herself, and our organizations exist for the improvement of the individual, not to deal with conditions of work and wages."<sup>36</sup> By 1893, however, the leadership began to respond to members' concerns. *Far and Near* in that year started to print articles on economic issues and the benefits of organization. Clubs were beneficial to working women as a class, reformers now argued, because they supplied training in organizational techniques, helped women advance into higher professions, and habituated them to a better standard of living.<sup>37</sup>

While some members pushed the clubs toward class-conscious trade unionism, others rejected the conception of educational recreation that guided the clubs' program. One working woman, for example, noted the declining interest in the clubs and wondered, "Is it not because, as our name implies, we are *working girls* and though desirous of mental, physical and spiritual culture, we *most need pleasant recreation?*" One club petitioned *Far and Near* to print more love stories and less serious fare.<sup>38</sup> More closely tied to the popular youth culture, these women envisioned the working girls' societies as social clubs oriented toward pleasure and relaxed sociability.

Reformers learned that they resisted the pleasure-seekers' demands at their peril, as they "discover[ed] that the success of a club depends, more than upon central position, pleasant rooms, or any external circumstance, upon its power of supplying what the members want."<sup>39</sup> The history of the Girls' Progressive Society typifies reformers' accommodation to their members' social interests. Initially, they followed the advice of the New York Association of Working Girls' Societies to restrict "any effort toward luxury or show" in the club rooms, spending available funds only for educational purposes. They made their rooms as homelike as possible and initiated a variety of instructional classes. Then "during all the month of January we waited for that tremendous influx of new members which we had dreamed of," but to their disappointment, they failed to attract much notice among working women. The club subsequently cancelled a number of classes and instituted Wednesday night receptions, featuring music and refreshments, a successful move that attracted the crowds they desired.<sup>40</sup> By the mid-1890's, most clubs had begun to subordinate didactic talks and classes to a whirlwind of social activities. Fancy dress balls, evening receptions, fairs, ice cream and card parties, theatrical entertainments, and bowling came into vogue. The club season even extended into summer, with picnics, trolley rides, and excursions offered to members.<sup>41</sup>

The accommodation to working women's culture was most pronounced in the reformers' changing attitude toward men and dancing in club life. As early as 1888, a small new society called "Our Club" wrote that "the monthly meetings when young men friends of the girls are invited are perhaps the most enjoyable of all." This innovation was gradually accepted by the clubs in order to attract new female members. In 1899, the 38th Street Society was heralding "the coming of a large number of young men to the monthly entertainments," while another large association, the Riverside Club, invited men to the club rooms two evenings a month. By 1900, most clubs had endorsed the presence of men at entertainments and receptions.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, dancing slowly gained acceptance among club leaders, who preferred to have working women waltz in the club rooms than in the city's public halls. In 1891, facing a "demand on the part of members to learn dancing," the Endeavor Club's leaders agreed to a "dancing drill," which pre-

sumably was not as corrupting as commercial dance lessons: "We finally compromised on a drill in which dancing steps should be introduced incidentally and healthfully, in the course of all sorts of marches and exercises." Other clubs permitted members to dance together after meetings or at entertainments. By 1900, as men became part of club life, leaders consented to mixed-sex couple dancing, which quickly became "the really popular thing" among members.<sup>43</sup>

Despite these changes, membership in the clubs dropped dramatically. Many of the oldest and largest clubs of 1890 had lost half or more of their members by 1900. Overall membership in the Manhattan societies declined to 1,267 by 1902, and several clubs disbanded altogether. Grace Dodge resigned as director of the New York Association of Working Girls' Societies in 1896, turning to other reform work. Significantly, she had come to believe that economic problems were the most pressing issues facing working women and that she was unqualified to solve them.<sup>44</sup>

The reasons for this declining interest were manifold. The clubs had never appealed to the vast majority of female wage-earners, who were immigrants or daughters of immigrants; with the great influx of foreign-born families into New York from 1880 to 1920, the clubs' emphasis on the American-born girl was increasingly misplaced. Moreover, clubs competed with many other activities for the attention of working-class women by the turn of the century. While relatively few women were unionized at this time, the Working Women's Society, trade unions, and, by 1906, the Women's Trade Union League offered opportunities for women interested in the labor question. Many more women found the entertainment they craved in the expanding network of commercial amusements available in the metropolis.

Finally, the fabric of middle-class values that had guided the club movement began to unravel. Reformers had sought to extend the middle-class club ideal to working women's social life, affirming a social reality constructed on the basis of gender. These efforts failed in large part because widening class differences could not be transcended in practice. Working women's experience of their sphere was vastly different from that of the middle-class ladies, and they urged reformers to take into account their understanding of gender

and class relations. Where reformers sought cross-class sisterhood, didactic recreation, and individual improvement, working women pressed for both heterosocial amusement and greater attention to the problems of labor. Club leaders conceded to these concerns, diluting their woman-centered ideology in the process.

### **RECREATION REFORM IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA**

The middle-class experience in working girls' clubs contributed to the redirection of women's recreation reform at the turn of the century. While clubs, friendly societies, YWCA's, and vacation cottages remained active, new reform agencies arose to combat the popular amusements of working women. The Educational Alliance, the People's Institute, settlement houses, and other organizations situated in the city's tenement districts and immigrant ghettos mounted a wholesale attack on the problems of working-class communities, including women's leisure.

