"Wouldn't a Boy Do?" Placing Early-Twentieth-Century Male Youth Sex Work into Histories of Sexuality

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FROM THE 1880S THROUGH THE 1910S urban U.S. reformers and police only infrequently sought out male youth sex work, but they still found it. They happened upon it while attempting to intervene into immigrant families, prevent juvenile delinquency, temper child labor, or suppress female prostitution. From the 1910s through the 1930s in Chicago social investigators, psychologists, and sociologists found male youth sex work when they examined the "individual delinquent," the social world of hobos, the lives of boys in street trades or gangs, and the deviancies of homosexuals, whom they largely conceived of as adult men. The "discoveries" of male youth sex work that occurred while such experts looked for something else provoked a mixture of alarm and indifference.[1] As a result, authorities, while compelled to make sometimes extensive comments on male youth sex work in field, court, or clinic notes, made scant, vague reference to it in their published reports. Consequently, reform and policing activities regarding male youth sex work were much more inconsistent than were actions regarding female prostitution, commercialized amusements, and more anticipated forms of boy delinquency such as theft and truancy. It was as if experts could only understand male youth sex work out of the corners of their eyes, on the margins of the supposedly more pressing issues they conceived of as their main concerns.

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[1] For a discussion of the deployment of "discovery" in investigators' documentation of male sex work see Steven Maynard, "Through a Hole in the Lavatory Wall: Homosexual Subcultures, Police Surveillance, and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890–1930," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, no. 2 (1994): 207–42.

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Many histories of prostitution tend to replicate early-twentieth-century experts in relation to male youth sex work, describing it, when at all, in passing. In the historiography of prostitution and in much of the contemporary critical feminist, sociological, and cultural studies scholarship on prostitution and sex work, male youth sex often gets acknowledged as a form of sex work that, because it falls outside the conventional definition of prostitution, is beyond the scope of a given theory or history. In Timothy Gilfoyle's *City of Eros*, for example, male and transgendered youth sex work is mentioned only when it crosses paths with female prostitution. Elizabeth Clement's recent *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900–1945* articulates the nuanced contours of a range of sexual economies across diverse ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic peoples. Yet it has little to say about youth and same-sex sexualities or male sex work. This has the effect of making same-sex commercialized sexualities (and same-sex sexualities in general) appear incidental to her important argument about how sexual bartering became normalized through the evolution of sex entertainment and modern young heterosexual dating and how this facilitated the marginalization and racialization of cash-exchange female prostitution.[2]

In the last fifteen years a handful of notable historians have challenged this somewhat glancing approach to male youth sex work. Their scholarship generally follows George Chauncey's lead; they are principally interested in the growing policing of male-male sexualities and the relationship of male youth and sex work to the rising prominence in both expert discourse and American culture of a homosexual/heterosexual binary by the end of the 1930s. These approaches have produced key insights. Steven Maynard's work on urban Ontario, for example, challenges Chauncey's claim that working-class sexual identities in the early twentieth century had little relationship to expert discourses on sexology and psychology, noting that this divide was bridged by working-class boys' and men's interactions with the courts, awareness of potential surveillance by police and reformers, and consumption of popular media. Male youth sex workers faced criminalization for engaging in sexual commerce, same-sex sexuality, and youth "delinquency." As such, they may have been particularly vulnerable to official "local centers of power-knowledge," which approached such prostitution less as a danger of "recruiting" boys into homosexuality than as a gateway activity to broader "immorality" and

[2] Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790–1920* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992); Elizabeth Alice Clement, *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Clement mentions male sex work once, on page 73, in passing. Kerwin Kaye makes a similar observation, noting that in both historical and contemporary scholarship "prostitution" de facto means female unless the "male" adjective is attached to differentiate it from what he calls its "conventionally heterosexual context." Kerwin Kaye, "Male Prostitution in the Twentieth Century: Pseudohomosexuals, Hoodlum Homosexuals, and Exploited Teens," *Journal of Homosexuality* 46, nos. 1–2 (2003): 49.

criminality. Peter Boag's work on the Pacific Northwest similarly shows how poor and working-class boys, when caught selling sex by urban authorities, experienced middle-class attacks as psychologically disordered, sexually perverse, and criminal. Yet while "on the road" these boys participated in more informally commoditized, subculturally encouraged, and scarcely policed "punk/wolf" relationships with older vagrant boys and men. In this sense what made the "homosexuality" of such boys "situational" was not the transience of their desires or identities (whatever those might have been) as they either "grew out of it" or moved from homosocial to heterosocial spaces. Rather, it was how certain circumstances demanded their activities be understood as "homosexual" or "perverse" or "delinquent" while other circumstances facilitated the toleration and encouragement of similar activities outside of pathologizing frameworks.[3]

Nayan Shah extends Boag's work by suggesting that the regularization of age-of-consent decisions in relationship to male-male sodomy charges had specifically racialized effects. Californian policing assumed that homosociality between Asian-born migrant men and working-class or poor transient boys that authorities understood to be white (whether native-born or recent European immigrants) was predicated on the belief in an inherent tendency toward sexual predation in "Oriental depravity." Shah reveals how the boys, on the other hand, were often understood to be "ordinary," if somewhat delinquent, "Americans." As such they were sometimes channeled into more rehabilitative juvenile court proceedings for misdemeanors in hopes of being put back onto the path toward "normal" sexuality and successful social adjustment (as opposed to fixed homosexuality or inherent "degeneracy").[4] All of this scholarship has been extremely productive in its

[3] George Chauncey, Jr., "Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identity and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War One Era," *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 2 (1985): 189–211; George Chauncey, Jr., *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Maynard, "Through a Hole"; Steven Maynard, "'Horrible Temptations': Sex, Men, and Working-Class Male Youth in Urban Ontario, 1890–1935," *Canadian Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (1997): 191–235; Peter Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). See also Kaye, "Male Prostitution"; Mack Friedman, *Strapped for Cash: A History of American Hustler Culture* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2003); Mara L. Keire, "Dope Fiends and Degenerates: The Gendering of Addiction in the Early Twentieth Century," *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 4 (1998): 809–22; David K. Johnson, "The Kids of Fairytown: Gay Male Culture on Chicago's Near North Side in the 1930s," in *Creating a Space for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories*, ed. Brett Beemyn (New York: Routledge, 1997), 97–118.

[4] Nayan Shah, "Between 'Oriental Depravity' and 'Natural Degenerates': Spatial Borderlands and the Making of Ordinary Americans," *American Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (2005): 703–25. Such racial hierarchies and narratives of white youth degradation at the hands of South Asian (and Greek) men appear to have been reflected, albeit with different meanings, among some of the native-born white boys involved in itinerant sex work. In Chicago one such young man spoke of another boy with whom he had shared a tramping affair and then

emphasis on the relationship of male prostitution and sex work to the rise in both a homosexual subculture and a more integrated and disciplinary model of heterosexuality, whiteness, and "normal" sexual citizenship.

This article shifts the focus about boys involved in sex work away from principally identity-based or disciplinary concerns about the development of the homo/hetero binary. Here boys' sex work is examined in its relationship to issues about the constructions and practices of gender and age that are more regularly addressed in studies of female prostitution. This raises a different set of issues, specifically about "treatment" of delinquency in "socialized law," the deployment of boyhood in the sexual economies of youth by reformers and young male sex workers alike, and the relationship of sex work to expanding and commercialized youth cultures of the early twentieth century. Evidence from field notes, internal reports, and published works of social investigators, youth workers, delinquency experts, and sociologists reveals that male youth sex work deserves sustained inclusion in studies of prostitution generally. Histories that integrate male and female sex work can enhance and complicate ongoing theoretical and methodological dilemmas regarding the blurry lines around various forms and actors in commercialized sex.

