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FOREWORD

On every hand we hear the admonition, "The study of society must be made objective." When one asks what is meant by this, he is referred to the natural and the biological sciences. But while the average man has little difficulty in comprehending what is meant by objective in the study of electricity, bees, etc., he finds himself at a loss to visualize the objects of study in a social inquiry. There is nothing strange in this, because the professionals in social science are still far from confident that they have their hands upon the social reality. True, many attempts have been made to find the basic factors in society, but these factors have been sought, for the most part, in the laboratories of biology and psychology, which is not unlike groping behind the scenes and digging under the stage, disregarding the comedies, tragedies, and dramas in plain sight.

On the other hand, experience with social phenomena is bringing us nearer and nearer to a realization that we must deal directly with life itself, that the realities of social science are what people do. Seemingly in full realization of this, the authors of this book have patiently observed an American community and sketched out for us, in the large, the whole round of its activities. No one had ever subjected an American community to such a scrutiny; probably few would regard it as worth while. Rather have we been taught to set store by studies of the individual on one hand, and on the other, on the gathering of intimate statistics as to wages, living conditions, etc., for groups in our national population at large, as coal miners, teamsters, working girls, etc. The first of these seems to have been ordered upon the theory that maladjustments of individuals might be dealt with effectively if one knew a true sample of personal histories, and, in the main, studies of this kind have justified their making. The second seems to rest on the assumption that occupational groups present collective problems which can be dealt with on a national level, the maladjustments in this case arising in the failure of these groups to articulate properly with other groups. Here
Chapter XIX

THE ORGANIZATION OF LEISURE

In the main these leisure activities are carried on by people in groups rather than singly; one plays with one's family or friends. At the same time that the family is declining as a unit of leisure-time pursuits, the basis of other associations is shifting; many of the earlier informal ties are being displaced by more rigid lines of union and demarcation.

Only one of the thirty-eight wives of business men who gave information on this point said that she had no friends whatever in Middletown, as against fifteen of the 118 wives of the working class; of the former group an additional four said that they had no "intimate" friends but only "casual" acquaintances, as against an additional twenty-five of the latter—making a total of one in eight of this business group and one in three of the working class who had either no friends at all in Middletown or no intimate friends. This degree of social isolation in the case of a third of the women of the dominant numerical group may be expected to have wide implications.

Such answers as the following are characteristic of the forty of the 118 workers' wives who had no friends or no intimate friends:

"It doesn't pay to be too friendly."

"I never chum with any one; it's dangerous."

"I have no best friends. In town you never know who is your friend."

"Even your best friend will do you dirt. I never run around with people. I let everyone alone."

"I haven't any friends in the city. I see plenty of people at church and clubs, but I treat them all alike."

"Our neighbors used to be good friends and we had lots of good times together, but in the last seven or eight years all that's gone. People don't pay much attention to each other any more."

Among the wives of the group of business men interviewed, the isolation is not so marked, possibly in part because these people have moved about somewhat less and partly, no doubt, due to their more extensively developed system of social clubs. Here, too, however, there is indication of shallowing friendships in such remarks as:

"I haven't many intimate friends. There is really only one person in town whom I regard as a really close friend."

"I have no intimate friends; it is difficult and too involving to become intimate with anybody but a few close relatives."

"We've let all our friends slip away as our children have taken up more and more of our time."

"I have no intimate friends. I just haven't had time for friends while I've been bringing up my children."

Vicinage plays a part in the forming of friendships, but, although living "next door" or "on the same block" still operates prominently among the working class, it appears to be less controlling among the business class than a generation ago. Eighty-nine (more than half) of the 173 "best friends" of the present working class wives and seventy-three (nearly two-thirds) of 116 friends of their mothers were reported to have been met first "around the neighborhood"; while seven of the seventy-five friends of the business group and twenty-five of their mothers' seventy-one friends were said to have been met in the "neighborhood." More than two-thirds of the best friends of the mothers of both working class and business class wives interviewed were said to have lived within six blocks of them, while slightly over one-half of the best friends of the present generation of working class wives and less than one in five of the best friends of the business class women interviewed live within six blocks of them.3 Friends living eleven

2 Cf. Ch. IX.
3 Nearly a fifth of the best friends of the present working class women live on the same block with them, as against only two friends in the case of the business class.

Each housewife was asked to report regarding her two best friends, but in cases where the women said they had no friends or no close friends they
or more blocks distant were again almost identically infrequent in the case of the mothers of both groups—less than one in five in each case; today, however, more than a third of the best friends of working men’s wives and nearly two-thirds of those of this business group live eleven blocks or more away.

The neighborhood appears likewise to have declined as a place of most constant association of friends. According to almost universal working class testimony:

“Neighbors used to be in each other’s houses much more than they are now.”

“Mother couldn’t understand when she came to live with us why people didn’t run in more and neighbor as they used to.”

“We ain’t got neighbors any more. People ain’t so friendly as they used to be. There’s less neighborhood visiting. You have to go places to see them.”

“My friends and I see each other most at each other’s houses and at the five-and-ten-cent store—generally when we go to the store. If you go to people’s houses you aren’t sure you’re welcome.”

Women of the business class were even more emphatic:

“I like this new way of living in a neighborhood where you can be friendly with people but not intimate and dependent.”

“People used to have more neighbors and every one else knew what you were doing and commented on it. I like it much better reported on the one or two acquaintances whom they saw most frequently. The same procedure was followed in the case of their mothers.

Data of this sort based upon small groups must be regarded as suggestive only.

The closeness of Middletown to its farm background is important in this connection. In his study of The Rural Primary Groups and Their Discovery in Wisconsin, J. H. Kolb speaks of this break-up of “neighborhood”: “The people who made these groups fifty years ago surely knew what it was to have a group social life . . . The group bonds were strong of necessity because of the type of life which the settlers led. There was the visiting of neighbors. Complaint was often heard that now with the good roads and automobiles, less ‘neighboring’ was done. ‘The young people go miles away,’ some one said, ‘but fail to get well acquainted with those near by.’” (Wisconsin Research Bulletin 51, December, 1921, p. 28.)

Cf. the decline of the habit, common in Middletown a generation ago, as noted in Ch. VII, for workers in a given plant to live together close about the factory in which they work, with their other major life-activities interlocking back and forth.

THE ORGANIZATION OF LEISURE

as things are now, when you can be independent and do things without thinking what others are going to say about it.”

“My friends and I don’t go back and forth to each other’s houses much except for definite social engagements. Then, too, the old-time call with cards and white kid gloves has completely gone out. No one ever comes to call.”

“Clubs have done away with calling. They have spoiled that old spirit of friendliness. People used to call on a bride just after she was married and she would go promptly with her mother to return the calls. There were calls when some one had died and church people always called on a new person in the neighborhood.”

“People just don’t call in Middletown. I have lived here four years and I have had practically no calls.”

“I don’t see my friends at all. That is really true—I never see them unless I run into them somewhere occasionally or they come over to dinner. It was different with my mother. She and her friends were always in each other’s homes.”

“I do very little visiting—mostly keep in touch with my friends by telephone.”

Like the neighborhood, the church is one of the recognized agencies acquainting members of the community with each other. “Affiliate yourself with some church if you want to get acquainted,” newcomers to Middletown are told. “Our first winter when we were so lonely we met people through the church,” said more than one woman. Forty-four of the 173

* The attenuation of visiting to telephone visiting is one of the phenomena that has appeared since 1890. A worker who had been injured in an industrial accident complained, “Radios and telephones make people farther apart. Instead of going to see a person as folks used to, you just telephone nowadays.” A woman living in one of the larger homes of the city, when asked where she sees her best friend, replied, “I do a great deal of telephone visiting and then I see her at evening parties.” In 1890 there was much “dropping in,” a ritual that frequently extended from the original intention of a simple sag to a leisurely half-morning’s visit: “When the ’phone came,” according to another business class woman, “it took up a lot of time, since you were within reach of so many more people, but it saved all the time formerly spent with women who ‘ran in’ on you while you were trying to do your morning’s work.”

* It is not unusual to hear such an erstwhile stranger ask, “But these people aren’t my best friends now.” According to local testimony, the tendency to employ the church’s social function instrumentally is growing, and it is more common today than formerly for strangers deliberately to
friends of the working class women interviewed and sixteen of
the seventy-five friends of the business class women were said
to have been met first either at church or at church and some
other place at about the same time. Thereafter, the church, or
the church linked with some other agency, was the most fre-
quent place of seeing fifty of these friends in the case of the
working class and eleven in the case of the business class.6
Women of both groups said that their mothers saw their
friends much more frequently at church, though they did not
give detailed information on this point.

But if the neighborhood and the church appear to have
deprecated somewhat as bases of association, organized club groups
appear from the very rough data available to have become
more important. Clubs figure as a most constant place of meet-
ing with ten of the 173 friends of the working class group
interviewed, as against two of 116 friends of their mothers,
and with twenty-six of the seventy-five friends of the business
class group interviewed as against six of seventy-one friends
of their mothers.