In addressing this issue, reform organizations moved away from the Gilded Age programs, criticizing their particularism and emphasis on individual self-help.<sup>45</sup> Two emergent intellectual trends, a stress on environmentalism and a new appreciation of leisure, influenced this generation of reformers. Adopting a more holistic approach, they treated the urban environment itself as the field of reform, directing attention to tenement house laws, playgrounds and parks, public health services, and community centers. The problem of working women's recreation became simply one element in the comprehensive effort to reconstruct community life and save the family. At the same time, leisure and play became central concerns of reformers. Recreation was no longer viewed as idleness, but as a necessary period of renewal and a precious resource. In Belle Israel's words, "Play is not a luxury, but an absolute necessity to the working world of today."<sup>46</sup>

Despite these changes in outlook, reformers after 1900 continued to believe that the primary purpose of recreation reform for working women was to inculcate standards of respectable behavior. Like their predecessors, Progressive reformers perceived a rising tide of promiscuity and immorality in the city. Their panic over white slav-

ery and commercialized prostitution reflects this perception, but organized vice was only one aspect of a larger problem. Social workers mobilized against sexual familiarity, unrestrained heterosocial relationships, and, not least, bad taste. "Everything possible should be done to ennoble the relations between the sexes; to purify the tradition concerning romance through the spread of the great novels; to eliminate cheap kissing games, cheap plays and low dances," they exhorted.<sup>47</sup>

As this admonition suggests, a prime target of Progressive reformers was the growing menace of commercial amusements. As we have seen, investigators infiltrated amusement parks, excursion boats, movie theaters, and dance houses to report on their questionable morality and unhealthy conditions. The threat that commercial amusements posed was closely related, in their view, to the breakdown of the family in industrial society. Just as industrialization had forced family members to seek work away from the home, so commercialization split apart the family in its leisure hours. Each family member sought recreation in different places outside the home, the father going to saloons, adolescent daughters and sons attending dance halls, children flocking to the streets, with only the mother staying at home. Nor could the family in its crowded tenement home provide a wholesome place of recreation or the chaperonage necessary for working-class youth. Since the biological family could no longer provide safe recreation for its daughters, argued settlement leader Mary Simkhovitch, "the community itself must become the foster father and mother."<sup>48</sup>

Reformers lobbied vigorously for the regulation of commercialized recreation through legislation and cooperative agreements with amusement entrepreneurs. Seeing regulation by the state as a substitute for personal chaperonage, Belle Israel's fought to limit the sale of liquor and to enforce standards of cleanliness in public dance halls. Others urged legislation to establish chaperones at all amusement resorts. The New York Public Recreation Commission, for example, recommended that "a woman should be present at all places of public amusement where young girls congregate, such as dance halls, cabaret restaurants, motion picture shows, dancing academies, theatres, etc."<sup>49</sup> Community organizations pressured amusement owners to provide a more wholesome environment for single

women. The East Side Neighborhood Association convinced "a number of the moving picture proprietors [to] set aside certain seats in their show places for girls who were unescorted." Other groups lobbied to have lights turned up in the nickelodeons during movies to prevent sexual harassment and seduction.<sup>50</sup>

Reformers coupled these restrictive measures with efforts to create positive alternatives outside the commercial nexus. The "neighborhood ideal" would substitute for the familial control that commercialization had destroyed. Social and educational clubs formed the core of settlement work, and by 1910, forty-one settlements sponsored 160 clubs for girls and young women. These were seen as necessary additions to tenement home life. "It is not possible to hold up before East Siders the Anglo-Saxon home ideal," observed a University Settlement report. "When homes have become nothing but eating and sleeping places then clubrooms must make up the difference between this and the ideal."<sup>51</sup> Hoping to teach young women how to protect themselves from the temptations of the city, settlement club work included sex education. "There is one armour-plate that the girl who goes out into the dance hall should have and must have," Belle Israels asserted. "She must have the armour-plate of sensible, wholesome education in matters of sex."<sup>52</sup>

In order to counteract the influence of saloons and dance halls, reformers developed social centers to provide a focal point for neighborhood life, bring family groups together, and allow people to create their own activities. The People's Institute, for example, converted several public schools into neighborhood centers with dancing, athletics, and entertainment for the entire family. Lillian Wald spearheaded an effort to create noncommercial meeting places, with the development of Clinton Hall in 1906. Wald's Henry Street Settlement also sponsored festivals and pageants to express the character of the neighborhood and its people. Believing that cheap amusements were popular only because the city provided few alternatives, reformers initiated such organizations as the Metropolitan Debating Society, Educational Dramatic League, and People's Music League.<sup>53</sup>

Perceiving sexual and social dangers to women in New York's commercial amusements, reformers responded with a multifaceted program for working-class recreation. These efforts were designed

to provide working-class youth with family-oriented, wholesome recreation, an alternative to the age-segregated, promiscuous amusements provided commercially. Through education, regulation, and noncommercial forms of amusement, Progressives hoped to counteract the city's dance halls, cheap theaters, and street life and to revitalize the family and community. Unlike the early working girls' clubs, most of these activities assumed the participation of both women and men, with reformers carefully negotiating their social interaction.