I make interventions into three areas of concern for "traditional," that is, female, prostitution by exploring how they overlapped and contrasted with early-twentieth-century male youth sex work in Chicago. First, I explain how systems and discourses of female prostitution reform and regulation comprehended and interacted with male youth sex work in ways that rarely viewed boys caught up in them as either sentimental victims or delinquent in conventionally masculine ways. This left such boys in precarious circumstances. Second, I trace how male youth sex work related frequently to the era's social structures of female sex work. It occupied some of the same spaces and cultures as females involved in sex work, including brothels, street prostitution, and heterosocial sites of commerce and leisure.[5] Finally, my

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subsequently abandoned in Fresno, California. When his conscience got to him, he checked up on the boy and, to a reported horror that signaled his sense of white ethnic solidarity, discovered he "was 'hustling' among the Greeks and Hindus, for fifty cents and a dollar." In this context, however, the claim toward white supremacy makes the "degradation" as much about getting too little in exchange for sex as it is about racial slippage. See Don Romesburg, "Arrested Development: Homosexuality, Gender, and American Adolescence, 1890–1930" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2006), chap. 5; Nels Anderson, "Document 120: Young Man, Twenty-two, Well Dressed, Homosexual Prostitute, Loafs in Grant Park (W.B.P.)," 1922, Ernest W. Burgess Papers (hereafter Burgess Papers), Anderson, Nels, Box 127, Folder 4, Special Collections of the Regenstein Library, University of Chicago (hereafter U of C); Nels Anderson, "Document 82: Case of Boy in Teens, Tramp, 'Flirting' with Men in Grant Park," c. 1922, Burgess Papers, Anderson, Nels, Box 127, Folder 2, U of C; Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 17–20, 50–52, 148–52.

[5] Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*; Clement, *Love for Sale*, 104–7; Timothy J. Gilfoyle, "Street-Rats and Gutter-Snipes: Child Pickpockets and Street Culture in New York City, 1850–1900," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 4 (2004): 853–82. Although beyond the scope of this article,

conclusion suggests how male youth sex work complicates issues of agency, oppression, subjectivity, and categorization in ways that might broaden historical approaches to commercialized sex more generally.

The ways in which reform, regulation, and policing affected male youth sex work depended largely upon the context through which observers came into contact with boys. The fundamental difference between reform and legal approaches to males versus females set male youth sex workers apart from either girl or women prostitutes. Unlike "fallen women" or victims of "white slavery," boy sex workers did not fit easily into middle-class sentimentalist child saving or prostitution management. In early-twentieth-century New York City, as Stephen Robertson shows, the establishment of distinct sexual crimes against children relied upon the presumed passivity of properly feminine girlhood and resistance as evidence of properly assertive masculine boyhood. The late-nineteenth-century definition of statutory rape, which established a provision for female immaturity that precluded choice, made girl sex workers under the age of consent "victims" rather than agents. Boy sex workers got no such allowances. With the charge of sodomy on which basis much male youth sex work was prosecuted, it was just as bad to submit as it was to initiate. In sodomy cases involving male youth sex work, where mostly teenage boys pursued and engaged in a kind of "voluntary submission" to sex with older boys and men, the men *and* the boys involved were likely to face misdemeanor sodomy, vagrancy, or disorderly conduct charges. Coupled with this reality was a national trend toward expanding both the range of activities and penalties for "sodomy" and "sexual perversity." Young offenders too old for the juvenile court who might have been sentenced to one to five years on a felony sodomy charge a decade earlier were now sentenced to as much as ten years' imprisonment. Sentences could vary widely, however, particularly when the encounter was interracial. Shah shows that when white boys and young men had commercialized sex with nonwhite men, they tended to receive misdemeanor vagrancy and disorderly conduct charges while the men they had sex with got felony sodomy charges. Still, acceptance of favors and/or cash in exchange for sex with men jeopardized the legitimate masculine requirements of resistance for most boys caught in sex work.[6]

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boys' sex work also had its own distinct homosocial locations and practices, such as the largely hobo world on Chicago's West Madison. For extensive discussion of Chicago transient male neighborhoods, boys, and sex work see Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chaps. 4, 5. See also Todd DePastino, *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 85–91. It is interesting to note that DePastino's discussion of boys engaged in formal and informal sexual commerce with vagrant men follows one about female prostitution yet is marked in terms of homosexuality (or "hobosexuality") rather than sex work, as if the two topics are necessarily different.

[6] For New York, the Pacific Northwest, and California and federal courts in relation to sodomy prosecution and sentencing see Stephen Robertson, *Crimes against Children: Sexual Violence and Legal Culture in New York City, 1880–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North

Despite gendered differences in crime, boy and girl sex workers often faced similar "treatment" outcomes by the early decades of the twentieth century. In the age of Progressive legal reform, fixed-term imprisonment for youth committing sex crimes was less likely than indeterminate sentencing and/or psychiatric institutional treatment and internment. Chicago established its Juvenile Court in 1899 and, fifteen years later, the Boys' Court for youth sixteen or older. This moved many boys out of criminal punishment and into either the Juvenile Psychopathic Institute and its affiliated homes for the feebleminded and delinquent or the Psychopathic Laboratory, which served Chicago's Municipal Court system. The Juvenile Psychopathic Institute and Psychopathic Laboratory also treated girls and women brought into the city's Juvenile Court and Morals Court on prostitution charges throughout the 1910s and 1920s. Male youth sex workers never faced the kind of regularized venereal testing and mandated treatment required of females during and after World War I. That regimen operated as its own kind of indeterminate sentence, occurred prior to conviction, and lasted from weeks to months. All sex workers, regardless of gender, faced the new system of "socialized law" that treated the "individual delinquent." This approach separated those youth whom experts believed could be treated through environmental and/or psychological processes from those who supposedly required more drastic measures such as sterilization, castration, and extended or permanent institutionalization.[7]

Carolina Press, 2005), 37–71; Stephen Robertson, "'Boys, of Course, Cannot Be Raped': Age, Homosexuality, and the Redefinition of Sexual Violence in New York City, 1880–1955," *Gender and History* 18, no. 2 (2006): 357–79; Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 140; Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 200–206; Shah, "Oriental Depravity"; Lawrence W. Murphy, "Defining the Crime against Nature: Sodomy in the United States Appeals Courts, 1810–1940," *Journal of Homosexuality* 19, no. 1 (1990): 49–66. Maynard shows how Ontario court records about sexual activities between men and children and teenage boys reveal that while "age was a significant axis of power," this did not mean that all boys involved in sex work were "victims." Rather, sexual danger and opportunity were regular parts of the home, neighborhood, and broader urban spaces working-class boys occupied, and working-class culture sustained a wider range of understandings about sex, particularly commercialized sex, between boys and men than reformers and the law allowed (Maynard, "Horrible Temptations," 234–35). For additional context for changing age-of-consent laws in relation to girls and boys see Carolyn E. Cocca, *Jailbait: The Politics of Statutory Rape Laws in the United States* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

[7] Michael Willrich, *City of Courts: Socializing Justice in Progressive Era Chicago* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Anne Meis Knupfer, *Reform and Resistance: Gender, Delinquency, and America's First Juvenile Court* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chaps. 2, 3. For similar observations about girls in other U.S. cities see Ruth M. Alexander, *The "Girl Problem": Female Sexual Delinquency in New York, 1900–1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995); Regina Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890–1945* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993); Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Clement, *Love for Sale,* esp. 142–43. In California transient youth

Youth of all sexes engaged in sexual delinquencies were disproportionately placed into more severe categories of care than other delinquents through a host of diagnoses ranging from feeblemindedness and defectiveness to moral imbecility and psychopathy.[8] Such cases were seen as impossible or difficult to cure and particularly dangerous because of the supposed risks that sexual promiscuities and perversions posed to the overall well-being of an orderly society. Girls were brought into systems of care and punishment for autoerotic and heterosexual sexual delinquencies at vastly higher rates than boys. Boys were almost never brought in for consensual sexual activity with females. When boys were mentioned, it was primarily because they had been caught engaging in same-sex sexual delinquencies.[9]

Such boys were more often singled out for segregation, medical intervention, or both than were other male delinquents. This was, in part, because such boys' acts were examples not simply of antisocial behavior but of gender transgression. Girls, not boys, were supposed to be sexual delinquents. Because such boys failed within the developing concepts of "normal" and "natural" male-gendered maturation and sexuality, they tended to be viewed less as wayward but redeemable protocitizens than as "degenerate" or "feebleminded" threats to "real" adolescence, society, and American nationhood. Through a kind of circular logic, experts often suggested the "treatment" of permanent institutionalization or radical invasive surgeries for boys who were determined to actively engage in same-sex sexual acts, justifying this in part on the grounds of their presumed feeblemindedness and/or gender inversion. Male youth sex workers, for whom exchanges of sex for money, goods, or favors signified to the legal system their consent, signaled to the processes of individualized "treatment" a dangerously fixated perversity. As such they stood at the nadir of

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with a criminal history were most vulnerable to a designation of "innate" degeneracy when tried for same-sex sexual activity with men, which led to institutionalization and other means of attempting to isolate such "degenerates" lest they, like "amoral foreigners," contaminate "normal" American society (Shah, "Oriental Depravity," 719).

