

# Heterosocial leisure



Heterosocial leisure is defined by Merriam-Webster as "of, relating to, or involving social relationships between persons of the opposite sex." In this instance, it is applied to the leisure culture where men and women actively participate in leisure activities together. This was far more emphasized in the Kathy Peiss, "Dance Craze" than in "Crowds and Leisure". Based on the reading I would say that dance culture, and how it changed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century captured a shift in the leisure culture towards heterosocial leisure.

In the beginning, the events such as receptions, affairs, weddings, and balls were in public dance halls and held by various "reputable" organizations. They raised money for charitable purposes and offered opportunities to dance and visit among friends and family. Being as they were under partial familial supervision and community ties, they were considered to have a greater respectability such that a parent wouldn't mind their daughter participating in such events because there was no improper dancing.

In the 1890s, new avenues for organized dancing emerged in what were called rackets. These were organized by social clubs and amusement societies and differed from previous affairs where neighborhood supervision and philanthropy existed in that the clubs had little interest in controlling admissions or chaperoning the dance floor. Massive advertising and indiscriminate ticket sales meant several hundred dancers at a single event. With this in mind, many people going the types of people attending became mixed with working class girls alongside the flashily dressed and the toughs.

This was further expanded on as dancing became commercialized as more public halls were built, and those were typically next to saloons. By 1910, the typical multi-purpose neighborhood hall and saloon could no longer accommodate the number of dancers, which brought the development of huge metropolitan halls and ballrooms specifically designed for dancing. These could hold anywhere from five hundred to three thousand patrons. As the dance venues evolved so did who ran them. More and more commercial halls moved away from using sponsorship to avoid the unsavory reputation of a dance hall from the Victorian era.

Many used the strategy of advertising the hall as a dance academy that taught the dances during the day and had open public receptions at night. Owners were also very focused on attracting the women by offering discounts on door entry and coat check. This enticed women to attend with or without escort. By doing so, the owners would then also attract the men. Once in the public halls the opportunities for heterosocial interaction was abundant. Dance offered the patrons avenues heterosocial interaction.

Various halls themselves devised schemes such as employing spielers who danced with attached girls. Walters were encouraged to match up and introduce young women and men. Social customs such as breaking where the man would pick up the girl to the dance floor also indicated the heterosocial interactions. Women would try to win male attention through eye-catching styles, and many would depend on treating to get things that they wanted in return for sexual favors. Overall, commercial dance halls provided opportunities to experiment with unconventional sexual and social roles between genders.