The difficulties involved in creating alternative forms of mixed-sex leisure are apparent in the reformers' treatment of dancing in settlement houses and community centers. More than other popular amusements, dancing seemed to link recreation and women's morality, serving as a potent symbol of heterosexual and heterosexual relationships. While Israels and others sought to regulate commercial halls, social workers pondered dancing in their clubs and entertainments. Many associated any form of mixed dancing with promiscuity and barred it; one survey of schools and social service agencies found that "mixed dancing by school-children of the adolescent age has been allowed only in a few places and under considerable restriction." Others, like People's Institute leader John Collier, saw folk dancing as a wholesome alternative to the coarse dances of the public halls and an art form that would strengthen ethnic and generational ties.<sup>54</sup>

More often, settlements accepted dancing cautiously, aware that "this feature might excite the objection of a few conscientious people." Regulated and chaperoned dances, they argued, would improve manners and behavior and, most important, would "offset the vicious influence of the commercialized dance hall."<sup>55</sup> While fearing the explosive potential of mixed-sex activities, reformers found that they could attract working women only by providing opportunities to dance and socialize with men: "One club leader, who found that the girls were leaving the club early, in order to meet boys and walk home with them, has solved the difficulty by inviting the boys in to dance for the last half-hour of the club meeting." University Settlement did not permit mixed clubs, but, agreeing with female members that "fun loses its savor unless it includes boys," sponsored numerous dances and socials.<sup>56</sup> Proper supervision, controlled



attendance, and sedate music, reformers hoped, would give dances a respectable atmosphere. Community centers went so far as to select appropriate participants, excluding disorderly youths, gangs, and smokers; as one report noted, "We do not want to invite in at this time those groups which raise new problems."<sup>57</sup>

Despite their best efforts, reformers often failed to entice working-class youth to the well-regulated dance of the settlement or neighborhood school. In P.S. 63, where the People's Institute had established a social center, "we have run two dances, buying decorations, extra lighting and fitting facilities and better music. The dances have not proved a success. The attendance amounted to almost nothing." As in the working-girls' clubs, different cultural styles among working women led to diverse responses; while some women believed that settlement dances were "high toned," many more felt they were "slow" and not as appealing as those run in the large public halls.<sup>58</sup>

At the other extreme, reformers often could not prevent their dances from assuming the character of those in commercial halls. Settlements and social centers often reported rowdy behavior and suggestive movements on the dance floor. University Settlement found it necessary to appoint a floor committee to supervise their dances and "instill a desire for decorum and order among 300 young people on pleasure bent." When ragtime blared in another community center at P.S. 104, reformers reported "disorderly conduct during the last two dances. Miss Daley blames the type of music as cause."<sup>59</sup>

Although reformers agreed that social agencies should bring girls and boys together before they met on street corners and dance halls, their efforts to ensure a purified notion of sexual relations were at times overwhelmed by the customary behavior of working-class youth. In 1905, for example, the People's Club developed some unnamed, dangerous "tendencies to frivolous social pleasure," which seem to have included loose sexual behavior. Social workers apparently intervened, reporting that "the home spirit, so characteristic of the Club in its best days, is well re-established, and the life of intimacy between the members of both sexes leads frequently to its natural results in engagement and marriage."<sup>60</sup>

Similarly, in P.S. 63's community center, the cultural style of

working-class youth challenged reformers' ideals and programs. The center had been established as a working model of the "neighborhood ideal," sponsoring dances, sociables, and athletic activities in the 1910's to provide community-controlled, wholesome recreation. By 1919, however, the center had come under the scrutiny of the Committee of Fourteen, whose business was investigating prostitution and vice. The investigator's damning report made a mockery of the reformers' vision. At P.S. 63, he appraised one of the chaperoned dances:

I visited this school, where a dance was going on. About fifty young couples were dancing, among them boys and girls in age of 12 or 14 years. Most of them didnt behaved [sic], they were using vile language, smoking cigarettes and shimmying while dancing. . . . It is a rendezvous for young men and young girls, who come here purposely to pick each other up.<sup>61</sup>

Aiming to reshape women's recreation and regulate gender relations, reformers at best waged a holding action against the onslaught of commercial culture and heterosocial forms of behavior. Despite numerous efforts, settlement leaders and social workers failed to reach most of their potential working-class constituency. The People's Institute estimated that only one percent of the populace used the parks, playgrounds, settlements, and social centers that reformers had established. Increasingly, they accommodated to the widespread popularity of commercial amusements, sponsoring trips to Luna Park, offering reduced prices for theater and concert tickets, and supporting motion pictures as a wholesome substitute for the saloon. Indeed, some even found themselves seduced by commercialized entertainment; one group of civic leaders, visiting a nickelodeon show, "came to be shocked, but, after the first disappointment was over, they remained to enjoy."<sup>62</sup>

Working women's recreation was only one small aspect of social reform in these years, but it dramatizes a larger cultural process taking place in American cities whereby interclass dynamics helped to redefine the relationship between gender and leisure. In the 1880's and 1890's, reformers sought to extend their notion of women's culture to working women's social life, but they failed to realize



their vision, eventually compromising with working-class women who preferred mixed-sex amusement to self-sufficient sisterhood. These young women pioneered new forms of public female behavior, which the dominant culture ultimately incorporated and popularized. As a new generation of reformers struggled to combat commercialized pleasures, other segments of the urban middle class increasingly embraced new "manners and morals" in emergent bourgeois social spaces, the city's cabarets, dance palaces, and movie houses. They too began to seek sensual and exciting leisure pursuits and heterosocial interactions, associating it with a sense of twentieth-century modernity.