Turning from the women of Middletown to their husbands,
somewhat similar rough trends appear.7 The church furnishes
a place of most constant meeting of friends among the
business men on whom data were secured in the case of but one
man out of a total of thirty-eight—and even then it is linked
with a civic club; among the men of the working class group,
eleven out of a total of ninety-nine friends are said to be seen
most often in church. Lodges exhibit about the same relative
frequency as churches for both classes, affording a most fre-
quent place of meeting for none of the business group, but for
eleven of the friends of the working class; and on the other

“shop about” among leading churches, appraising congregations as well as
ministers.

On the other hand barriers are appearing within business class congrega-
tions; a rather plain young couple, members of a large, fashionable
church, complained of the coldness of Middletown: “It’s a hard town to
get acquainted in,” said the young wife. “I go to the church Flower
Mission and other meetings and my husband to the Men’s Club, but the
people you see there don’t see much of you outside.”

If only those answers stating “church” alone (including “church work”
and “Sunday School”) be included, these last figures drop to thirty-seven
and three respectively.

These data on the basis of men’s associations must be handled even more
tentatively than those on their wives; not only are samples small, but data
are second-hand in nearly all cases, i.e., secured from the wives.

and clubs other than lodges were not once mentioned for the
working class, while they account for the most constant places
of meeting in the case of twelve of the thirty-eight friends of
his business group.

One gains an impression that the women, especially those of
the business class, actively cultivate friendships more than do
the men. In fact, as pointed out in an earlier chapter, this social
contact activity of the female partner in marriage is increas-
ingly prominent today. One business class woman described a
common situation when she said, “Most of my husband’s
friends are the husbands of my friends. I met the women
through my club and he met their husbands through me.” An-
other prevailing aspect of men’s friendships was pointed out in
the remark, “My husband has so many acquaintances that he
has time for few friends. It’s a modern tendency, I guess. Re-
lationships are more artificial since people don’t drop in as
they used to.” Among the working class, the isolated man is
apparently more common than formerly, as the decline of
unions and lodges as social agencies, the disappearance of the
corner saloon,8 greater mobility, and similar factors have com-
ined to scatter the working personnel of a given factory, and
no new organizations such as the business class civic clubs have
arisen. Such statements as the following by some of the work-
ing class wives interviewed appear to represent a considerable

“He don’t go to the lodge any more. The picture show has
killed the lodge. He just stays home and don’t see any one.”

“He liked the man who lived next to us, but he’s only seen him
on the street once since we moved.”

“He just sees the men at work. He don’t go to the lodge any
more. The auto has ruined the lodges and everything else.”

“He says he’s just a lone wolf.”

8 Drinking as a convivial activity has not been common among the busi-
ness men of Middletown since the coming of prohibition, due largely
apparently to the abstinence of a group of men powerful in the industrial,
social, and civic life both in 1890 and today. Among the workers the aboli-
tion of the saloon has removed a place of frequent association with their
fellows, which is only in part taken by the “speakeasies.” There were forty
saloons in Middletown in November, 1891.

It is a shortcoming of this study that it did not consider more directly
the drinking habits of Middletown before and after the coming of Federal
prohibition.
THE ORGANIZATION OF LEISURE

ably not so much an increase in occasions for association as
greater organization and formality. "People used just to drop
over in the evening," as one working class wife put it, "but now
they invite them way ahead of the date and make a party
of it."

The prominence of the informal "dropping in" type of social
contacts in 1890 is reflected in the day-by-day diary of the
young baker for the years 1888-95. Four, five, and six evenings
a week the items run as follows:

"I picked up the bunch. Went to H's and I set up ice
cream for the crowd. Then we all took a ride round town on the
street-cars. Stopped in at F's awhile, then meandered to
K's awhile, then home."

"Last night I got K and we went to church. Then picked
up a crowd of fourteen and all went down to the glass factory
to watch glass blown. Back uptown at ten and all got ice cream.
Stopped in at N's; gang stayed there and I took my two
girls home. Had an elegant evening."

"Bunch over at M's. Pulled candy and sang. Had a time!"

"Ice cream social at church. Then to K's. Set up a keg,
Had a time!"

Among the business class, social intercourse appears to have
been scarcely more formal.

The wider range of alternatives in Middletown today necessi-
tates more organization; parties tend increasingly to center
about a core of organized club groups—"pledge parties" of
sororities, the Country Club Halloween party, the "husbands'
dinner" of the Sew We Do Club.10 Even when not definitely a
part of a club organization, parties, particularly among the
business class, are not infrequently today given in some public
town of the earlier day offsets somewhat the activity of the Sunday "society
editor" of today. In fact, testimony of people who knew Middletown in both
periods indicates that the parties of 1890 were as thoroughly covered as
those of today.

10 The leading paper reported 127 parties given by clubs in Middletown
between December 11, 1924, and January 3, 1925, as against ninety-four par-
ties given by all other organizations and individuals, including churches,
business or industrial units, small home affairs, and so forth. It is probable,
however, that the more thorough reporting of club parties than of small or
home parties and the special celebration of the Christmas season by the
clubs affect this ratio.

Such press reports are a dubious source for statistically usable data,
but the attention paid to "persecutions" in the press of the smaller Middle-

Never was there more pressure in the business world for
solidarity, conformity, and wide personal acquaintance than
exists today under the current credit economy. But among
the working class certain factors operate to make more tolerable
than formerly the position of the "queer cuss" or the "lone
dog": no particular expression of sociability is necessary for
or evoked by operating a machine; if the position of the indi-
vidual tool-worker has become more precarious as he has been
increasingly reduced to the status of one of the plant's raw
materials, his isolation is being compensated for at certain new
points. Workmen's compensation steps in when he is hurt
in getting his living, the Visiting Nurses' Association may
replace the neighbors who "run in to help" when his wife has
a baby, life insurance may be provided by his employers or
is available on easy weekly terms through the agent at the door,
and such new inventions as the movie, the automobile, the
radio, make him less dependent upon his friends in his leisure.
It will not be surprising if we find the worker's leisure time less
closely organized than that of the business man. But his increas-
...
leading citizens and their wives meet "at a near-by house," hold "a council of war until their proposed victims had retired for the night, when with an abundance of 'taffy' sugar, all made a bold dash for Mr. C—'s." Gone, or nearly so among the business class, though to a far less extent among the working class, are such "jolly affairs" as "trolley parties," "progressive tiddely-winks," "shoe socials" where one secured one's partner by seeing her shoes under a sheet pinned up at the end of the room, "lemon squeezes," "going to Jerusalem," "cobweb parties," "pin the tale on a mule," comundrums, charades, evenings of " euchre, whist, pedro, and crocbon" or " parchesi, authors, and checkers," or evenings when "all had a sing." Waggish tricks do not form such a large part of an evening's diversion. The young baker's diary related every so often during the nineties, "They went home with my hat," or "Attended a wake at ——'s. Somebody hid my hat."

The growing rigidity of the social system today is centering parties more and more upon cards, pedro among the workers and bridge among the others. Cards and dancing are the standard entertainment of Middletown. In general, dancing holds the position of preëminence with the younger group prior to marriage, while from marriage on the more sedentary activity predominates. In 1924 the sectional state conference of the numerically most powerful religious denomination in Middletown renewed its traditional prohibition upon card playing, and in some of the more religious working class families the ban is still maintained not only upon cards but upon checkers and other games as well, but among the business group there are virtually no people who debar card playing. The local press

11 Mah jong was a furious alternate to bridge for a while and then disappeared.

It must be borne in mind that in leisure-time pursuits as in so many other activities, the workers of Middletown still do many of the things the business group did a generation ago. Thus a men's chorus of a church whose membership is made up largely of working men gave a party in 1925 at which there was singing of sacred hymns, a long recitation in the rhetorical manner of 1890, a "humorous selection," "a few words from our pastor," and copious food.

12 The extent of the relaxing of the ban upon cards is witnessed by the maintenance by at least three of the local semi-religious, benevolent lodges of regular gambling at cards in their club-houses, a percentage of the winnings going to the lodges for their charity.

Playing cards on Sunday is still tabooed by many people, though less so than in 1890.
reported thirty "card parties" for the three months of January, July, and October, 1923, with card playing a part at the entertainment of many others, as against only one for the corresponding months of 1890. This does not mean that cards were not played in 1890, but probably that they were not such an inevitable and formalized feature of social intercourse.