[8] William Healy, *The Individual Delinquent* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1915); James W. Trent, Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Knupfer, *Reform and Resistance.*

[9] Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chap. 3. The Illinois 1915 Feebleminded Commitment Act declared that a person deemed "feeble-minded" could be committed against his or her will. The Juvenile Protective Association supported this law and also advocated segregation for feebleminded female prostitutes that year. This was the same year that prostitution became a formally jailable (as opposed to fine-based) offense, making the women eligible for all the related techniques of socialized crime. From 1914 to 1917, of 4,447 cases in the Psychiatric Laboratory, 2,025 came from Boys' Court, 1,236 from Domestic Relations, and 947 from Morals. Willrich argues that judges were "far more likely to seek the laboratory's advice in adjudicating offenses committed in the morally ambiguous sphere of the social: vice, domestic disputes, and youth offenses. It was within this sphere of everyday life and domestic relations that eugenic jurisprudence had its greatest effect upon the life chances of the defendants." This increased in the 1920s (Willrich, *City of Courts*, 257–63).

this system.[10] While they faced different crimes with different potentials for punishment than girls or women and were not detected or prosecuted in anywhere near the numbers that female prostitutes were, they often ended up facing somewhat similar treatments when caught. Because their situation was less an object of either legal rehabilitation or reform efforts of victim saving, however, such boys were uniquely vulnerable to indifference and hostility rather than advocacy.

Beyond the formal systems of law and punishment, the larger social reform and policing projects of the early twentieth century that uprooted and relocated geographies of commercialized sex in Chicago, as in so many other U.S. cities, affected boys in their relationship to homosexuality and commercialized sex in unexpected ways. Early reform efforts (1900s–1910s) led by the Committee of Fifteen and the Juvenile Protective Association (JPA) prosecuted pimps, attempted the "rescue" of white "fallen women," and effectively shut down the red-light district. The result of this was a transition of female prostitution from its centralization in the Levee District to less formal, more dispersed sex work throughout the city. Still, one concentration occurred in the increasingly racially segregated South Side African American neighborhoods throughout the 1920s and 1930s.[11] Male youth sex work became part of a broad spectrum of sexualities that might be pursued by men seeking commercialized sex in these new economic zones.

Some boys discovered alternative sexual, gender, and commercial possibilities simply by living on the South Side. Leo, an effeminate African American

[10] Romesburg, "Arrested Development," esp. chap. 3; Shah, "Oriental Depravity," 717–20. See also Kaye, "Male Prostitution," 18.

[11] Mark Haller, "Urban Vice and Civic Reform: Chicago in the Early Twentieth Century," in *Cities in American History*, ed. K. Jackson and S. Schultz (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1972), 290–305; Kevin J. Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). For more on Progressive Era approaches to and the restructuring of female prostitution see, for example, Mark Thomas Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*; Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Thomas C. Mackey, *Red Lights Out: A Legal History of Prostitution, Disorderly Houses, and Vice Districts, 1870–1917* (New York: Garland, 1987); Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900–1918* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Neil Larry Shumsky, "Tacit Acceptance: Respectable Americans and Segregated Prostitution, 1870–1910," *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 4 (1986): 665–79. On the turn-of-the-century rise of pimps' authority and street presence see Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 33, 40; Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789–1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 171. Gilfoyle shows how historians' emphasis on pimps as objects of predominantly twentieth-century reformer concern has been overstated (*City of Eros*, 76–91, 251–69). See also Timothy J. Gilfoyle, "Prostitutes in History: From Parables of Pornography to Metaphors of Modernity," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 1 (1999): 132.

boy, grew up in the late 1920s and early 1930s with a concentration of pimps and female prostitutes around his neighborhood. He recalled that when he was fifteen he overheard pimps saying about him, "I would like to have that bitch for myself. I would like to fuck him." He added that while it made him "sort of uneasy," he "did not let them know." Those interactions helped instigate for Leo a questioning of the broader social and sexual meanings of his "sissy" childhood. Within two years he was regularly attending parties in drag and having relationships with other boys. The density of commercialized sex in his neighborhood, despite the discomfort it caused him, helped him find a way to be in the world that felt right to him, a way he could "talk as I choose and not act under a strain and I could be my real self."[12] To say the least, this was far outside the approaches to "well-adjusted" adolescence and "healthy" environments that concerned youth workers of the day. Nonetheless, it is suggestive of the subtle ways that sex work and space had rippling effects on subjectivity and maturation for youth, even if they did not directly participate in such sexual economies.

Pimps embraced the marketplace with potential and actual same-sex sexual practices involving boys (who often were gendered through working-class masculinities) and "fairies" (who spanned gender performances and practices but tended toward effeminacy, flamboyance, and sometimes cross-dressing). Although they were sidelines to the main business of brokering female prostitution with men, boys and fairies were components in the consumer array of pimps' business and pleasure.[13] Reformers searching for female "vice" were unnerved and confused by this easy confluence of various male desires. When a male JPA investigator looking for female prostitution approached one "colored man" named Norman at the corner of State Street and 31st Avenue, Norman asked him if he was "particular"

[12] "Leo. Age 18. Colored," 1934, Burgess Papers, Homosexual Interviews, Box 98, Folder 11, U of C.

[13] For the rise in pimps by the late 1920s and especially during the Great Depression as well as the exceptional effect it had on black women and in black neighborhoods see, for example, Clement, *Love for Sale,* 206–11. George Chauncey argues that youth street drag was more frequent in African American neighborhoods in New York during this period than in other neighborhoods. This could have helped normalize the public catcalling of effeminate boys there. He discusses fairy culture at length, including sex work in brothels and in public spaces. His description of fairydom as a particular domain of the young, often a transitional process into a more gender-normative yet gay-identified adulthood, resonates intriguingly with evolving concepts of adolescence plasticity and gender from this period (Chauncey, *Gay New York*, esp. 102, 249–50). See also Friedman, *Strapped for Cash,* 20; Kaye, "Male Prostitution," 7–8; Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chap. 5. It is difficult to discern whether fairies were less prevalent in Chicago than they were in New York City. Boag asserts they were much more prevalent in New York than in the Pacific Northwest. He argues that this was because of the dominance of transient men in working-class cultures in the region who tended to prefer "boys" to "fairies" (Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 30–31, 82–83). Chicago, a major hub of transient culture and a major metropolitan area, had its fair share of hustlers and fairies.

and remarked, "WOULDN'T A BOY DO?" (emphasis in original). Norman added, "I have 2 others besides myself, and we'll entertain you better than any women would." At Norman's house a few blocks down the investigator then "declined his invitation," so Norman called his friends to the street. The reformer added that "one of them who wrote his name and phone number told me that a lot of white fellows come to their apartment for 'pleasure.'" He promised to return and left hastily, scribbling notes about how disappointed he was that he had encountered "degenerates" when he had been seeking "pimps."[14]

While the investigator did not indicate Norman's age, the trope of boyhood was a component of his sexual sales pitch. This signaled the working-class interchangeability of the bodies of fairies, women, and boys as "vehicles for phallic satisfaction and manly solidarity."[15] Yet Norman claimed boyhood as a product differentiation that coupled performances of youth and maleness with a particular affinity for pleasuring the male body in a way supposedly exceeding the abilities of competing female prostitutes. This could involve the willingness toward receptive oral sex, for example, which fairies (and sometimes boys) would engage in when women, paid or otherwise, often would not. Moreover, it invited the options of penetrative oral and/or anal sex to men who might not take the receptive end of such practices in noncommercialized and/or heterosexual relations. Moreover, Norman seized upon the double meaning of boyhood as both a submissive youthful maleness in an intergenerational encounter and, in the context of an interracial exchange with a middle-class white man, a performance of racial deference.[16]

In the eyes of many clients the various sexes, ages, races, and genders of sex workers were far less fundamentally different than they were in the eyes of middle-class reformers or the law. Yet in terms of services marketed and sold, sex workers' wares were also particularized. Norman's appeal to the

[14] Juvenile Protective Association, "Vice Conditions in Chicago, Illinois, 1920–1923—correspondence, reports," JPA Papers 108, University of Illinois, Chicago Special Collections (hereafter UIC).