For the middle class, women's leisure in the Victorian era had been associated with education, uplift, and sisterly bonds; by the 1920's, it was decisively linked to social freedom, freer sexuality, and mixed-sex fun. Reformers were seen as hopelessly out-of-date by the younger generation, their criticism of heterosocial commercial culture irrelevant. Most feminists today would similarly reject their moralistic assumptions and family-oriented solutions. But the leaders of working-girls' clubs, settlement houses, and other reform agencies understood some of the liabilities of the modern culture for women, its potential for exploitation, as well as its alluring freedoms and pleasures. As Mary Simkhovitch warned, "The young men of the big cities today are not gallantly paying the way of these girls for nothing."<sup>63</sup>

## CONCLUSION

When the working day is done, oh! girls just want to have fun.<sup>1</sup>

The reformers' response to working girls' style represents one facet of a larger cultural transformation occurring between 1880 and 1920. Competing conceptions of gender informed much of the cultural ferment of these years, as numerous voices questioned the inviolability of women's traditional sphere. Public attention turned to the "New Woman," who relished personal autonomy and activity in the public arena and challenged the boundaries of domesticity and female self-sacrifice. This emergent sensibility among middle-class women extended from political life to leisure time. Women's massive mobilization for suffrage and temperance, as well as their visibility in radical politics, signified a new scale of participation in public life. Fervid debates over the "new morality" brought the scrutiny of women's sphere into the realm of private life. Greenwich Village feminists, for example, zealously advocated women's sexual satisfaction, personal freedom, and equality in marriage.<sup>2</sup> The bursting of old barriers infectiously appealed to other middle-class women who were less politicized. Dancing sensual dances, attending cabarets and nightclubs, living as "bachelor girls" in apartment houses, these women expressed a new-found sense of freedom and possibility.

At the same time, middle-class men's roles also underwent challenge and redefinition. The Victorian ethic that bound success to hard work and thrift grew more distant from many men's daily experiences. The development of large, impersonal corporations in an increasingly bureaucratic society undermined traditional notions of masculine individuality and conquest. So did the restlessness of

men's wives and daughters. Seeking new ways of understanding manliness, some middle-class men became feminists, arguing that women's emancipation meant equality and self-fulfillment for both sexes. Many more, however, turned to leisure activities and consumer goods, which promised the excitement, gratification, and self-expression often denied in the workplace. White-collar jobs could be forgotten in the masculine rituals of football and body-building or in the exotic delights of an urban nightclub.<sup>3</sup>

In the nineteenth century, as a distinct middle class developed in American society, the emergent class found ways to distinguish itself culturally from working-class immigrants, Afro-Americans, and the idle rich. The bourgeois world view counterposed such values as sobriety and domesticity against the dissipation and promiscuity of those higher and lower in social rank. By the early twentieth century, however, these groups—by virtue of their very “otherness”—offered sensuality, colorful adventure, and expressiveness to segments of the urban middle class. While some New Yorkers looked on with disapproval, others found working women who “put on style” an amusing, fashionable, and admirable part of the cultural landscape. What had been seen as rowdy girls' deviant behavior in the mid-nineteenth century was evaluated more ambiguously by the early 1900's. Flamboyant fashion, assertive sexuality, and close social interaction between the sexes held their appeal by being not quite respectable.

An important catalyst in this cultural process was the intensive commercialization of leisure, which defined recreation as a commodity, created new audiences, and profited by the selling of heterosocial culture. Within the working-class community, leisure entrepreneurs consciously encouraged the participation of women in mixed-sex amusements, altering traditional patterns of sociability. Promoters organized dances and excursions on a mass scale, hampering neighborly chaperonage and familial control. Outside the tenement districts, huge dance palaces and large amusement parks beckoned young women who desired spaces for social experimentation, personal freedom, and unsupervised fun. Movies, initially located in immigrant neighborhoods, attracted large numbers of wives and mothers as well as single women, decisively breaking down the segmentation of working-class recreation. All of these

commercial amusements transmitted and mediated heterosocial culture to working-class women and men, although in different ways and to different audiences.

Much of this leisure culture made its way into the entertainment of the middle class. Entrepreneurs and promoters scoured the city's “low” dance halls and variety theaters for songs and dance steps and observed street culture for new fads and fashions.<sup>4</sup> Introducing novelties into nightclubs, amusement parks, and the movies, they transformed them into safe, controllable activities that could be sold to all classes. George Tilyou purified the raucous sexuality of the “old” Coney Island by organizing patrons' behavior to produce innocent intermingling and harmless laughter. Dance idols Irene and Vernon Castle toned down tough dancing for high-class cabarets, while movie-makers elevated potentially promiscuous interaction to healthy athleticism and girlish freedom, embodied in such screen stars as Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford.<sup>5</sup> Tamed for the middle class, heterosocial culture promised self-fulfillment for women through consumerism and an ideology of companionate romance and marriage.

This cultural formulation, transmitted in the movies, advertising, advice books, and popular magazines of the 1920's and beyond, obscured the tensions and contradictions lingering below the surface of working women's leisure. Young working women had defined a style that in some ways subverted the traditional bases of their dependency—as dutiful daughters in the patriarchal immigrant family and as submissive workers in a capitalist economy. At the same time, this style continued to be pursued in a context of economic and sexual dependency, where pleasure could blur into vulnerability and peril. Expressing the aspiration for selfhood and fulfillment, it did not attempt to transform the web of gender and class relations in which working women were situated.