Dancing is today a universal skill among the young; their social life, particularly among the high school group, is increasingly built about it. The dance apparently held no such prominent place in the leisure activities of 1890. Dancing there was, to be sure: great balls by the policemen, cab-drivers, clerks, nail-makers, green glass workers, and other occupational groups—usually for charity; the grand ball of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers in 1890 was proclaimed "the largest event of its kind ever given in Middletown or the Gas Belt, with 1,200-1,500 present." Among the business class small dances in fashionable homes on New Year's Eve and other holidays were not uncommon; this group, moreover, patronized Professor Daisy's fortnightly dancing lessons at the skating rink, culminating in a "ball and German with fifty society couples and seventy-five spectators, the latter watching with interest the fancy dancing, heel and toe polka, then the German." But dances were not mentioned in the leading paper in January or July, 1890, and were mentioned only five times in October, as against ten times in January, 1923, twenty-two times in July, and twenty-four times in October. More significant of the shift is the fact that the leading fashionable young men's social club of 1890 gave parties but no dances. Not until 1900 does the press speak of dancing as a "local craze."

Today the social pace is set for the unmarried group by the elaborate formality of club, fraternity, and sorority dances in hotels, each costing $150-$300 and involving keen rivalry in decorations, music, partners, dress, and number of invitations. These reach chiefly the business group but tend to include a wider range as high school attendance grows. The old round of informal Christmas holiday pleasantries has been largely crowded out by a rigid ritual of fourteen annual formal dances; the principal public celebration of Thanksgiving Day consists in three dances—an annual matinée dance by one of the fraternities and two evening dances. High school commencement no longer means the program of essays, the solitary ball and faculty-student party of the nineties, but a dizzy week of junior-senior dance, "a fitting climax to the social affairs of the junior class"; senior formal dance, "one of the most elaborate affairs of the season"; banquets, picnics, and receptions—all carefully planned in April, two months before the events.

Among the working class home dances, like those of the business class thirty-five years ago, still survive, though the better music of public dance halls has greater attraction. So exacting has the public taste in dance music become that a local church was forced to abandon the effort to hold dances in its parish house "because the young people demanded better music than we could afford." Such new customs as the replacement of boys' and girls' walking to and from dances in a crowd by the almost universal custom of going by couples in an automobile, and the disappearance of "odd" girls at dances, the pairing off of boys and girls being emphasized by the full press reports of those who attend by couples, tend to emphasize the rigidity of the social ritual of the dance.13

Just as the unorganized social associations of the neighborhood in 1890 have given way increasingly to semi-organized dances and clubs, so the more active leisure-time pursuits involving physical exertion in various sports exhibit a similar reversion of the unorganized before the organized. Few people today walk for pleasure in Middletown, the river is now too polluted for fishing, and the small boys of the city are wont to call out in a disgusted tone to a stray bicyclist, "Aaw, why don't you buy a machine!" Instead of these unorganized, one-man types of physical recreation, the city affords facilities for organized sport undreamed of in 1890: Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., high school gymnasium, municipal golf course and Country Club course, and grade school, high school, factory, lodge, and Y.M.C.A. leagues in various sports. The sporadic factory

13 It should be noted in passing, particularly in view of the fact that nine of the fourteen formal Christmas dances are given by girls, that the dance has apparently, whether consciously or not, been seized upon by the unmarried girls as a device whereby the newer aggressiveness of the females can assume overt form despite the traditional attitude of the male ban upon it. The extent to which these dances exist as an appendage of the mating ritual of the younger set is reflected in the frank remark of a popular high school senior girl, "The girls in each club are awfully catty about the extra invitations to their club dances they are allowed, and it's sure some test of a girl's popularity if she gets invited to all nine of the girls' formal Christmas dances."
base ball teams of the nineties represent one of the few forerunners of the present tendency.

Organized sports appear, from a brief check, to exhibit a greater increase since 1890 in the relative amount of news space devoted to them in the Middletown press than any other department of news—from 4 per cent. of the total news content of the leading paper in 1890 to 16 per cent. in 1924.14 For the three sample months of January, July, and October, 1923, the leading paper mentioned 169, seventy, and ninety-eight organized and unorganized sporting or athletic events in the city, as against six, fifteen, and seven for the corresponding months of 1890.16

The athletic activity of the city today culminates in basketball in the high school. The high schools of the entire state are organized into a state-wide league involving each year “regionals,” “sectionals,” and “finals,” during which the city’s civic pride is deeply involved: leading citizens give “Bearcat parties” prior to attending the final games, hundreds of people unable to secure tickets stand in the street cheering a score board, classes are virtually suspended in the high school, and the children who are unable to go to the state capital to see the game meet in the school in a chapel service of cheers and songs and sometimes prayers for victory. In the series of games leading up to the “finals” the city turns out week after week to fill to the doors the largest auditorium available.17 In con-

14 See Table XXIII. Counts could be made only of one representative week—the first week in March—for both periods. Counts based upon such a short period must obviously be used only tentatively.

15 These figures apparently represent increases both in actual participation in sports and in occasions for watching others play. To a certain extent they are misleading in that they do not include the extensive unorganized “vacant lot” sports of 1890, but on the other hand they do not include much of the day-by-day activity for men and boys at the Y.M.C.A. in 1923. The heavy increase in organized sports is shown by the following distribution of sports mentioned for the month of October in each year: 1890, three competitive shoots by the local gun club with clubs from other towns, two fishing trips, and two announcements of hunting trips. 1923, three baseball games, seventy-three bowling matches, three basket-ball games, three weekly shoots by the gun club, four golf tournaments, nine football games, one bicycling party, one prize fight, one Y.M.C.A. track meet.

16 Basketball sweeps all before it. Witness the jubilant voting of the city council to spend $20,000 for a new gymnatorium for the “Bearcats” at a time when the cry on all sides was for retrenchment in city expenditures and the public library was understaffed because it could secure no assistant for less than $7,500 when a cut in its funds made only $7,500 available. The bond issue for the new gymnasion was finally overruled through appeal

"THE ORGANIZATION OF LEISURE"

This trend toward greater organization appearing in so many leisure pursuits culminates in the proliferating system of clubs which touches the life of the city in all its major activities. A total of 458 active clubs was discovered in Middletown after an exhaustive canvass during the spring and summer of 1924, by a small and unpopular group of citizens to the state authorities having ultimate supervision over such fiscal matters.

It is widely reported that “the chief thing that got [the new superintendent of schools, a young man elected after the preceding superintendent, a veteran school executive, was dropped for alleged political reasons] his job was that he put [Middletown] on the map as a basket-ball town.”

17 Gillin says of Cleveland, “In the course of the successive age periods conventional spare-time interests turn less and less to outdoor athletic activities; as people grow older their pursuits tend to diverge more and more from those forms which have been established in the history of the race. This is especially true of the activities of men. Their activities in the later periods follow the lead of the women’s, emphasizing the trend away from the more direct and simply organized and physically active pursuits.” John L. Gillin, Wholesome Citizens and Spare Time (Cleveland: Cleveland Recreation Survey, 1918), p. 18.

18 There was considerable opposition from some older citizens to the proposal to put a swimming pool in the new Y.W.C.A. building.

A “doctor book” of the nineties warned the women of a generation ago against the current sedentary, indoor life of women, which “besides hurting their figure and complexion, relaxes their solids, weakens their minds, and disorders all the functions of the body.” But Marion Harland in her Talks upon Practical Subjects warns that “the fin de siècle girl and her bicycle have hardly been acquainted long enough for the passage of correct judgment upon the consequence of the intimacy.”

The girls entering Vassar College in 1916-20 engaged in an average of 9.2 sports, as against 2.0 for the incoming freshmen of 1896-1900; 0.6 per cent. of the former reported no sports at all, as against 26.5 per cent. of the earlier girls. Mabel Newcomer, “Physical Development of Vassar College Students, 1896-1920” (Quarterly Publication of the American Statistical Association, New Series No. 139, Vol. XVII.).
roughly one for each eighty people. This probably includes four-fifths of all active organized club groups. A canvass of the city of 1890, believed by the staff to be roughly as comprehensive as the 1924 count, revealed ninety-two clubs, or one for every 125 people. While the city has grown less than three and one-half fold, adult social clubs have increased from twenty-one to 129, church adult social clubs from eight to 101, adult benevolent groups, trade unions, and the group of literary, artistic, and musical clubs have each doubled, business and professional groups have increased from one to nine, and civic clubs (most of them with a strong business flavor as well) from one to eleven. The current of organization has apparently run even more rapidly in the region of the more formal type of juvenile clubs, as national organizations such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Reserves have increased in Middletown from zero to ten groups, as the church has organized its children in the effort to hold them against outside competition, and as clubs have sprung up to sift the 1,600 high school students into the smaller groupings. Organized juvenile clubs of all kinds have increased from six (all church clubs) in 1890 to ninety-five, although obviously many transitory neighborhood “clubs” of children were omitted in the counts of both periods.