[15] Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 84–85.

[16] Chad Heap notes that "boy" in this context had racialized implications, with a young black man appealing to what he understood to be the white middle-class reformer's demands for deference built into the racist hierarchies that situated African Americans as less developed and more "immature" than whites. For a sustained discussion of sexual "slumming" in Chicago across both sexuality and race during this period see Mumford, *Interzones*; and Chad Heap, "'Slumming': Sexuality, Race and Urban Commercial Leisure, 1900–1940" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2000). The category of "boyhood" could also be extended to protect some white men well into their twenties from punishment in noncommercialized interracial same-sex encounters, marking them as innocent and hapless victims of "Oriental depravity," as Shah suggests ("Oriental Depravity," 714–15). For brief discussions of male youth sex workers' differentiations in terms of services rendered (often involving oral sex) and lower price point than female prostitutes see Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 81–85; Kaye, "Male Prostitution," 9.

disguised reformer was, first, about ease and availability and, second, about an assumed versatility of the client's phallic pleasures rather than a gesture toward his presumed fetish, sexual orientation, or inclination. Given that social reality, it seems crucial that scholars give more than passing mention to male and transgendered sex work in relation to how systems of prostitution reform clumsily collided with more integrated and nuanced commercial sexual economies and practices.

The most visible attempts by reformers, government, and business to stem male youth prostitution occurred, unsurprisingly, not in the African American "vice area," immigrant neighborhoods, or zones of impoverished male transience. Rather, they happened in relation to one of the most iconographic systems of American boy labor. Throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century the JPA periodically intervened to stop newsboys from sidelining in sex work. The economic incentive to sell sex was high. According to a comparative study of street trade investigations in Chicago and six other cities, on average such youth made around twenty-five cents a day for five or more hours of work. Boys could also make at least double that for a brief detour for a bit of sex work in a rooming house, alley, or public bathroom.[17]

Boys purchased papers from circulation managers in news alleys, distribution spaces between newspaper buildings that were sites of both homosexuality and youth culture. They were also social centers where runaways and homeless youth gathered alongside other boys and men to pass the time between editions. Much to reformers' consternation, newsboys' talk included gossip about prices of and strategies for homosexual sex work.[18] In March 1923 one JPA investigator spent two nights in the Hearst Alley to find out if it was true that selling sex to men was common. The investigator complained that combining newspaper sales with prostitution allowed boys to earn enough to live, albeit modestly, beyond the structures of dependency expected by modern categories of childhood and adolescence. This put such boys potentially beyond the reach of school, reform, and the juvenile court. In 1924, as a result of JPA pressure, Hearst switched to distributing papers

[17] Elsa Wertheim, *Chicago Children in the Street Trades* (Chicago: Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago, 1917); Anderson, "Document 82"; Anderson, "Document 120"; Juvenile Protective Association, *Annual Report of the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago* (Chicago: Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago, 1928).

[18] Maynard notes a Toronto reformer making a similar observation about the commonplace nature of working-class boys engaged in sexual commodity dialogues, discussing pricing and places to sell sex to men ("Horrible Temptations," 206). For more on the contexts of undercover social investigation and sociological research in Chicago from the 1910s through the 1930s in relation to same-sex and gender-transgressive cultures see Chad Heap, "The City as a Sexual Laboratory: The Queer Heritage of the Chicago School," *Qualitative Sociology* 26, no. 4 (2003): 457–87; Johnson, "The Kids of Fairytown"; Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chaps. 4, 5.

outside the alley. Managers also agreed to forbid overnight stays and to turn away all youth under sixteen. Luise White observes how state responses to female prostitution in both twentieth-century Nairobi and Progressive Era America criminalized behaviors that were not in themselves sexual. The same is true in relation to male youth news alley sex work. The results were not the prevention of boy prostitution but its dispersal outside the alleys and the denial of what was affordable temporary shelter and a site of vital social networking to homeless, migrant, and/or poor hard-working youth.[19]

Socioeconomic and cultural gender circumstances structured key differences between boys and girls involved in sex work. While many girls prostituting in the early twentieth century did so as a means of contributing to their biological family's economy and keeping the family together, boys for the most part seem to have sold themselves for themselves. Kerwin Kaye asserts that "many working-class youths approached prostitution as a simple means to an end." But to what end? Although he mostly equates boys' "sexual pragmatism" with financial gain, he quotes Maynard attributing motives ranging from aspects of survival, such as food and shelter, to building wealth, to gaining access to commercialized amusements, to growing into a "gay" identity, to, finally, notions of relationality and affinity such as companionship and community.[20] Maynard's list usefully highlights how complex both the means and the end could be for boys in sex work.

Some effeminate working-class boys went into fairy prostitution after finding community with a similarly inclined gang that provided friendship

[19] Juvenile Protective Association, "Newspaper Alley Investigations," 1921–29, JPA Papers 84, UIC; Luise White, "Prostitutes, Reformers, and Historians," *Criminal Justice History* 6 (1985): 201–27. Reformer interactions in the 1920s had many parallels with previous news alley exposés and reforms (Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chaps. 4, 5). As it turned out, persistent and regularized reform efforts were not essential to the demise of the news alley culture of homosexuality and youth. Expanded subscriber delivery, the establishment of adult-run permanent enclosed newsstands at busy corners, and point-of-sale truck distribution to newsboys did the work of closing alleys by the late 1920s and early 1930s. All of these factors also pushed newsboys into increasingly marginal or low-income and predominantly male homosocial, vagrant, and vice areas in the late 1910s and early 1920s, where sideline male prostitution would have been less lucrative but more likely. Still, the removal of boys from news alleys worked in the same way as the shifting of female prostitutes to, as Matt Houlbrook explains, "repudiate and remove a disorderly sexual presence from the urban environment, defining the limits of sexuality through the symbolic ordering of space" ("Toward a Historical Geography of Sexuality," *Journal of Urban History* 27, no. 4 [2001]: 502–3). See also David Nasaw, *Children of the City: At Work and at Play* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 183–88. On vagrancy surveillance and prosecution in "borderland spaces" such as news alleys see Shah, "Oriental Depravity," 704, 713–14.

[20] Kaye, "Male Prostitution," 14, 15, 16; Maynard, "Horrible Temptations," 196, 207, 212, 234–35; Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 194–95; Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chap. 5. For observations about women and girls selling sex for their family economies see, for example, Stansell, *City of Women,* 193–211. Luise White highlights the strength of this formulation in another early-twentieth-century context in *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

and experience to those just on the scene. Categorized by effeminacy, fairy prostitution was generally considered a degraded position among boys in sex work. For the fairies, though, sex work was one of the only occupations that enabled them to express alternative gender identities outwardly. Through that expression and its public performance in urban space they discovered and reaffirmed their connection to one another. The capacity through which sex work facilitated their camaraderie should not be understated. At least one boy lamented that he would gladly have joined "the group of 'ladies' who solicit along the lake front" if only he "had the clothes to enable him to appear in such circles." Young fairy sex workers had both a community and an established space for selling sex for which this boy longed. This resonates with recent scholarship on how girlhood prostitution often involved community, suggesting that these conceptualizations need not be confined to those with female bodies. In early-twentieth-century Chicago the culture of some male youth sex workers involved not just sexual identification but more relational qualities ascribed to normative modern adolescent development such as dependency, individuation, productivity, and belonging.[21]

Other boys were more affected by changing social relations produced by the emergence of informal female sex work such as occasional prostitution by single young "women adrift" and the less explicitly commoditized gifting system of heterosexual "treating" and "pickups." In the late nineteenth century treating was a reciprocal drink-buying aspect of working-class male homosocial saloon cultures, while pickups involved paid sex with female prostitutes, boys, or fairies. In their twentieth-century evolution treating and pickups developed in relation to heterosocial, heterosexual commercialized amusements. Boys and men treated girls to admission costs, food, and drinks in an informal exchange for possible sexual and emotional returns. Boys and men also "picked up" girls for an evening (or more) of going out and, potentially, shacking up. Historians describe how the imagined lines between various types of female sex work and play blurred considerably in practice despite attempts to delineate between them (in differing ways) by both middle-class observers and working-class young people and their families.[22]

[21] Nels Anderson, "Document 122: Boy Tramp, Great Wanderer, Homosexual, Intelligent. Two Years on Road," 1922, Burgess Papers, Anderson, Nels, Box 127, Folder 4, U of C; Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chaps. 2, 5; Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985); Stansell, *City of Women*; Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*; Randy D. McBee, *Dance Hall Days: Intimacy and Leisure among Working-Class Immigrants in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Clement, *Love for Sale*. An anthropological work that effectively addresses these issues across genders in a different context is Annick Prieur, *Mema's House, Mexico City: On Transvestites, Queens, and Machos* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[22] Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*; Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); Clement, *Love for Sale*, esp. 45–75; McBee, *Dance Hall Days*.