Moreover, the leisure pursuits of single working-class women often ceased with marriage or motherhood. Within working-class families, low income, lack of community services and labor-saving technology, and the traditional burdens of housework and child care continued to constrain wives' leisure time after 1920. The growing numbers of working wives, slowly increasing before World War II and dramatically rising thereafter, normalized a “double day” that

allowed women little time for leisure. Although the movies, and later radio and television, offered married women wider options for leisure activities, working-class recreation remained quite segregated by gender, as well as age and marital status. Sociological studies of working-class family life suggest the persistence of separate worlds for women and men until the 1970's. At that time, Lillian Rubin observes, the feminist movement and women's greater economic independence spurred many working-class wives to demand greater sharing and companionship within marriage.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the commercial culture led women to tie self-fulfillment to consumerism. This may have diverted working women from their class interests or heightened expectations of the "good life" in such a way as to encourage collective action and unionization.<sup>7</sup> The dominant vision of consumer individualism and heterosocial companionship did not, however, encourage a feminist consciousness among working-class women. Unaccompanied by substantive changes in the allocation of power, work, and resources by gender, that culture served to foreclose women's options.

The desire of women for self-determined pleasure, sexuality, and autonomy, haltingly expressed by working women at the turn of the century, continues to be a compelling issue several generations later. It remains so in a society whose sophisticated engines of culture rapidly commodify the expression of those outside the mainstream, draining it of its dissonance and challenge in the process. That working women "just want to have fun" may thus be taken as a trivial claim, easily achieved in the world of leisure, or as a profoundly liberating—and unfulfilled—feminist demand.

## NOTES

### Introduction

1. Ruth S. True, *The Neglected Girl* (New York, 1914), p. 58.
2. Tape I-132 (side A), New York City Immigrant Labor History Collection of the City College Oral History Project, Robert F. Wagner Archives, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University. (Interviewees' names used in my study are fictitious to protect their anonymity; researchers who wish to verify quotations should refer to tape numbers.)
3. Tape I-3 (transcript), Immigrant Labor History Collection.
4. E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (1967): 56-97; Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (New York, 1977).
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### Chapter One

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### Chapter Two

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69. "A Questionnaire on Juvenile Standards," (23 November 1915) in Subjects Correspondence, Children and the Motion Pictures, 1910-1916, Related Papers, NBRMPC.

70. "House of Bondage," box 106 (Controversial Films Correspondence), NBRMPC.

71. Merritt, "Nickelodeon Theaters, 1905-1914"; *Moving Picture World* 2 (4 Jan. 1908): 8; Palmer, "World in Motion," p. 356; Davis, *Exploitation of Pleasure*, pp. 33-34; Grau, *Stage in Twentieth Century*, p. 309.

72. *Views and Films Index* 3 (22 Feb. 1908): 11, and 2 (27 July 1907): 4. For the industry's ambivalence, see also *Views and Films Index* 3 (11 Jan. 1908): 5; 3 (22 Feb. 1908): 5; and 2 (12 Oct. 1907): 4.

73. Jacobs, *Rise of American Film*, p. 156.

74. Harlem, New York *Home News*, 3 May 1916, clipping, in Regional Correspondence, New York, New York City (Manhattan), 1910-1919, NBRMPC.

75. May, *Screening Out the Past*, especially pp. 96-146; Ewen, "City Lights."

76. May, *Screening Out the Past*, p. 119.

### Chapter Seven

1. Richard Henry Edwards, *Popular Amusements* (New York, 1915), p. 140.

2. My approach in this chapter is to understand reform itself as a social relationship between groups of individuals, not a program or set of ideas imposed on passive or powerless people. Recent scholars have criticized the concept of social control and developed more interactive models of change that acknowledge working-class agency. See especially Stephen Hardy and Alan G. Ingham, "Games, Structures and Agency: Historians on the American Play Movement," *Journal of Social History* 17 (Winter 1983): 285-301; Gareth Stedman Jones, "Class Expression versus Social Control? A Critique of Recent Trends in the Social History of 'Leisure,'" *History Workshop* 4 (Autumn 1977): 163-170; Roy Rosenzweig, "Middle Class Parks and Working Class Play: The Struggle Over Recreational Space in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1870-1910," *Radical History Review* 21 (Fall 1979): 31-48; Francis G. Couvares, "The Triumph of Commerce: Class Culture and Mass Culture in Pittsburgh," in *Working-Class America*, ed. Michael H. Frisch

and Daniel J. Walkowitz (Urbana, Ill., 1983), pp. 123-152; Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 108-114.

3. Grace Dodge, "Working Girls' Societies," *Chautauquan* 9 (Jan. 1889): 223. On the Gilded Age response to the urban working woman, see Mari Jo Buhle, "The Nineteenth Century Woman's Movement: Perspectives on Woman's Labor in Industrializing America," Bunting Institute Working Paper, 1979; Lynn Weiner, "From the Working Girl to the Working Mother: The Debate Over Women, Work and Morality in the United States, 1820-1920" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1981), pp. 68-96; Amy Srebnick, "True Womanhood and Hard Times: Women and Early New York Industrialization, 1840-1860" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1979), pp. 79-158.