Although there has been a growing tendency among the business class to make club life serve other than recreational ends, notably those of getting a living, most Middletown clubs apparently offer people not an extension of their customary activities but a way of escape from them. The city is dotted with social clubs, chiefly women’s clubs, but in a limited number of cases including husbands as well: the Kill Kare Club, Jolly Eight, Best of All Club, Happy Twelve, Bitter Sweet Club, and

19 See Table XVIII for distribution of clubs by classes in both periods.

The number of formal and informal social groupings in the city is, of course, almost indefinite. Only those organizations which have a definite and regular social meeting monthly or oftener are included here as “clubs.” The figures given are based upon a careful count of clubs mentioned in the two leading papers in 1890 and in 1924 from January 1 to October 1, checked and augmented by the city directories and by reports of individuals for both periods. The 1890 count was further supplemented by two diaries, one of a working man and one of a business man. Other informal sources of information were used for both periods. The chief types of clubs that are missing from these totals are certain informal neighborhood groups (luncheon, bridge, sewing, children’s clubs, etc.) that are not reported in the press. The reporting in both periods appears, however, from all available evidence, to have been very comprehensive.

so on. Here cards, games among the working class, music, or dancing, and always “refreshments” offer Middletown an alternation from routine duties of life. Among the business class the Country Club, bridge clubs, and so on, and, among the group from fifteen to thirty years of age, fraternities and sororities, tend to supplement or displace the smaller, less formal neighborhood gatherings of a generation ago.

The value which Middletown places upon education is reflected in its clubs, but, although working class families press toward schooling for their children and to some extent avail themselves of technical training in evening classes, it is the more leisured women of the business class who compose the literary and artistic study clubs of the city. These nineteen groups, fifteen of them forming a part of the county “Federated Club of Clubs,” vie with the men’s civic clubs in local prominence. The total membership of all nineteen clubs is approximately 700.

“Mutual mental improvement” was the stated aim of the earliest study club to be organized; many others sprang up in the nineties for “the social and intellectual advancement of its members,” “general education in art, science, literature, and

20 Of the eighty-eight women’s “social” clubs on which data were secured, forty-five, chiefly of the working class, play games or have “contests,” twenty-six, largely business class, play cards (this number would probably be greatly increased if more of the informal clubs could have been found and included in this enumeration), twelve sew, three are luncheon and dinner clubs, one a dancing club, and one a bowling club.

Thirteen of these eighty-eight clubs were originally formed with a purpose which included the mutual saving of money (“Christmas savings clubs”). Seven have some kind of devotional exercises at their meetings. Most of them have occasional parties and picnics. Two do some regular charitable work, though many more help specific needy cases.

Thirty-eight of these eighty-eight clubs are composed of women between twenty-one and forty years of age, fourteen of women over forty, twenty-nine of both groups, seven of both of the above groups and also of members under twenty-one.

21 Efforts have been made to form study organizations among working class women, but with relatively little success. The tightening social lines of the city have made the feeling of these women that they are being patronized by the business class women.

22 There is some overlapping in membership of the various clubs.

Age distribution of members was secured for seventeen of the nineteen clubs; three of them are made up of women between twenty-one and forty years of age, two of women over forty, and twelve of both groups. By a comparison with N. 20 above it will be observed that age is apparently more of a factor influencing the coming together of women in social clubs than in these study clubs.
music,” or “work in literature, music, art, needlework, and philanthropy.” Each club has some symbol of its work; characteristically, all are verbal symbols; again characteristically, all relate to the master symbol, “Progress,” the word standing alone as the motto of one club. “That what we have done already is the earnest of what we shall do,” says another, while the Federated Club of Clubs sets forth, “Our motto, The Actual and the Ideal,” means that from the actual we will grow into the ideal, that is, we have imagined an ideal woman, and we wish to grow toward that perfection in womanly beauty, grace, and culture.” Bound up with the symbol of progress are strong religious as well as educational traditions. One club sets at the outset of its year’s printed program:

“On the threshold of our task,
    Let us light and guidance ask,
    Let us pause in silent prayer.”

“Progress” in mental improvement, today as a generation ago, is sought largely through writing and listening to papers and speeches. These are supplemented variously in the different clubs by devotions, music, and “responses” in which each woman says a sentence or two on “Forget-Me-Nots of My Summer,” “Current Events,” “Literary Gems,” “Household Hints,” “Bible Verses,” “Who’s Who,” “Famous Sayings of Great Soldiers,” “Prominent Women of the Civil War,” “Short Accounts of New Reforms,” “Wise and Foolish Women of the Bible,” “American Industries,” etc. A comparison of club programs of the nineties with those of today.

Six of these federated clubs read from the Bible at their meetings and six repeat at each meeting the club woman’s creed:

COLLECT FOR CLUB WOMEN

“Keep us, O God, from pettiness; let us be large in thought, in word, in deed.
Let us be done with fault-finding and leave off self-seeking.
May we put off all pretense and meet each other face to face without self-pity and without prejudice.
May we never be hasty in judgment and always generous,
Teach us to put into action our better impulses, straightforward and unafraid.
Let us take time for all things; make us grow calm, serene and gentle.
Grant that we may realize it is the little things that create differences,
that in the big things of life we are as one.
And may we strive to touch and to know the great common woman’s heart of us all; and, O Lord God, let us not forget to be kind.”

THE ORGANIZATION OF LEISURE

suggests that active study in connection with the programs is in general somewhat less consecutive than formerly, although only those clubs are admitted to the federation which do some definite “work.” Most of the programs tend to oscillate somewhat from subject to subject in an effort to be as comprehensive as possible in each year’s work. The program of one characteristic federated club took up within one recent year “Prophets of the Bible,” “Wonders of the Radio,” “What Do Colleges for Women in the Orient Accomplish?” and “The Life of Paul.” Another club proceeded within winter from “Recent Religious Movements: Christian Science and New Thought,” to “The Dictograph,” “Mural Paintings,” “The Panama Canal,” “The Drama,” “Hull House,” and “Dress.” The year’s work of yet another included meetings on “Waterways,” “Animals,” “Our Nation,” “Socialism,” and “The Simple Life.” The program of another club offered in an exceptionally long season of twenty-one meetings, five of which were purely social, a program providing study of “the Bible, history, music, art, and literature.”

One factor in the great variety of subjects covered by the programs of many clubs may be the device of passing on to them through the Federation suggestions of various standing state committees for their work:

“I suppose,” said the president of the Federation on one such occasion, “that the members of the state committees will want to put in special pleas for the subjects of their particular committees. I’m on the history committee and I’ll say my say first. Now, I

24. Cf. Ch. XVII for discussion of the music and art clubs which are members of the Federation. No other clubs have as clearly defined fields of study.

25 While Biblical themes are still common, they do not bulk as large as formerly. Thirty-five years ago it was not uncommon for a club to follow some study of the Bible concurrently with other work. Such a mingling of the two strains appears in the following course of study for the twenty-one meetings in the year’s program of one club: Meeting No. 1: Abraham; Egyptian women. 2: Isaac; modern Egypt. 3: Jacob; Greek women. 4: Joseph; Greek religion. 5: Moses; Roman women. 6: Banquet. 7: The twelve tribes; Qwo Vayâlar; 8: Tabernacle; French women. 9: Jewish feasts; French palaces. 10: Idolatry; English women. 11: David. 12: Solomon; American women. 13: Temple; Yellowstone National Park. 14: Children’s Day. 15: Queen of Sheba; [State] writers. 16: Joseph and Mary; Queen Wilhelmina. 17: Christ; Caesar of Russia. 18: Jerusalem; lives of Patti, Schumann-Henck, Sembrich, Melba. 19: Mary Magdalen. 20: Club ten years hence. 201: Modern Jews; Harold, Last of the Saxons.

21: Passion Play; modern painters.
think it would be really very fine if each club would include at least one meeting this next year on early state history. I don’t see any reason why you shouldn’t do it. We should all know more about the early history of our own state. The history committee would like you to have just one meeting on that. Now the other ladies may speak for their committees.” Members of the Industrial Relations Committee and of the Committee on the Exchange of Bulbs and Seeds, and so on, followed with their pleas.

In addition to this parceling out of programs by energetic committees, there are certain standard subjects which recur; year after year appear meetings on “Origins of Thanksgiving,” “Old Christmas Stories,” “How the Flag Originated,” “Flag Day and Its Meaning,” “The Home Life of George Washington,” “St. Patrick and the Shamrock,” “Thoughts on Easter,” “Friendships of the Bible,” “Bible Types of Modern Women,” “Birds and Flowers of the Bible,” “Old Testament Heroes,” “Beauty Spots of the State,” “Middle Western Writers,” “Riley and His Poems,” “Readings from Eddie Guest,” varied with “History of our Club” and “How We May Improve Our Club.”

Amid these programs—winding along through “Ruskin, As Man, Author, and Critic,” “The Xantippes of History” (with the comment, “If all had husbands like Socrates they would be found more numerous in our city”), “Etchings and Engravings,” “Immigration,” “The Power of Music,” “The Effect of Friendship upon Character,” “Intelligence Testing,” “Modern Novels”—certain trends appear. A slow shift is taking place away from the almost exclusive preoccupation with “literature” as the heart of the things worth studying toward more active interest in the life of Middletown. The earlier aims of “the promotion of literary and social tastes” are somewhat giving way to “the social and intellectual advancement of women and united effort to further improvement in the community in which we live.” “In the early days we were more interested in ancient Greece,” said one club woman, “but now we are interested in what is happening in Middletown.”