Male youth sex work also adapted to these various forms of informal sex work and play in ways that complicate their easy classification as "female" or "heterosexual." The predominantly white working-class heterosocial commercialized leisure zone around South State Street between 12th Street and the downtown Loop also facilitated homosexual sex acts, interactions with homosexual subcultures, and gender-transgressive expression. During a burlesque show seventeen-year-old Alexander Stahl took up a middle-aged man's offer to pay his admission to a second one. Stahl laughed at the man, he explained later to a social researcher, because the man "had a high-pitched voice just like a girl." After the show they went back to the man's place in a middle-class apartment neighborhood on the Near North Side.[23] After a meal the man surprised Stahl by putting his arms around him and kissing him. The man then changed into a chemise and asked Stahl to "treat him like a woman." Stahl claimed that before that moment he had "never heard of this type of people." Next, the man defied his own "woman" role by encouraging Stahl to take the receptive role in anal sex. Stahl, now understanding this exchange through his own working-class idiom, told him that he "didn't want to 'punk' around with any men." Still, he hung around during a party at his host's house that night that was filled with other gay-identified and cross-dressing men. When he left, he discovered someone, presumably the host, had put twenty-two dollars in his coat pocket, which was a fortune to him. Sitting on a park bench, he was joined by a seasoned boy sex worker who told him that if he "worked it right with these queers" he would "make a lot of money." Instead, Stahl met up with a girl and blew his newfound fortune on a rented room, where the two had sex and hung out for the next two weeks until the money ran out. Still, he took the boy's suggestion to heart and went on to tramp around the country selling sex to men along the way.[24]

[23] From the 1910s through the early 1930s the Near North of Chicago was a central area of interlocking spaces in which some older youth lived and played in a vast territory of rental units occupied in large part by unmarried young men and women. As a place of mobility and high residential turnover as opposed to stability and family, the Near North was, for sociologist Harvey Zorbaugh, a "disorganized" place of artifice, deception, and loneliness. For many of those who chose to live in the Near North, though, the experience was anything but lonely. Away from the usual pressures of heteronormative conformity demanding marriage, children, professionalization, and property acquisition, they were able to explore a more diverse array of alternative forms of living. See Harvey Warren Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929); Myles Vollmer, "Boy Hustler—Chicago," 1933, Burgess Papers, Case Studies, Box 145, File 8, U of C; Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Heap, "Slumming," chaps. 1, 3; Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chaps. 4, 5.

[24] Alexander Stahl, untitled, c. 1932, Burgess Papers, Homosexual Interviews, Box 98, Folder 5, U of C.

Stahl's experience in the early 1930s bridged a host of sexual practices in transition during the 1920s and 1930s. "Punking," when a usually masculine-identified boy or younger male would take the receptive role in sex with an older male for cash or some other form of compensation, was most commonly associated with working-class and transient cultures from the late nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth century. By the 1910s, though, and especially by the 1920s and 1930s, masculine working-class boys were also increasingly, if unevenly, accessed as "trade" by a wide range of men, including, as in this case, those active in self-identified gay cultures. The johns and pickups of trade more commonly encouraged these boys to take the insertive role in sex, and, over time, many boys involved in sex work with men saw taking the receptive role as less masculine. Stahl's case, like many in the field notes and papers of social investigators, reveals how much in flux these competing concepts were even as late as the 1930s.[25]

Yet Stahl, at least at first, was not selling sex per se. Modes of male prostitution layered atop evolving cultures of treating, even as heterosocial treating (and, by the 1930s, dating) gradually eclipsed homosocial treating practices of intimacy and reciprocity. Stahl, if taken at his word, seized upon an offer of short-term patronage in an informal exchange for socializing and then conceded to the added compensations of kissing and hugging. It was only when he was asked to take either role in anal sex that he pushed back, clarifying to the man his limits. Those limits changed, though, when he discovered the money, inspiring Stahl to appreciate the value of more formalized sexual exchanges with men and to embrace the utility of his own body as a tool for material resourcefulness and opportunity for travel.

Historians have explained how pickups and treating sanctioned girls' use of sexual expression as a social and economic strategy toward acquiring heterosocial companionship, clothing, and commercial recreation. Regardless of girls' desires for or revulsion toward heterosexual interaction, in other words, few could enjoy the expanding consumerist pleasures of youth culture without some participation in the attraction of male attentions and the related access to males' wallets. This disassociation of desire and sexual identification from

[25] Kaye, more concerned with explicitly prostituting males, does not address the role of treating but ably explains that while in the early twentieth century both masculine-performing young men and "fairies" enjoyed considerable opportunities to sell sex, the fairies did not have time on their side. By the 1930s and 1940s effeminate, cross-dressing, and otherwise gender-transgressive sex workers had become increasingly marginalized (although still present), while masculine working-class youth had become increasingly central to the male sex trade (Kaye, "Male Prostitution," 13–16). See also George Chauncey, Jr., "The Policed: Gay Men's Strategies of Everyday Resistance," in *Inventing Times Square: Commerce and Culture at the Crossroads of the World*, ed. William R. Taylor (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1991), 320–22; Chauncey, *Gay New York*; Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*.

informal sex work required by the heterosocial youth system cut both ways. It did not just produce compulsory heterosexuality for girls but encouraged, strangely, homosexual sex work for boys short on cash. In fact, such same-sex sex work could, potentially, facilitate for some boys the solidification of a more conventionally "normal" engagement with the modern treating and dating in which boys required both masculine gender and heterosexual performance and identity. Stahl's "treat" reward of twenty-two dollars at the end of his first homosexual night of informal sex work allowed him to pick up a girl and enjoy treating her for two weeks. Edward, another working-class boy expected to open his pocketbook in order to show girls a "good time," discovered that homosexual sex work in commercialized heterosocial spaces allowed him to participate more fully in heterosexual treating and dating. As he put it, "Sure, I hustle. . . . A fellow has to take his girl out on Sunday, an' that takes money. He feels like a dog if he can't take her to a show. So I try to make a buck or two Saturday, if I can."[26]

Some boys discovered quickly that same-sex treating could turn into a real job. First introduced to homosexual sex acts via pickups either in male homosocial spaces or in heterosocial commercialized leisure sites, such youth transitioned from an informal sexual economy into more formalized sex work. Such behaviors sometimes occurred with little forethought or sense of differentiation from those other sexual modes. Yet the conscious choice to seek out regularized paid sex with men signaled a more aggressive pursuit of acquiring and hopefully accumulating capital by conceiving their boyish masculinity and their young bodies as their chief assets.

Other boys enjoyed what might be considered the "female" position in treating rituals with other boys and men. Being picked up did not necessarily relate to one's gender subjectivity—some effeminate boys and men treated more masculine boys, while other masculine boys and men picked up more effeminate boys and fairies. Male pickups, like those between boys and girls, sometimes involved emotional and social, if casual, intimacy, as when seventeen-year-old African American Walt Lewis picked up a "fag" named "Gerildine." After interfemoral intercourse he explained that they "laid there for about 2 hours and talked." Masculine white middle-class young men also enjoyed receiving male treating and pickups. Another seventeen-year-old boy learned from a friend that if he wore his school uniform at the corner of Randolph and State, he could get picked up by men and "make five or ten dollars easy that way." Like many girls participating in treating, however, he chose not to participate in such explicit prostitution. Instead, he got picked up by a masculine man in his late twenties or early thirties who took him

[26] Vollmer, "Boy Hustler." I take the term "compulsory heterosexuality" from Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5, no. 4 (1980): 631–60. For discussions of how participation in heterosexual treating and dating youth cultures had no necessary relationship to young people's personal sexual or emotional desires toward being with the opposite sex see Clement, *Love for Sale*, 219; Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chap. 5.