4. Reform organizations and activities in New York City are listed in William Howe Tolman and William I. Hull, *Handbook of Sociological Information with Especial Reference to New York City* (New York, 1894). Further information may be found in Working Girls' Vacation Society of New York, *Annual Reports* (New York, 1885-1915); U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Boarding Homes and Clubs for Working Women*, by Mary S. Fergusson (Bulletin no. 15; Washington, D.C., 1898), pp. 141-196.

5. Young Women's Christian Association of New York City, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report* (New York, 1895), p. 16; New York State Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Eighteenth Annual Report* (Albany, N.Y., 1900), p. 387. On rational recreation, see Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London, 1978).

6. The ideology of women's sphere in the nineteenth century is discussed in Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood* (New Haven, Conn., 1977). On the application of this ideology to feminist and urban reform efforts, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Beauty, the Beast and the Militant Woman: A Case Study in Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America," *American Quarterly* 23 (Oct. 1971): 562-584; Karen Blair, *The Club Woman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined* (New York, 1980); Estelle Freedman, "Separation as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930," *Feminist Studies* 5 (Fall, 1979): 512-529; Buhle, "Nineteenth Century Woman's Movement."

7. Young Women's Christian Association of New York City, *Twenty-third Annual Report* (New York, 1894), p. 17. A typical investigation of working woman and morality is Carroll Wright, *The Working Girls of Boston* (1889; rpt. New York, 1969). Sensationalized depictions of New York as a center of sin may be found in James McCabe, *Lights and Shadows of New York Life* (Philadelphia, 1872); Mathew Hale Smith, *Sunshine and Shadow in New*

York (Hartford, Conn., 1869); Helen Campbell et al., *Darkness and Daylight, or Lights and Shadows of New York Life* (Hartford, Conn., 1897).

8. Young Women's Christian Association International Board, *Report* (New York, 1889), p. 23; Harlem Young Women's Christian Association, *Building Souvenir* (n.p., 1897), p. 12; see also Young Women's Christian Association of New York City, *Twenty-second Annual Report* (New York, 1893), p. 16.

9. Working Girls' Vacation Society, *Sixth Annual Report* (1889), p. 6.

10. See Karen Blair, *Club Woman as Feminist*, for a discussion of this ideology and its practice among middle-class women.

11. Harlem YWCA, *Building Souvenir*, p. 17.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18; Young Women's Christian Association International Board, *Report* (New York, 1887), pp. 44–45.

13. Grace Dodge's involvement with the Working Girls' Clubs is discussed at length in Esther Katz, "Grace Hoadley Dodge: Women and the Emerging Metropolis, 1856–1914" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1980), pp. 57–115. The significance of the clubs for women of all classes is discussed in Joanne Reitano, "Working Girls Unite," *American Quarterly* 36 (1984): 112–134. On the activities and membership of the New York clubs, see Tolman and Hull, *Handbook of Sociological Information*, p. 225; New York Association of Working Girls' Societies (hereafter cited as NYAWGS), *Annual Reports* (New York, 1884–1901); *Far and Near* (1891–1894); 38th Street Working Girls' Society, *Circular of the Domestic Circle* (n.p., n.d.).

14. U.S. Bureau of Labor, *The Attitude of Women's Clubs and Associations Toward Social Economics*, by Ellen M. Henrotin (Bulletin no. 23; Washington, D.C. 1899), p. 514. See also Blair, *Club Woman as Feminist*, and Reitano, "Working Girls Unite."

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17. NYAWGS, *Seventh Annual Report* (1891), p. 5; Robert D. Cross, "Grace Hoadley Dodge," in *Notable American Women, 1607–1905*, ed. Edward T. James (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), p. 490; Dodge, "Working Girls' Societies," p. 224.

18. Dodge, "Working Girls' Societies," p. 225.

19. *Far and Near* 1 (Dec. 1890): 21; NYAWGS, *Sixteenth Annual Report* (1900–1901), p. 9; NYAWGS, *Fourth Annual Report* (1888), p. 3; NYAWGS, *Seventh Annual Report* (1891), p. 24.

20. 38th Street Working Girls' Society, *Tuesday Evening Practical Talks, 1891–92* (leaflet; n.p., n.d.). Grace Dodge, *Bundle of Letters to Busy Girls on Practical Matters* (New York, 1877), is a compilation of typical talks. See also U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Working Women in Large Cities: Fourth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor, 1888* (Washington, D.C., 1889), p. 49.

21. See, e.g., *Far and Near* 2 (July 1892): 180; 2 (Aug. 1892): 201; 3 (April 1893): 112; 3 (May 1893): 134; and 3 (June 1893): 158; Dodge, *Bundle of Letters*, pp. 105–106; NYAWGS, *Fifth Annual Report* (1889), p. 5; NYAWGS, *Seventh Annual Report* (1891), p. 18.

22. Dodge, "Working Girls' Societies," p. 223; Dodge, *Bundle of Letters*, p. 37.

23. Dodge, *Bundle of Letters*, pp. 103–104, 39, 33–34. See also *Far and Near* 1 (Sept. 1891): 208.

24. NYAWGS, *Fourth Annual Report* (1888), p. 22.

25. Dodge, "Working Girls' Societies," p. 24. See also U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Working Women in Large Cities*, p. 49.