The oldest and largest of the women’s clubs, which now has 168 members, began in the late nineties to form clubs within the club, or “departments.” The Literature Department, which included art, music, and ancient history, comprehended the entire work of the club in 1890, but the Literature and Art Department today is in the minority both in number of meetings and of members, owing to the rise of popular Departments of Sociology and Civics (originally Philanthropy and Civics) and History and Current Events (originally Education and Home). These new departments, made up of women having the ballot and aware of many currents in the life eddying about them, zealous to improve Middletown, find their way hard. One business class woman who says that she is “never able to get reading done,” joined the History and Current Events Department whose program announced the study of Wells’ *Outline of History* and the *Review of Reviews* News Letter. “But,” she protested, “at the meetings the women, instead of discussing; read aloud little sections of the book and I get nothing from it at all. At one meeting they read from the *Outline* and at the next read an article on pioneer life by Dr. ——— and at the next went back to Mr. Wells. I have stopped going, and I’m going to resign.”

The Sociology and Civics Department, setting out in 1924-25 to study community problems with the help of Blackmar and Gillin’s *Outlines of Sociology* and Miss Byington’s Russell Sage pamphlet on *What Social Workers Should Know About Their Own Communities*, found itself bewildered in the attempt to cover in one meeting the political life of Middletown and in the next the religious life, trying to answer questions on the churches ranging from “Do their spheres overlap?” to “What

20 The following changes in distribution of membership are illuminating:

1890: Entire membership literature, art, music, and ancient history.
1902-3: Lit. and Art 44 per cent., Philanthropy and Civics 27 per cent., Education and Home 19 per cent.
1909-10: Lit. and Art 45 per cent., Sociology and Civics 31 per cent., History and Current Events 24 per cent.
1919-20: Lit. and Art 45 per cent., Sociology and Civics 33 per cent., History and Current Events 22 per cent.
1923-24: Lit. and Art 32 per cent., Sociology and Civics 22 per cent., History and Current Events 34 per cent, Dramatic Art 12 per cent.

As late as 1899-1900, nine of the general club meetings were under the Department of Literature and Art and only five each under the Departments of Philanthropy and Civics and of Education and Home, whereas in 1919-20 Literature and Art had five meetings, Sociology and Civics six, and History and Current Events three, and in 1923-24 Literature and Art and History and Current Events had four each, and Sociology and Civics and the new Department of Dramatic Art, devoted to rehearsing and presenting plays, three each.
is the social welfare work of each? How is it financed?” Baffled by the difficulty of finding concrete answers to the complex current questions they are attempting to study in this and other clubs, Middletown women tend, not unnaturally, to fall back upon generalizations. Thus a paper dealt characteristically with the “problems” of the church in Middletown in such terms as:

“Whenever in poetry we hear exalted the beauty of night, it is always a night with stars. . . . No man with a soul in him can look at the stars and not see God. . . . Men would be hopelessly lost in the darkness of this world but for the light of the true Christian.”

A paper on “Bolshevism in America” at another study club explained:

“There is room in this country for but one flag and that is the American flag. Put down the red flag. It stands for nothing which our Government stands for. It is against the integrity of the family, the State and Nation. It floats only where cowards are in power. . . . The whole Bolshevism movement in Russia was in the interest of and financed by Germany. In the United States German Gold also has been stimulating the Bolshevism campaign.

“Bolshevism has no root in America. . . . The I.W.W. represents organized Bolshevism in America. We have certainly shown that we know how to handle the I.W.W. . . . It would be foolish to magnify such disorders as Bolshevism. . . . The American people believe in America. They believe in doing things the right way, not the wrong way.

“We must take this movement of Bolshevism seriously. . . . We must not for one moment relax our vigilance. . . .”

“Part of it is contradictory,” said the writer afterwards, “but I read different things in different places.”

Still another club attempted the discussion of the “problem” of the movies in Middletown, “a subject of vital interest from a moral as well as commercial aspect”; a paper presented “Tendencies of Movies and Their Possibilities,” and the program thereafter shifted into “a chatty round-table discussion of favorite screen stars, best plays, and why certain ones were chosen by club members.”

Discussion of child-rearing, although it would appear to be a dominant interest of many of these federated club members,

is confined almost entirely to the struggling Mothers' Council. This organization, replacing the moribund Parent-Teachers Association, is kept alive by the larger churches, each of which has its own group; at the monthly union meetings attendance ranges only from twelve to twenty. Programs consist, in addition to music, Bible reading, and talks or the reading aloud of papers sent out by the national organization, followed by scattered discussion.7 According to the emphatic testimony of one of the active members:

“The Mothers' Council is dying. Actually it is powerless to act in matters concerning the problems of home and school because it is connected with the churches. The only good thing it has done is to bring Catholic and Protestant women together and help break down religious prejudice—though even this was almost spoiled when a minister's wife bitterly attacked the Catholic attitude towards Bible study in the schools. The meetings really do next to nothing to help mothers to deal with their own problems in bringing up their children.”

Only occasionally in the other federated clubs do papers appear on such subjects as “The Family as a Cooperative Institution” and “What Public Health Is Doing for the Child.” “House Planning,” “Interior Decoration,” and other questions of homemaking are only less infrequent. And even such discussions tend to fall into the familiar generalizations, as, for example, in a 1924 paper on care of health:

7 The concepts under which the “problems” involved in child-rearing are considered by these groups appear from the 1923-24 program: “The Power of Organized Motherhood to Benefit Humanity”; “New Application of Music and Song in Education”; “Choosing Children's Books,” followed by discussion led by the local librarian; “Cooperation between the Home and School”; “The Duty of Parents in Training Children for Citizenship”; “Thoughts on Religious Education,” and “Christian Spirit in the Home”; “Courtesy—Respecting the Rights of Others.” The 1924-25 program included: “What Constitutes a Modern Good Father?” (by a minister); “What Can We Do Toward Meeting Community Needs?” (by the head of the local hospital, whose principal interest in her talk was aligning the local women behind the hospital); “The Woman of the Home”; “A Real American”; debate on “Resolved, That a College Education Is Necessary to Success”; a “Teen Age Meeting,” including talks on the Boy Scouts, Girl Fire Girls, the Bible in the public schools, and review of the novel, The Plastic Age; “The Misunderstood Child.” It is only fair to remark that these imported program subjects glorify out of all proportion the actual proceedings at the meetings.
"The physical laws of health, however simple and concise they may be, are not to be separated from the mental and spiritual condition of the patient, and no one will deny that their influence is of great importance. 'Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your spirit which is God's.'

The subject of foods and food values is a broad one. . . . If people would but fully realize that by proper living it is possible for every one to be well, very few persons would be ill. The great hope of modern medicine is the prevention of disease."

It continued with a sketch of the work of Jenner and the Mayos, with no reference to the concrete problems involved in "proper living" in Middletown.

Press reports of club papers, while they frequently include summaries of the facts covered, tend to single out for eulogy "the charming and gracious manner" in which the paper was presented, or the "well-chosen and eloquent" words of the speaker; one of the most popular lectures to which Middletown club women listened in 1924 was described as "a poem in prose." As school education appears to be more valued in Middletown as a symbol for things hoped for than for its specific content, so this activity of "improving one's mind" through club papers may be regarded as serving in part as a focus of sentiments rather than as something to be put into practice and used. And, just as the city paid more attention to elaborate externals of its houses in the eighties, when there was little to be done in the way of adding material improvements inside, so these papers show a tendency toward verbal ornamentation not only in the familiar regions of literature and art, but also in the baffling new programs on "civic problems." In other words, here as elsewhere, stagnation or mild bewilderment tends to result in the proliferation of superficial external aspects. If, however, the pressure of maladjustment in local life becomes acute enough to force increasingly concrete discussion and action upon the emergent "Sociology and Civics" concerns of these women, we may expect to see a recession of this ornate verbiage before more definite action addressed to specific ends.

As the clubs have become less exclusively literary they have increasingly made sporadic forays into practical civic affairs.

No one of the fifteen federated clubs lacks an annual contribution to at least one of the social service organizations: the Free Kindergarten, Humane Society, Anti-Tuberculosis Association, Social Service Bureau, Day Nursery, Y.W.C.A., etc. Federated Club members point with pride, also, to the fact that they initiated the first Associated Charities in the city, the Visiting Nurses' Association, the Juvenile Court, the teaching of manual training in the schools; to their sponsoring of art exhibits in the schools, recognition dinners for honor students, a rest room for women in the Court House, anti-tuberculosis shacks, Investigation of the working conditions of women in Middletown; to their agitation for regulation of dance halls, better motion pictures, and dry law enforcement; to their changing the name of one of the streets to Pershing Avenue and planting trees along it as a war memorial. Discussion as to which woman's club originated certain of these projects is active, and in some cases a men's club disputes the claim, but the Chamber of Commerce is wont to turn to the Federated Clubs for help in a community program, and the men frequently admit that "it's usually the women who carry things through." This concrete satisfaction of something definite accomplished in Middletown appears to be an increasingly prominent feature of the work of the women's clubs.