to a restaurant and insisted on paying. He went to the man's home, played the insertive role in oral sex, which he liked, and was given some socks from Marshall Field's. When the man tried to give him money, he refused, suggesting perhaps a class-inflected resistance to the direct exchange of cash for sex.[27]

Comparing boys and girls within homosexual and heterosexual modes of treating across socioeconomic class brings greater clarity to the complex meanings of various forms of sex work by the 1920s and 1930s. As Clement asserts, working-class and middle-class girls could claim treating and dating as socially and morally acceptable (and eventually socially sanctioned) modes of sex barter by declaring them fundamentally different from explicit cash-for-sex transaction. This marginalized the latter form of sex work and those who engaged in it under the rubric of "prostitution." The former simply became "heterosexuality."[28] For boys, however, who needed the cash up front in order to get into the game of modern heterosexuality, being "treated" by men could and did include monetary compensation alongside other gifts such as tickets to shows, drinks, dinners, and clothes. For working-class boys in particular, taking cash from men as part of a treating exchange could, and for some did, affirm greater heterosexual masculine interactivity and participation. The men treating them could even view their "gifts" of money as a means of facilitating such boys' access to the pleasures of dating girls and gaining the financial resources through which the comparatively more dependent boys could eventually become more economically autonomous men. Particularly for middle-class men and working-class boys, this dynamic carried forward into the new heterosocial system some of the late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century homosocial allure of patronage built into Horatio Algeresque myths of plucky young entrepreneurialism through intergenerational camaraderie. The seductive promises of economic and social advancement through self-fashioning in such modes of youth, innocence, and masculine pluck could motivate boys' sexual and social strategies and men's responses.[29] For middle-class boys who presumably already possessed

[27] Walt Lewis, "My Story of Fags, Freaks, and Women Impersonators," 1933, Burgess Papers, Homosexual Interviews, Box 98, Folder 11, U of C; "Three Children. (1) Brother who is now 19 (2) Sister 17. Mr. D 21," c. 1934, Burgess Papers, Homosexual Interviews, Box 98, Folder 2, U of C.

[28] Clement, *Love for Sale,* 212–39. She also notes that during the Great Depression more girls engaged in casual and temporary cash-for-sex encounters and sought to frame them in terms of treating. They found that with the modern system of treating and dating in place, males sometimes took affront to their monetary requests, and girls faced both men's sense of sexual entitlement with the "kind of loose women" who would ask for money and potential social marginalization and hostility.

[29] Early-twentieth-century boys were fans of Alger tales because they held the promise of an American dream of economic luck and social betterment. Adult male patronage was a key Alger element, suggesting, as Michael Moon writes, that "the white males who control wealth and power have their eye out for that exceptional, 'deserving,' 'attractive' underclass youth" ("'The Gentle Boy from the Dangerous Classes': Pederasty, Domesticity, and Capitalism in Horatio Alger," *Representations* 19 [1987]: 106–7). Paid sexual interactions of middle-class

some of the monetary resources to treat and date girls, being treated would more often have closely resembled the ways in which girls were treated, eschewing cash for sex in favor of more indirect sexual bartering. The rise in heterosocial spaces with both heterosexual and homosexual systems of interaction between boys and girls produced a more complex field of sexual and economic constraints and possibilities than scholars of female sex work or, for that matter, homosexuality recognize.

All of this underscores how crucial it is that any study of male youth sex work should grapple with the densely intertwined cultural fields of childhood, gender, sexuality, and commerce. It must, either directly or indirectly, address some of the same questions of agency, oppression, power, and subjectivity that challenge scholars of female prostitution. Historians of sexuality and prostitution have been leaders in substantiating revisionist feminist projects illustrating how many girls and women who engaged in sex work in different times and places chose their entry into, manner of, and exit from prostitution even if that choice was highly constrained by economic, legal, political, and cultural circumstances. Because of contemporary attitudes toward sexual agency in childhood and adolescence, though, the suggestion of choice in teenage girls' or boys' sex work is less easily forwarded. In early-twentieth-century Chicago teenage boys ran the gamut in relation to agency regarding sex work. Some were victims of extreme poverty and sexual violence. Boys such as Alexander Stahl initially stumbled into sex work. Still others intentionally pursued prostitution, with reluctance or enthusiasm. They did so for strictly economic purposes, perhaps even more with the economic hardships of the late 1920s that deepened into the 1930s. Some did so as an opportunity for other money-making schemes such as blackmail or robbery. These at times involved sex and even some tenderness prior to the committal of the more conventionally masculine delinquencies of theft and bodily violence. Others embraced a mixture of financial gain, sexual pleasure, and community. Finally, some found commercialized sex with men a key means through which they could flourish as gender transgressive "fairies."[30]

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men and working-class boys, while not often so explicitly sentimentalized by either party, would have inherited Alger mythologies in their interaction, particularly in treating contexts. See Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chap. 5; Nasaw, *Children of the City,* 54–55, 60–61, 86. For a similar observation about late Victorian and Edwardian British middle-class male reformers' efforts to nurture relationships with working-class boys see Seth Koven, "From Rough Lads to Hooligans: Boy Life, National Culture, and Social Reform," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker et al. (New York: Routledge, 1992), esp. 366–67. For turn-of-the-century and 1930s observations of long-lasting homosexual patronage relationships between middle-class men and working-class boys growing into adulthood see Maynard, "Horrible Temptations," 208–9; George W. Henry and Alfred A. Gross, "Social Factors in the Case Histories of One Hundred Underprivileged Homosexuals," *Mental Hygiene* 22, no. 4 (1938): 603.

[30] Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chap. 5. Boag posits that in the Pacific Northwest by the 1930s a distinction among boys who engaged in homosexual sex acts had begun to

Legal scholar Noah D. Zatz argues that since constructivist theories decouple sexuality from its supposedly naturalized fusion with male-female genital sex and, moreover, from genitalia in general, we need to imagine genital encounters as possibly "*de*-eroticized interactions, in which the absence of sexual pleasure might be no less surprising or disappointing than in an ordinary handshake." He suggests that the regulation and management of commercialized sex is predicated on the continued refusal by experts and reformers to see sex work as work as opposed to sex. In so doing, the rights and agency enjoyed by other forms of workers, including protections from and recourses against physical harm including rape, are routinely denied to female prostitutes. He adds that both liberal feminist and radical feminist critiques of prostitution presume that because it is a transaction on the commercial worth of the body, it is inherently degrading in either universal humanist terms or specifically gendered terms. This stance assumes a particularly intimate correlation between sex, as opposed to other embodied activities, and the self.[31]

For male youth sex workers in early-twentieth-century Chicago, however, a diversity of relationships between selfhood, embodiment, and commerce raises questions about the assumed coherence between selling sex and degradation. For many boys, the experience was effeminizing in a way they found shameful and humiliating. In that sense they suffered from a gender oppression shared with those females who felt similarly degraded. For other youth, though, sex work enabled access to an explicitly affirming connection of desire, developing selfhood, and their bodies. It also enhanced a financial agency that young people constantly struggled to achieve, particularly outside of the heteronormative family unit. One man recalled fondly how when he, at sixteen, worked on the elevator in a department store, the male cashiers and window decorators called him "Sunshine," and he enjoyed regular sex in the stockroom with one of them, receiving a dollar for the once-or-twice-a-week interaction. He liked the money but said he

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coalesce into three more conventionally modern gay identities: queens, those who had homosexual desires but "hid the fact," and those for whom such sex was purely circumstantial (*Same-Sex Affairs*, 80, 85). Maynard suggests that some boys in urban Ontario who had sex with men, particularly for money, assumed it was something they would outgrow when, as adults, they had greater financial resources; others saw themselves as homosexual or "perverted" in some fixed way; still others regarded themselves as neither perverts nor prostitutes and saw their homosexual acts as inconsequential, with no relationship to their identities ("Horrible Temptations," 212). My research shows that by the 1920s and 1930s some youth had sought to identify themselves in alignment with being a "fairy," "queen," or "queer," while others had not. It is important, in any case, not to project a deterministic futurity on young people based on the moments some observer recorded them. Whether they declared themselves "queer" in some form or "normal" in that moment and space may have had little correlation to sexual identification (or practice) in later life.

[31] Noah D. Zatz, "Sex Work/Sex Act: Law, Labor, and Desire in Constructions of Prostitution," *Signs* 22, no. 2 (1997): 277–308.

did it for the pleasure, recalling, "My whole body seemed to vibrate, I was thrilled with it."[32] Like many fairy boy prostitutes, sex work filled his purse along with affirming his fey gender identity and sexual desires.