26. Dodge, "Working Girls' Societies," p. 225; Helen Campbell, "Association in Clubs with Its Bearings on Working-Women," *Arena* 5 (Dec. 1891): 63; Katz, "Grace Hoadley Dodge," pp. 59–60.

27. NYAWGS, *Third Annual Report* (1887), pp. 20, 2–3; NYAWGS, *Fourth Annual Report* (1888), pp. 6–7. See also Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work* (New York, 1982), pp. 93–94; Weiner, "Working Girl to Working Mother," p. 94. Such tensions were common in most cross-class organizations. See, for example, Alice Kessler-Harris, "Organizing the Unorganizable: Three Jewish Women and their Union," *Labor History* 17 (Winter 1976): 5–23; Nancy Schrom Dye, "Creating a Feminist Alliance: Sisterhood and Class Conflict in the New York Women's Trade Union League," *Feminist Studies* 2 (1975): 24–38.

28. *Far and Near* 1 (Nov. 1890): 9, and 1 (Dec. 1890): 25.

29. *Far and Near* 2 (Feb. 1892): 79.

30. *Far and Near* 1 (Jan. 1891): 39, and 1 (Feb. 1891): 58–59. Similar perceptions are discussed in Mary Gay Humphreys, "The New York Working Girl," *Scribner's* 20 (Oct. 1896): 503, 512.

31. Betts, *Leaven*, pp. 147 (quote), 148–158.

32. *Far and Near* 2 (May 1892): 144; 1 (Jan. 1891): 39; 1 (Feb. 1891): 56–57; 2 (Nov. 1891): 15; and 2 (Sept. 1891): 208.

33. Susan Levine, "Labor's True Woman: Domesticity and Equal Rights in the Knights of Labor," *Journal of American History* 70 (Sept. 1983): 323-339; see also Herbert G. Gutman, "Protestantism and the American Labor Movement: The Christian Spirit in the Gilded Age," in Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (New York, 1977), pp. 79-117.

34. *Far and Near* 2 (Nov. 1891): 16.

35. Humphreys, "New York Working-Girl," pp. 502-513. Rosalyn Baxandall et al., eds., *America's Working Women* (New York, 1976), p. 214, also suggest this movement toward unionism.

36. Humphreys, "New York Working-Girl," p. 506; *Far and Near* 2 (Nov. 1891): 16.

37. See, for example, E. G. Balch, "Working-Girls' Clubs as a Factor in Social Development," *Far and Near* 3 (March 1893): 87-88. Katz, in "Grace Hoadley Dodge," pp. 105-113, discusses in detail the internal debates among club leaders over this issue.

38. *Far and Near* 2 (July 1892): 187, and 2 (Feb. 1892): 79.

39. NYAWGS, *Fifth Annual Report* (1889), p. 5.

40. NYAWGS, *Fourth Annual Report* (1888), pp. 6-8; NYAWGS, *Third Annual Report* (1887), p. 20.

41. See list of entertainments in NYAWGS, *Sixteenth Annual Report* (1900-1901), pp. 21-22.

42. NYAWGS, *Fourth Annual Report* (1888), p. 16; NYAWGS, *Fifteenth Annual Report* (1899-1900), pp. 21-22; NYAWGS, *Sixteenth Annual Report* (1900-1901), p. 21; *Far and Near* 1 (March 1891): 86.

43. NYAWGS, *Seventh Annual Report* (1891), p. 14; NYAWGS, *Sixteenth Annual Report* (1900-1901), p. 21; NYAWGS, *Eighth Annual Report* (1892), p. 23.

44. For the decline in membership, cf. NYAWGS, *Seventh Annual Report* (1891), p. 38, and *Eighteenth Annual Report* (1902-1903), pp. 7-8. For further discussion of the decline and Dodge's resignation, see Katz, "Grace Hoadley Dodge," pp. 108-113, and Cross, "Grace Hoadley Dodge," p. 490.

45. See, for example, Stanton Coit's criticism of working girls' clubs in *Neighbourhood Guilds: An Instrument of Social Reform* (1891; rpt. New York, 1974).

46. Belle Israels, "Regulation of Public Amusement," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science in the City of New York* 2 (July 1912): 126. The literature on Progressive era reform affecting working-class communities is vast. A good starting point is Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978); Allen Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-*

1914 (New York, 1967). Boyer discusses environmentalism on pp. 179-180. On emergent middle-class attitudes toward leisure, see Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850-1920* (Chicago and London, 1974).

47. Robert A. Woods and Albert J. Kennedy, *Young Working Girls: A Summary of Evidence from Two Thousand Social Workers* (Boston, 1913), p. 98; see also George J. Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City* (New York, 1913); University Settlement Society of New York, *Report* (New York, 1897), p. 27; Jane Addams, *Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (New York, 1912). For a subtle analysis of these middle-class concerns, see Don S. Kirschner, "The Ambiguous Legacy: Social Justice and Social Control in the Progressive Era," *Historical Reflections* 2 (Summer 1975): 69-88.

48. Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch, "A New Social Adjustment," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science in the City of New York* 1 (Oct. 1910), pp. 86-87; Lillian D. Wald, *The House on Henry Street* (1915; rpt. New York, 1971), pp. 173-174, 195-96.

49. New York Public Recreation Commission, *Report* (1912-1913), p. 21; Israels, "Regulation of Public Amusements"; Belle Lindner Israels, "Dance Problem," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1912* (Fort Wayne, Ind., 1912), p. 142.