And yet the essential function of these groups is probably no more to be found in their civic work than in their study programs. Of the twenty meetings yearly of one representative study club, three are luncheons with no programs, another is a banquet for husbands, a fourth an annual banquet for members, while an annual guest day, an annual picnic, and an annual business meeting are also without programs; eleven program meetings remain, at all of which refreshments are served and a "social hour" is enjoyed. In the early days of the largest women's club a banquet was held once every three years, whereas today there is an annual banquet, the year opens with a dinner or tea, there is a New Year's "Open House," a

28 The Mothers' Council has fostered various movements in the community: religious education in the schools; an effort to remove obscene literature from the local news-stands; getting the sororities to recommend that their members do not wear such low-cut gowns to dances; urging probation work in the juvenile court; and persuading the high school authorities to set aside the first period in the morning for committee meetings so that the children can come home earlier from school.
the extent of basing its program on "The Larger Citizenship." But its social exclusiveness remains, and it holds itself rather aloof from the other clubs of the Federation.

Appeal to social prestige was used by a publishing house to draw women into the club which most nearly resembles the Chautauqua Reading Circles of the nineties. The agents for this "clever book-selling scheme," as it is called even by some of its supporters, secured the adherence of some social leaders and used their names as drawing-cards for others. "But, Mrs. ______, you don't realize that this isn't just a study group," said the agent to one woman who had said that she did not care to join.

"It will give you a chance to know the best people in town!" With this inducement, plus the fact that they would be receiving "the equivalent of a college course except for economics," 125 women invested $66.00 in a set of books to be used as a basis for a six-year course of study. And, in defiance of the customary social stratifications, the nucleus of the plan has persisted; women who, as one member explained of her particular group, "would never have come together in an invitation club," continue to meet. During the three years since the Chapter was organized, one morning group largely composed of society women has practically fallen to pieces; an evening group of business women limps on feebly, and two other morning groups of more mixed membership survive; the last two, like the first, display in their 9 A.M. meeting hour the same conspicuous leisure which marks the morning club described above. The study centers around the books which one member described as "outlines, about what you would find in an ordinary school history." The first year covered "Epochs of Human Progress" in eighteen meetings, the second "History of the Drama," and the groups in 1924-25 were studying the "History of Art." "I work harder on this than on any of my other club work," said one of the most active leaders of club life in the city. "I usually spend an afternoon at the library on each paper," said another, "and two evenings writing it." As many as six papers at a single meeting may cover, for example, "Egyptian Architecture," "Mesopotamian Architecture," "Solomon's Temple," "Greek Architecture," "Greek Sculpture," and "Greek Painting." At such a meeting one sees the persistence of the traditional emphasis upon "improving one's mind" by means of all
sorts of knowledge. Following the reading of papers come the questions for this time:

Ques. “Describe the plan of an Egyptian temple.”
Ans. “They were very massive.”
Leader. “Yes, and, of course, we know they had decorations and all.”
Ques. “Contrast the cella of a Greek temple with the inner rooms of Egyptian and Mesopotamian temples.”
Leader. “Of course, they were just about the same.”
Ques. “Point out the differences between the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Greek religions.”
Leader. “Of course, we know they were all pretty much alike. They all worshiped gods.”

“I learned three things from this meeting,” said one of the group as the dozen women were leaving, “there were three kinds of Greek columns, Roman architecture wasn’t as good as Greek, and Alexander the Great lived before Christ.”

Somewhat set apart from the other women’s study clubs and including a few men among their numbers are the groups centering their work in “practical psychology.” As eagerly as Middletown in the nineties thronged to hear “Dr. C—’s free lectures to men and women only on Solar Biology or our relation to the Zodiac—the mysteries of yourself,” about 250 people, the majority of them women, came in 1924 to find out from two women lecturers “How We Reach Our Subconscious Minds.” Following the free advertising talks, thirty women, some of them from the working class, paid $25.00 for a course of ten lectures giving “definite psychological instruction for gaining and maintaining bodily fitness and mental poise and for building personality,” setting forth the “Infallible Formula” for “reaching, re-directing, and enriching the operations of Your Greater Self,” and assuring that “we all come into the world with the same equipment of brain cells. You can become any sort of success you choose.” Another group of two dozen women and two men comes together weekly in a meeting in the parlors of the Chamber of Commerce, beginning always with the prescribed ritual:

Leader. “How are you?”
Group. “Fine and dandy, why shouldn’t I be?”

Leader. “Now we have started vibrations which have lifted us already to a higher plane.”
Group, in unison. “I am relaxing, relaxing, relaxed. . . . I am wholly passive—Universal Mind has taken possession of me. . . . Knowledge is Power. I desire Knowledge. I have Knowledge—”
and proceeds to the study of concentration, attention, the subconscious mind, and so on from their textbook, The Master Key.

Despite the uneven and somewhat scattered nature of the work of some of these women’s study clubs, it is chiefly in these groups that the intellectual traditions of the nineties live on.

If self-cultivation in women’s clubs has become somewhat more diffuse as the population of the city has become so differentiated that the future of a woman’s child and the business success of her husband are not remotely connected with the social level of her clubs, the educational work of the men’s clubs, except for strictly specialized professional clubs and listening to talks in other clubs, is not simply diffuse—it is engulfed.

From 1878 to the chaotic gas boom days a group of substantial citizens met regularly in a Literary and Scientific Association, “one of the fixed institutions of learning in the city.” Bankers, lawyers, doctors, merchants, wrote and discussed papers on “What is Mind?” “The Physiology of Life and Death,” “Obvious Reasons for Evolution,” “The Ultimate Destiny of the Earth,” “Monopolies and Taxation,” “The Legal Effects of Marriage,” “The Religion of Asia,” “Freedom of Speech,” “The Evils of Our School System,” “What Shall We Teach Our Boys?” “Patriotism vs. Dishonesty,” “The Relativity of Knowledge,” and “The Relation of Science to Morality.” The intellectual give and take of this group was evidenced by the opposition it aroused,99 and, after the first

99 “This association, like all the others of a similar character,” observed a local historian in 1880, “has failed to secure the good will and friendship of all professed promoters of progress. To some, it partakes too much of religion; to others, too largely of science; to some, not enough of either. Indeed, some whose cherished opinions and beliefs have suffered by coming into contact with the relentless argument of others, have irreverently and uncharitably charged infidelity as the prevailing sentiment. Occasions of its adjournment have been seized upon to write and publish its obituary by those whose wish has been father to the thought; but while numerous examples of the instability of human affairs are constantly passing our notice, the Literary and Scientific Association of [Middletown], now upon the threshold of the fourth year of its existence, never gave better promise of
breath-taking rush of the gas boom, it was resumed in the Ethical Society, including in its membership "any gentleman above the age of sixteen years, who enjoys a reputation for temperance, virtue, and is liberty-loving, truth-telling, and debt-paying," who received a unanimous vote of the members.

"The utmost freedom of speech will be allowed," continues the press announcement, "there are no fees or fines. . . . The exercises are to consist of essays, orations, recitations, and discussions. Any plan the purpose of which is to benefit our city morally or humanity collectively may be placed before the society. It is hoped that public sentiment may be aroused so that any and all palpable evils with which we are afflicted may be eradicated because the best element in society demands it. . . ."

The society started out with a membership of twenty-nine "of all denominations and political complexion" and shortly increased to fifty, including some women; attendance of members and guests frequently reached seventy-five or one hundred. It led a wandering existence, meeting at first in the "Blue Ribbon" Rooms and later in the Universalist Church, being requested to leave the former place, because, it is reported, its Sunday afternoon meetings drew so many more people than the church services. Week after week in the nineties baker and nail-maker sat side by side with banker and doctor, discussing such questions as the "Ethical Life of Man" ("The well-being of man and not the glory of God should be the subject of our efforts. Intellectual, moral, and physical culture and not piety is the prime condition of man's well-being. . . .") "Physical Culture for Children in Our Schools," "Free Silver," or "The Meaning of Evolution." Nor was this the only discussion group; the Carpenters' Union conducted for a while a series of Sunday afternoon discussions, and lively discussion went on continuing to edify all who will attend its meetings, and of wielding an influence for good in the community where it seems to have a permanent lodgment."

The important thing to note here, in the light of the current quietistic men's civic clubs, is that there could be a club of leading business and professional men in Middletown a generation ago that stirred up fierce indignation on philosophical and social questions. Cf. the discussion of the leveling effect of credit in Ch. VIII, and also Ch. XXVIII.