Other boys paralleled the girls of the same era that Gilfoyle describes as engaging in sex work with a kind of "instrumentalism" in which they utilized their bodies for cash or some other form of compensation in a way that decoupled the middle-class presumption that linked body, sex, and selfhood. Certainly some newsboys' attitudes seem to indicate a similar attitude, as when an undercover investigator overheard, much to his chagrin, one sixteen-year-old boy in a news alley bragging with masculine bravado to two other boys his age that he had found a man who would pay him two dollars for sex. "Damn! I'll fuck him all night for that," one of the other boys said admiringly. Unlike boys' treating, with its hazy zones between sex, feelings, gifts, and financial gain, this sort of exchange most closely resembles the explicit sex-for-cash transaction traditionally associated with prostitution of both sexes. Some boys' self-understandings resembled those of some prostitutes of today who, Zatz explains, view their work as a sex *act* that involves performing an illusion of participation in a *sexual* act as experienced by the client. Despite psychiatric, legal, and reform discourses to the contrary, it would be difficult to defend an assertion that such embodied sex work was inherently degrading or disempowering.[33]

Zatz explains that the greatest and perhaps most troubling radical potential of sex work comes not from the division of sexuality from sex work but from the ways in which it can breach the sexuality/labor barrier that most discourses on prostitution disavow. Sex work contains within it the "tantalizing, threatening possibility that one cannot know in advance, that even ritualized behavior contains within it the flexibility for variable, destabilizing experience and practice." For some early-twentieth-century male youth sex workers, this possibility and flexibility was less destabilizing in practice than in Zatz's theory. Edward, the ostensibly heterosexual boy described earlier who had sex with men to pay for his dates with girls, told a researcher that while he would "rather have a girl anytime," he enjoyed the feeling of men giving him oral sex, hugging him, and kissing him. Sometimes he became friends with the men who paid him for sex, at which point he stopped having sex with them, although one suspects he still enjoyed being treated by the men for his company.[34]

[32] Earl W. Bruce, "Oral history of Mr. X, 27," c. 1936, Burgess Papers, Bruce, Earl W., Box 128, Folder 8, U of C. This recollection appears to come a decade after the time of his department store employment.

[33] Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 287; Zatz, "Sex Work/Sex Act," 284; Juvenile Protective Association, "Newspaper Alley Investigations." Chauncey similarly describes how some boys, particularly those from a southern Italian background, came from a culture in which they could adopt an "instrumental attitude toward their bodies before marriage" that allowed bodily use for cash or social advancement (*Gay New York*, 74).

[34] Zatz, "Sex Work/Sex Act," 299; Vollmer, "Boy Hustler."

A similar flexibility between labor, affinity, and leisure can be further appreciated in the case of young fairies. Historian Mara Keire attempts to delineate the differences between "gang members, fairies, and charity girls," whom she calls "consumers" of sporting-class culture, and female prostitutes, the "producers" of sex work. She does so to explain how "producers used signifiers to make their living, [while] consumers used them to express their identity." This is helpful in terms of tracing paths of cultural transmission, rightly noting how fairies, like charity girls, "borrowed heavily from the 'professional' signifiers of prostitutes" and then carried them far beyond "sporting" districts into broader heterosocial and homosocial identities and cultures. Yet in terms of locating the work of sex itself, Keire's placement of fairies outside of the "producer" role relegates the sex work of fairies (and boys) to the realms of recreation and leisure. By locating fairies' sex pursuits as the ancillary to the "real" labor by female prostitutes, Keire inadvertently replicates a more general contemporary and historiographic tendency toward situating same-sex sexual culture, activity, and gender nonnormativity as the "merely cultural."[35] Moreover, it masks the parallel and overlapping sex work done by women, fairies, and boys. For some fairies, selling sex to "normal" men through their combination of flamboyant self-stylings and sexual aggressiveness was a principal means of making money. It is difficult, therefore, to say when fairies "borrowed" female prostitutes' looks and mannerisms for "leisure-time identities," when they made this appropriation as a conscious donning of a kind of work uniform, and, finally, when the two modes of performativity occurred simultaneously.

Male youth sex work further troubled reformers by blurring the lines between "work" as an adult mode of social interaction and "play" as a child's mode of engagement. David Nasaw argues that early-twentieth-century child labor in street trades was sometimes "almost a pleasant interlude between a day's confinement in school and an evening in cramped quarters at home." Such work operated along a continuum from adult-supervised, ostensibly "uplifting" youth spaces at one end and commercialized youth culture and amusement at the other. Nasaw highlights the ease with which boys shifted between work and play. Sexuality, same-sex or otherwise, existed as an integral component of much of both. This inherency was part of what made reformers so anxious to separate the two. Observers from Jane Addams to sociologist Walter Reckless remarked on the all-too-seamless interconnection of work, play, and sex for newsboys and other youth working the streets.[36]

[35] Keire, "Dope Fiends and Degenerates," 814. I apply the term "merely cultural" as utilized by Judith Butler in "Merely Cultural," *Social Text* 52–53 (1997): 265–77. For a brief overview of historical relationships between male homosexual identity and culture and leisure and recreation see Don Romesburg, "Gay Men's Leisure Lifestyles," *Encyclopedia of Recreation and Leisure in America*, vol. 1, ed. Gary S. Cross (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004), 388–91.

[36] Nasaw, *Children of the City,* 45–47; Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (New York: Macmillan, 1909); Fredric M. Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927); Walter C. Reckless and

By the 1920s mental hygienists and social commentators increasingly embraced the theory that adolescents had to express their sexuality through tempered, mediated outlets of "sex play" in order to complete their adjustment to proper heterosexual maturity. In other words, proper sex play, including dating and perhaps even petting, was a part of the "work" an adolescent was supposed to do in order to become an upstanding heterosexual, productive, and reproductive citizen. At the same time, child and even much teenage labor was from the 1900s onward becoming stigmatized as harmful to the proper development that supposedly only came through education and character-building work that was decoupled from its explicit wage-earning function.[37] The fusion of sex, work, and play in commercialized sex work and barter was most destabilizing for expert discourses and institutions, either from that time or this, that were heavily invested in the production of certain models of gender, sexuality, childhood, and labor as discrete from one another and readily comprehensible.

This brings us back to the present, to contemporary scholars' approaches to prostitution, and to what a focus on male youth sex work might tell us about sex work in general. In "Prostitutes in History" Gilfoyle points out the particular obstacle in "identifying the precise populations of prostitutes," asking, "What is a prostitute? How does the historian count?" Zatz encourages a definition of prostitution as "attending to the sexual desires of a particular individual (or individuals) with bodily acts in exchange for payment of money" and adds the caveat that "prostitution is both a practice in which gender and sexuality play important structuring roles and one that cannot simply be reduced to gender or sexuality."[38] Scholars of sex work need to consider our own rationales for evaluating why male youth sex work generally does not "count" or the limits to how it does. How do historians accept reform and legal definitions regarding categories of sex and age when we treat such discourses and sources with critical skepticism in so many other ways? What reformers or experts counted or did not count deserves more than a passing reference; the systems of categorization, quantification, and naming have the power to both produce and obscure meanings. The segregation or exclusion of male youth sex work from

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Mapheus Smith, *Juvenile Delinquency* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1932). Gilfoyle, in *City of Eros*, 286–87, notes that many teenage girls engaged in prostitution considered the selling of sex not as work but rather as just another avenue to recreational opportunities, to the frustration of reformers and police.

[37] Clement, *Love for Sale*, 228–29; Floyd Dell, *Love in the Machine Age: A Psychological Study of the Transition from Patriarchal Society* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1930), 237, 283–315; Julian B. Carter, *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880–1940* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007); Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chap. 2; Robertson, *Crimes against Children*, 179–202; Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 56–112.

[38] Gilfoyle, "Prostitutes in History," 138; Zatz, "Sex Work/Sex Act," 279.

our fields of research conceals a variety of important observations. People with young male bodies shared with people who had female bodies some material and social conditions structuring formal and informal sex work. This occurred despite material, legal, cultural, and social conditions that strove to represent male youth and women engaging in prostitution—and treating or dating, for that matter—as fundamentally different.