50. University Settlement Society of New York, *Report* (New York, 1912), p. 41.

51. University Settlement Society of New York, *Report* (New York, 1897), p. 10; University Settlement Society of New York, *Report* (New York, 1894), p. 11. On the number of settlement clubs, see Annie M. MacLean, *Wage-Earning Women* (New York, 1910), p. 38; "Social Settlements," in New York Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Eighteenth Annual Report* (1900), p. 257. Typical club activities are noted in University Settlement Society's *Reports*.

52. Israels, "Dance Problem," p. 144; Wald, *House on Henry Street*, p. 198; University Settlement Society of New York, *Report* (New York, 1913), p. 26; Betts, *Leaven*, p. 253. On the broader social purity and sex education movements, see David J. Pivar, *Purity Crusade* (Westport, Conn., 1973); Christina Simmons, "'Marriage in the Modern Manner': Sexual Radicalism and Reform in America, 1914-1941" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1982).

53. C. S. Childs and John Collier, "Summary of Results to Date of Social Center Experiment of P.S. 63, Manhattan"; "The Redemption of Leisure: A Program Presented by the People's Institute of New York"; "The People's Institute and the Recreational Needs of Greater New York" all in box 7, Committee on Recreation, Printed Matter on the Use of Leisure Time,

People's Institute Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations; People's Institute, *Seventeenth Annual Report* (New York, 1913-1914), p. 19; Lillian Wald and Social Halls Association, to —, 11 Sept. 1921, box 29, Lillian D. Wald Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York; Wald, *House on Henry Street*, pp. 184-188, 225-227. Kirschner, "Ambiguous Legacy," discusses the "neighborhood ideal."

54. Michael M. Davis, *The Exploitation of Pleasure: A Study of Commercial Recreations in New York City* (New York, n.d.), p. 47; John Collier, "Leisure Time, the Last Problem of Conservation," *Playground* 6 (June 1912): 93-106; New York Public Recreation Commission, *Report* (1912-1913), p. 14.

55. "Social Settlements," in New York Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Eighteenth Annual Report* (1900), p. 265; University Settlement Society of New York, *Report* (New York, 1914), p. 8; New Era Clubs, "The New Era Idea" (n.p., n.d.), box 18, Wald Collection, Columbia University.

56. "H.S.S. on Adolescent Girl" (1913), p. 5, box 94 (Settlements), Wald Collection, Columbia University; University Settlement Society of New York, *Report* (New York, 1912), p. 30.

57. "Memorandum from meeting with Miss Draper," box 7, Community Center Work, People's Institute Collection; *Notes on Community Center Work in School Buildings, Pamphlet No. 1, March 8, 1915*, box 7, Social Center Committee, People's Institute Collection.

58. "Tentative Outline of Work Centering in the Public School Buildings," p. 4, box 7, Committee on Recreation, Printed Matter on the Use of Leisure Time, People's Institute Collection; C. S. Childs, "Proposed Social Center Dance Hall," box 21, Annual Reports, Essays, Reprints and Pamphlets, People's Institute Collection; Woods and Kennedy, *Young Working Girls*, p. 124.

59. University Settlement Society of New York, *Report* (New York, 1912), p. 28; University Settlement Society of New York, *Report* (New York, 1898), p. 50; "P.S. 104, Committee Meeting, April 14," box 7, Committee Center Work and Committee on Recreation, People's Institute Collection.

60. People's Institute, *Eighth Annual Report* (New York, 1905), pp. 10-11.

61. Investigator's Report, P.S. 63, 23 June 1919, Records of the Committee of Fourteen, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

62. Davis, *Exploitation of Pleasure*, p. 34; "The Redemption of Leisure," p. 3, People's Institute Collection; People's Institute, *Twelfth Annual Report* (New York, 1909), p. 26; Lester Francis Scott, "Play-Going for Working

People," clipping from *New Boston* (n.d.), Theater Arts Collection, Lincoln Center Library of the Performing Arts, New York Public Library; Czitrom, "Redemption of Leisure."

63. Simkhovitch, "New Social Adjustment," pp. 86-87.

### Conclusion

1. Cyndi Lauper, "Girls Just Want to Have Fun," *She's So Unusual* (Red Sox Music Productions/Portrait Records/CBS Inc., 1983).

2. For the various strands of the women's movement, see Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: Birth Control in America* (New York, 1977); June Sochen, *The New Woman in Greenwich Village, 1910-1920* (New York, 1972); Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920* (Urbana, Ill., 1981); William L. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America* (Chicago, 1969).

3. Peter Filene, *Him/Her/Self* (New York, 1974); Elizabeth H. and Joseph H. Pleck, eds., *The American Man* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1980); Ellen Kay Trimberger, "Feminism, Men, and Modern Love: Greenwich Village, 1900-1925," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow et al. (New York, 1983).

4. For a description, see Edward B. Marks, *They All Sang: From Tony Pastor to Rudy Vallee* (New York, 1934).

5. Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Westport, Conn., 1981); Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (New York, 1980); John Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York, 1978).

6. Recent sociological studies of the working-class family include Lee Rainwater et al., *Working-man's Wife* (New York, 1959); Mirra Komarovsky, *Blue-Collar Marriage* (New York, 1967); Lillian Breslow Rubin, *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working-Class Family* (New York, 1976).

7. The latter possibility is suggested in Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge, Eng., 1983), p. 228.