A baker, describing the way he spent Sunday in the nineties, said, "In the morning a bunch of us bakers would get together with a keg and bicker over wages, flour, and what not. Then after dinner I'd go to the Ethical Society."
eighty men who gather each Tuesday for lunch at Rotary come together under the rules of the national organization decreeing that a single outstanding man in each business and profession in the city may be a Rotarian; but since strict adherence to this rule would omit some of the business leaders, special "associate" and "honorary" memberships have been created so that one sees among Rotary members four lawyers, three bankers, and four millionaire manufacturers all engaged in the same plant. These chosen head men, meeting in the best hotel or at the Country Club, stand about chatting, observing the ritual of calling each other by first names, until the president shouts, "Let's go!" whereupon all crowd into the dining room. No "blessing" precedes this meal as in the other civic clubs, as the classification of ministers is unrepresented in Rotary. Eating proceeds vigorously at the long tables for about half an hour. Ten minutes of lusty song follows—the latest Broadway hits and Rotary songs, chief among them:

R-O-T-A-R-Y,  
That spells R-O-T-A-R-E-E-E.  
R-O-T-A-R-Y,  
It's known o'er land and sea;  
From North to South,  
From East to West,  
He pro-fits most  
Who serves the best.  
R-O-T-A-R-Y,  
That spells R-O-T-A-R-E-E-E.

When "every one is feeling good," the scrolls bearing the printed words of the songs are rolled up on the wall and the introduction of guests takes place. "I have with me as my guest Bill Smith, visiting Rotarian from Jacksonville," says a member, Bill stands up, and from all the tables rises a brisk volley of, "'Lo, Bill!" "Hi, Bill!

As at most meetings in Middletown, speeches form the pièce de résistance of the programs, these being of three kinds: (1) speeches from a Middletown member on his "classification"—"Being a motion picture exhibitor," "Making and selling high-tension insulators," merchandising, advertising, the law; (2) speeches by the head of a local charity, the librarian, the director of the vocational work in the schools, or by the head of organizations such as the state bankers' association; (3) speeches by "outside speakers" routed to Middletown through the International Rotary headquarters and speaking on "Sound Economics," "R.O.T.C. in the Colleges," "Tax Revision," "The United States and World Leadership," and similar topics. Nowhere is Middletown's predilection for a "real good speaker" or its ready acceptance of the views of a person who pleases it more apparent.

The civic work of these clubs with their slogans of "service" and "the under-privileged boy" is likewise of three kinds: (1) certain annual affairs such as inviting the honor students of the high school to one of their luncheons, holding special club chapels in the high school, attending the county poor farm in a body at Christmas time and making speeches and distributing small gifts, conducting an annual Christmas party for one hundred or so needy boys, or an annual Easter egg hunt in a local park, at which hundreds of children search among the leaves for the lucky eggs drawing prizes of merchandise and money; each of the clubs does four or five of these civic things a year; (2) the sporadic good turn to meet some local need—giving a radio to the Orphans' Home, or agreeing to take turns week after week in bringing a crippled boy to high school in their automobiles; (3) considerably less common activities of the more ambitious sort, e.g., one club secured a summer camp for the local Y.W.C.A. The Dynamo Club of young businessmen, affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce and differing from the other civic clubs in that its membership is open to any member of the Chamber, secured a municipal golf course for the city and organized a local drive to utilize school yards as playgrounds.

The lack of coherence in the subjects of the speeches to which each of these clubs listens week after week and in which the nontechnical occasional charitable work which constitutes their civic work suggests that, as in the women's study clubs, the reason

34 See Ch. XXII for the reasons for omitting a minister from Rotary.
for their dominance lies in neither of these activities but in the instrumental and symbolic character of their organization. Not only are they a business asset, but by their use of first names, sending of flowers on birthdays, and similar devices, they tend to re-create in part an informal social intercourse becoming increasingly rare in this wary urban civilization. “It isn’t Edward T. Smith, President of the So and So Corporation, you’re addressing,” said a speaker at Rotary, “but the human being, the eternal boy in Ed.” “It makes you realize the other fellow hasn’t got horns on and ain’t out to get you,” as one man put it. “You can’t sit down at a table with a man and talk things over without getting to understand him better,” said another. “There were a couple of fellows here I used to look at and think, ‘What’s he done?’ and then I got to know them at Rotary and found they were doing a lot of fine things without waving their arms about them the way some folks do.”

These genial, bantering masters of the local group find here some freedom from isolation and competition, even from responsibility, in the sense of solidarity which Rotary bestows. For some members the civic clubs have displaced lodges and churches as centers of loyalty and personal and class morale.

“Rotary and its big ideal of Service is my religion,” said one veteran church and Sunday School worker of Middletown. “I have gotten more out of it than I ever got out of the church. I have gotten closer to men in Rotary than anywhere else, except sometimes in their homes.”

All the clubs take pride in an accumulated sense of service. Said a speaker at a Middletown Rotary luncheon:

“The lowly Nazarene who walked by the Sea of Galilee was the first Rotarian, and the second great Rotarian was that other man who probably did more for mankind than any other man that ever lived, Abraham Lincoln. Could we spread the Rotary spirit to the coal mines, this ideal of service would end all strikes. Could it be spread to the Governments of Europe, France would not have entered the Ruhr, Germany would have paid. You remember what President Harding said at the Rotary convention in St. Louis: ‘If I could plant a Rotary club in every city and hamlet in this country I would then rest assured that our ideals of freedom would be safe and civilization would progress.’”

Challenging him and his world at no point, often proving of actual cash value in his business, membership in these clubs may serve a Middletown business man as the symbolic repository of his ideals, assuring him that by virtue of carrying on his business and being a member of this club his daily life in the group is its own justification and has dignity and importance. This combination of utilitarianism and idealism, linked with social prestige and informal friendliness, is almost irresistible.

And yet the men’s civic clubs are not without their local critics. Some feel that the civic club mountain groans weekly and brings forth—a slogan:

“When you come right down to it, what’s the justification for the existence of this club?” said a loyal Rotarian in a burst of private candor. “Want to know what I think? We’re just a bunch of Pharisees and hypocrites!”

“It’s an awful job week after week getting up a three-ring circus to entertain these clubs,” said an officer in another club, “and I sometimes wonder if they’re worth the trouble.”

“The whole town is over-organized,” declared the wife of one Rotarian vehemently. “I don’t think the men’s clubs amount to much. They get together and some one talks about something for a few minutes and then they go off to business again and forget all about it. If all the men who meet in these separate civic clubs would get together, say once a month at the Chamber of Commerce, and discuss one or two things and act upon them, they might get something done.”

Certainly it is true that a wide gap exists between the activities of the civic clubs and the major maladjustments of which Middletown complains. In general, civic club members, like others, habitually regard these friction spots as inevitable accompaniments of life, and the city pursues its accustomed course with more or less creaking of the machinery in much the same manner as before the existence of the civic clubs. This situation presents few anomalies when it is realized that the clubs exist primarily as an adjunct to the business interests of their members and as a pleasant way of spending leisure; chiefly as a supplement to these interests and in regions where no enemies will be made or no ructions raised do the clubs become “civic.” And within Rotary itself a cleavage is beginning to appear. Some members complain that a certain group always sit to-
gether and play together and that this "cliquishness" will "spoil Rotary."

"Do you know what's behind all these civic clubs?" asked a member of another club. "Snobishness. Each Rotarian goes home and spreads the Rotary talk about the Rotarian being the best man in his line in town, then all the wives tell all their neighbors, and then the wives begin forming their exclusive sets."

This tendency may later on eventuate in the splitting off of another, more exclusive group within Rotary. Just as forty years ago the lodges, by straining off a more exclusive group, cut into the churches as a center of social life and loyalty for Middletown men, so, as the lodges have become inclusive, civic clubs led by Rotary have cut into the lodges. The signs of fissiparous beginning to appear in Rotary may point toward a repetition of the cycle in the future.

The great days of lodges as important leisure-time institutions in Middletown have vanished. At present, despite the heavy building programs of leading lodges, business men are "too busy" to find the time for lodge meetings that they did formerly; the man who goes weekly to Rotary will confess that he gets around to the Masons "only two or three times a year." Working men admit, "The lodge is a thing of the past to what it was eight or ten years ago. The movies and autos have killed it." "He belongs to a lodge but never goes," said more than one of the working class wives interviewed.

"Twenty years ago," said a business class lodge officer, "when we had 186 members, we used to get out 125 regularly for meetings. Even ten years ago with 300 members we got out 200. Then we had a president who wanted the lodge to grow, and we ran the membership up to 912. Now we have to have a supper before meetings to get any one, and at that we get out only about forty, or on initiation night sixty. The heart of the lodge movement went out of it when we all began letting anybody in, regardless of whether he lived the ritual. The lodges here are on the rocks."