Additionally, historians must resist the urge to base our analyses of male youth sex work predominantly upon its relationship to the emergence and proliferation of a homosexual/heterosexual binary. Kerwin Kaye describes, at a "level of generality" spanning major North American and Western European cities, how the emergence and evolution of homosexual and heterosexual identity structured policing and treatment regimes as well as social patterns related to males selling sex to other males. Kaye's orientation- and identification-based approach leads him to formulate three major periods in male prostitution over the past century. Prior to the 1930s working-class male youth prostitution was understood as "pseudohomosexual," or largely situational, something that a widespread diversity of boys might be involved in, regardless of their own sexual identification or inclination. From the mid-1930s through the 1960s the "hoodlum homosexual," marked mostly as a working-class or poor heterosexual boy understood to be "delinquent" because of his participation in the sex market, replaced both the general working-class boy and the fairy. Finally, the 1970s to the present is explained as the age of the "runaway prostitute," an object of social concern either as a middle-class white boy besieged by "dangerous outsiders" such as pimps and homosexual johns or as a vulnerable gay youth forced onto the streets because of familial homophobia and abuse.[39] While in broad strokes this periodization is provocative and useful, many boys in the first decades of the twentieth century fell outside concerns of child saving and defy Kaye's chronology by looking a lot more like his midcentury "hoodlum homosexuals." As early as the 1910s sex work marked boys caught up in reform and justice systems as sexually "delinquent" for whom particularly severe forms of treatment were prescribed.[40]

Kaye's conceptualization traces the shift throughout the 1900s through the 1940s from what he calls "gay-identified" sex workers (or fairies) selling to "normal" men toward "straight-identified" prostitutes selling sex to "gay-identified" men. But this trajectory gets tangled up when Kaye puts what he terms "straight-identified," or masculine, nonfairy boys into the mix. To maintain this formulation he describes the clients of such boys, coming along in the 1920s through the 1940s, as "gay-identified" or even, at one

[39] Kaye, "Male Prostitution."

[40] For more on the attachment of particularly harsh diagnoses and prescriptions for what I call "homosexually delinquent youth" see Romesburg, "Arrested Development," chap. 3.

point, as "gay-identified fairies." At the level of specificity, in the field notes of sociologists and reformers, for example, there is little evidence of any real consistency with which either the boys or the johns attached a "gay" or "straight" (or, for that matter, a "fairy" or "normal") sexual self-identification to their desires or commerce. Certainly, it was not the case that by the 1920s and 1930s effeminate men or "fairies" became the main customers of boy sex workers. Masculine men either primarily invested with homosocial vagrant or working-class cultures or just looking for an outlet for their phallic desires continued to buy sex from boys even as gay-identified men of a variety of genders joined them as johns, clients, and treaters.[41]

Kaye ascribes his approach, dependent upon widely published books and articles by sexologists, social scientists, and other experts, to a "lack of available source material" exclusive to the United States.[42] This lack results from the type of sources he chooses to use, namely, widely published sexological and vice-related scholarship, as opposed to either the case histories or the field notes in those areas or, as importantly, the archives of youth, adolescence, and juvenile delinquency. It overrides the subtleties of experience imbedded within contexts of competing forms of expert discourse and subjugated knowledges in favor of a more theoretically than empirically driven conceptualization. The

[41] Kaye, "Male Prostitution," 8–13. See, for example, Nels Anderson, "Document 100: Boy Tramp, Exploited by Perverts, Decidedly Feeble-Minded, on Way Home (Indiana)," 1922, Burgess Papers, Anderson, Nels, Box 127, Folder 3, U of C; Anderson, "Document 120"; Paul G. Cressey, "Report on Summer's Work with the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago," 1925, Burgess Papers, Cressey, Paul, Box 130, Folder 5, U of C; Clifford Shaw, *The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 85–86; Myles Vollmer, "Vagabond Boy—Chicago," 1933, Burgess Papers, Case Studies, Box 145, File 8, U of C. Increasingly, however, both boys and experts described clients as "queers" or "homosexuals," lumping them together instead of differentiating them based on clients' gender behaviors or their own senses of their sexual actions in relation to their identities. This trend approximates Kaye's narrative more closely. See, for example, Henry and Gross, "Social Factors," 591–611.

[42] Kaye, "Male Prostitution," 53n7. His internationalist approach faces similar challenges, causing him to make chronological assertions that do not bear out in many U.S. contexts. For example, he uses British scholarship to state that "same-sex sexual practices among middle-class youth were subject to social scrutiny long before any parallel concern was manifest toward working-class youth," placing the former in 1880s boarding schools and the latter in the vice and juvenile protective agency surveillances of the mid-1910s. Published examples of institutional and noninstitutional concern over delinquent male youth same-sex activity in the United States make this claim's cross-Atlantic applicability dubious. See, for example, Randolph Winslow, "Report of an Epidemic of Gonorrhoea Contracted from Rectal Coition," *Medical News* 49 (1886): 180–82; G. Frank Lydston, "Sexual Perversion, Satyriasis and Nymphomania (part 2)," *Medical and Surgical Reporter* 61 (1889): 281–85. A similar assertion based on British scholarship that by the "first decades of the twentieth century . . . state scrutiny had effectively pushed even moderately esteemed youth [such as lower-level clerical workers] out of the sex trade" does not apply well to Chicago (Kaye, "Male Prostitution," 12n5, 53–54). See also Romesburg, "Arrested Development," esp. chap. 5.

practice of digging deeper along a variety of veins of inquiry yields a closer approximation of social experiences, and this is a necessary step in verifying and complicating claims about broad historical trends. This matters because the general channeling of male sex work into circuits of "gay history," like the channeling of "prostitution" into inquiries principally concerned with female bodies and the policing of women, obscures the very real ways in which they fuse, differentiate, and run parallel to one another. Both approaches, moreover, tend away from concerns that the history of childhood and youth brings as an additional field of analysis. I belabor these points not to discredit Kaye's valuable work but to underscore how we must interrogate constantly the question of which activities count as "prostitution" or "sex work" and which get counted more as "homosexual" and how this is incorporated into or pushed to the margins of our own research.

While it is vexing to open the floodgates beyond male pimps, female brothel workers, madams, streetwalkers, and "charity girls" to the seemingly endless other combinations of practices, genders, sexes, spaces, and forms of exchange that constitute sex work, this is necessary, as sociologist Laura María Agustín argues. She asserts that research, the media, and what she calls the "helping gaze" of reformers are fixed almost exclusively on women who sell sex. As a result, much of what makes up the sex industry in a given time and place often gets ignored, which, she explains, "in itself contributes to the intransigent stigmatization of these women." Historical sociologist Alan Hunt, discussing the vice commission reports issued in North America between 1902 and 1919, underscores the relevance and applicability of Agustín's call to historical study. These reports, ostensibly preoccupied with conventionally understood "prostitution," tended to be about a diverse set of topics regarding the proliferation of heterosexual commercial spaces. Hunt explains that this "expansionary move confers on a whole variety of troublesome sexualities the metaphorical reach of prostitution," even as it foregrounds the centrality of female sex work. Clement shows how working-class girls and women effectively worked by the 1920s and 1930s to decouple treating (and then dating) from this metaphorical reach. This came at the cost of marginalizing not only female prostitution but also homosexuality. Over time overtly commercialized same-sex encounters, particularly involving boys, came to represent this effect's worst manifestation.[43]

Both in passing mention within the reports and more extensively in the background materials and field notes supporting them, male youth sex work became a regularized component of the broad array of activities and

[43] Laura María Agustín, "The Cultural Study of Commercial Sex," *Sexualities* 8, no. 5 (2005): 618–31; Alan Hunt, "Regulating Heterosocial Space: Sexual Politics in the Early Twentieth Century," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 15, no. 1 (2002): 1–34; Clement, *Love for Sale*; Romesburg, "Arrested Development"; Robertson, *Crimes against Children*, 117–232.

locations that fell under the broad umbrella of "vice" that had the concept of prostitution as its organizing principle. As social researchers, historians should contextualize and trace the circuits within that blurriness around regularized sex labor, occasional sex for cash transactions, systems of treating, and sex play, in the process bringing age and sex into analyses alongside the more familiar categories of gender, class, and race. In so doing scholars will generate new substantive and sophisticated debates over sex work. These dialogues will, hopefully, carry us away from reformers' seductive notions about prostitution, deviance, sexual identity, risk, and childhood toward a fuller, more nuanced social reality.