The attendance problem among the working class lodges is also acute. The Eagles, e.g., give a dollar at each meeting to the fifth name drawn from the membership list if the man is present; if he is not present the dollar is added to the dollar to be offered the following week. On one recent occasion the lodge went for thirty-seven weeks without the fifth name being present; the next week the owner of the fifth name was present and received thirty-eight dollars, a five-dollar hat, a free shampoo, and a free cleaning and pressing of a suit of clothes.

In the main business men join lodges today for business reasons—a gentle business man of any local standing can hardly afford to stay out of the Masons at least; and workers join chiefly for the sickness and death benefits, though even here the Workmen's Compensation system, group life insurance by employers, and the spread of the habit of independent insurance, are cutting into the lodges. The ritual is said on every hand to mean little today, apparently far less than even a generation ago. "No man or woman can follow the teachings inculcated here," said the press report of the founding of a new local lodge in 1890, "without being purer, nobler, more charitable, and more willing to speak kind and loving words to those whom misfortune has overtaken." And yet, "the other night," remarked a high degree lodgerman in 1924, "one of the Templars gave the rest of the order the devil for not making their practice and their professions square better. All of us know it is to laugh when a man is elevated to the Commandery or to some chair because of his diligence in performing the duties and learning the rites of Masonry," when he knows and we know that he only learned enough to skin by, thanks to coaching, and really isn't interested in the rites themselves, but joined for business reasons."

In the race for large memberships to support ever larger competitive lodge buildings—the Masons lead the field with a new million-dollar "temple"—the old personal note has apparently dropped largely from membership. According to a man closely identified with local lodge life:

"It used to mean something when you belonged to a lodge—the lodge meant something and you meant something, and when you met a fellow member on the street or in his place of business one of the first things you'd think was that he was a fellow member. Now, lodges are so large you often don't even know a man's in 'em, and if you do you don't care."

The extent to which the lodges have lost this close brotherhood, in the eyes of some members, appears in the remark of a busi-
ness man in speaking of the decline in fellowship in his church, "Why, you go there and it's as cold as any lodge."

As lodge interest has declined, interest in other clubs has tended to take its place among the business class, but not among the workers. The lodge and the declining labor union are almost the only clubs of the working men. The club life of the working class and business class groups interviewed is suggested by the following data on 123 and thirty-nine families respectively of the working class and of this group of the business class:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business class</th>
<th>Working class</th>
<th>Business class husbands</th>
<th>Working class husbands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of individuals answering</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to 1 or more clubs, lodges, etc., of some kind</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to 1 or more lodges</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to 1 or more church clubs</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to 1 or more labor unions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to other clubs</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This disparity between club affiliations of the two groups becomes more apparent from the fact that seventy-seven of the seventy-eight total affiliations of this representative group of 123 working class husbands are either in trade unions or lodges, clubs of decreasing local importance, which many of them apparently seldom attend. As pointed out in Chapter VIII, only eleven of the 100 working class families for whom income distribution was secured contributed anything to labor unions. Forty-eight paid lodge dues, amounts ranging from $3.00 to $43.00, averaging $15.20. In so far as Middletown may be "clubbed to death" this is largely a business class phenomenon.

More working class wives belong to clubs than a generation ago, in all likelihood, but the pressure upon the working class as a whole appears to be not from the multiplication of their loyalties but from their social isolation.

With greater organization has come increasing standardization of leisure-time pursuits; men and women dance, play cards, and motor as the crowd does; business men play golf with their business associates; some men in both groups tinker with their cars and tune in their radios; a decreasing number of men are interested in gardening, a few turn to books, one or two surreptitiously write a little; a few women "keep up music" and two or three paint or write; among the wealthy are a few who collect paintings and prints, two who collect rare books, and one who collects rugs. Interest in drama, as in music, art, and poetry, centers mainly in the high school. In 1877 there was even a Mechanics' Dramatic Club, "a local group of amateurs"; but today an occasional lodge revue is put on with much labor to raise needed funds, and now and then a sorority gives a revue, but the giving of plays is confined to the high school and to a few women in the Dramatic Department of the Woman's Club. For those who look wistfully beyond the horizon a hobby tends to be like an heretical opinion, something to be kept concealed from the eyes of the world. One family, unusually rich in personal resources, has recently built a home a little way out of town, set back from the road almost hidden in trees. So incomprehensible is such a departure that rumors are afloat as to what secret motive has prompted such unprecedented action. Hobbies appear to be somewhat more prevalent among high school pupils than among their elders. Of 275 boys and 341 girls in the last three years of the high school answering the question, "In what thing that you are doing at home this fall are you most interested?" one boy was publishing a small magazine, one studying aviation, one practicing mental telepathy, fourteen doing scientific experiments, one girl was collecting books, one collecting photography, one collecting linen handkerchiefs, two doing botanical experiments, and three girls and one boy writing. But most of their answers show that standardized pursuits are the rule; with little in their environment to stimulate originality and competitive social life to
discourage it, being “different” is rare even among the young.

Men have adopted more rapidly than their wives the activities growing out of new leisure-time inventions: it is largely they who drive and tinker about the car, who build the radio set and “get San Francisco,” who play golf, who first use such new play devices as gymnasium and swimming pool. Meanwhile, such new leisure as Middletown women have acquired tends to go largely into doing more of the same kinds of things as before. The answers of the two groups of women interviewed to the question, “What use would you make of an extra hour in your day?” bear witness to the narrowness of the range of leisure-time choices which present themselves to Middletown women. Both groups spoke of wanting time for reading more often than anything else, but as noted in Chapter XVII, this desire to read was both more marked and more specific among the business class. Only one of the thirty-two business class wives answering would use the time to rest, while approximately one in seven of the ninety-six working class wives gave such answers as “Rest,” “Go to bed,” “Lie down and rest, something I hardly ever do.” More than a third of the working class group answered blankly, “I don’t know.” One in sixteen of each group answered, “Fancy work or crocheting,” but, in the case of both of the two business class women so answering, in a tone of apology. In both groups a number mentioned getting out more with people, but the answers indicate different kinds of pressure. Among the working class it was frequently: “I’d go anywhere to get away from the house. I went to the store last night. I’ve been out of the house only twice in the three months since we moved here, both times to the store.” “I have two daughters. One lives only a block away and I’ve been over to see her only twice in the last two months. The other lives ten miles out on the interurban and I never see her. If I had an hour I’d use it to see them.” The pressure upon the group of business class women is apparently much less at this point; some of them say vaguely, “I’d like an hour in the afternoon for bridge or the movies,” or “I’d like more time for reading, calling, visiting, and social life.” Not one of these business class women answering referred to church work or Bible reading as a possible way of spending an extra hour, although to seven of the working class women answering, such work was their chief desire; two business class women, how-

THE ORGANIZATION OF LEISURE

ever, mentioned civic work among other things. No worker’s wife spoke of more time with her children, but four of the other group felt this as their chief desire. No woman of either group spoke of wanting to spend more time with her husband. One woman perhaps summed up the situation of the business class mother whose children are not below school age: “I am busy most of the time, but I can always get out when I want to.” Another expressed herself as actually having time to spare: “I am not pressed for time. I really have time for more civic activity than the community wants me to do.” For a large proportion of the working class wives, on the other hand, each day is a race with time to compass the essentials.49

Much may be learned regarding a culture by scrutiny of the things people do when they do not have to engage in prescribed activities, as these leisure pursuits are frequently either extensions of customary occupations to which they contribute or contrasts to the more habitual pursuits. In Middletown both aspects of leisure appear. The reading Middletown people most enjoy, the spectacles of romance and adventure they witness on the screen, the ever-speedier and more extended auto trips, many—perhaps even today the majority—of the women’s club papers, would seem to be valued in large part because of their contrast to the humdrum routine of everyday life. This seems to be particularly true of the working class. On the other hand, the whole system of business men’s clubs is apparently valued in part for its instrumental character, its usefulness to the main business of getting a living, and even such an apparently spontaneous activity as golf is utilized increasingly as a business asset; this use of leisure-time groups as an extension of the main activities of life is appearing to a minor but seemingly increasing extent in the women’s study clubs.

Finally, the greater organization of leisure is not alto-

49 To summarize: Of the ninety-six working class wives answering the question, twenty-seven answered, “I don’t know.” Sixteen would use it for housework or sewing, fourteen for rest, eighteen for reading, seven for getting away from home and seeing people, seven for church work, two to write letters, one to earn money, and four said that they are not pressed for time and might therefore use the time in various ways.

Of the thirty-two out of this group of forty business class wives answering this question, fourteen want time for reading, three for housework, two for fancy work, four for their children, three for social activities, one for rest, and five stated that they are not pressed for time and might use it in various ways.
gether a substitute for the informal contacts of a generation ago; opportunities to touch elbows with people are multiplied in the mobile and organized group life of today, but these contacts appear to be more casual and to leave the individual somewhat more isolated from the close friends of earlier days. In view of the tightening of social and economic lines in the growing city, it is not surprising that the type of leisure-time organization which dominates today tends in the main to erect barriers to keep others out.