

The Taxi-Dance Hall

A Sociological Study in Commercialized
Recreation and City Life

Paul G. Cressey

The Early Sociology of Culture

Edited by Kenneth Thompson

Volume II



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THE TAXI-DANCE HALL

THE TAXI-DANCE HALL

*A Sociological Study in Commercialized
Recreation and City Life*

BY PAUL G. CRESSEY

*Formerly Special Investigator, Juvenile
Protective Association*



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FOREWORD

It is gratifying indeed to an organization like the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago when community conditions about which it is especially concerned become the subject for extensive study and research. Paul G. Cressey while serving as a case-worker and special investigator for the Juvenile Protective Association was requested during the summer of 1925 to report upon the new and then quite unfamiliar "closed dance halls." This book is in a sense the outgrowth of those assignments. While our interpretation of the taxi-dance hall problem may not coincide entirely with Mr. Cressey's, this possibility does not make us less appreciative of the great contribution he has made.

Mr. Cressey's initial investigations revealed, as do other studies, the complexities which social agencies face in the urban situation, when in the interests of young people they are called upon to control and regulate doubtful social centers. His reports indicated clearly that certain amusement places came into existence because of our lack of social resources and that only through increased experimentation and study can we learn to meet more wholesomely the needs which call the taxi-dance hall into existence.

Social agencies have failed signally to take community conditions into account, and even when such a point of view has been accepted, there has been little effort to analyze and interpret these conditions. "Case work" has not yet been applied to the community. Few social agencies realize the importance or have the resources for "eternal vigilance" and for this very necessary research and experimentation.

If the experience and case material of other agencies could be utilized and interpreted as Mr. Cressey has here done, these studies should make possible not merely intelligent regulation and control but—what is of far greater importance—the substitution of wholesome acceptable social centers, commercial, as well as private and municipal, to meet the recreational needs of young people.

JESSIE F. BINFORD, *Executive Director*
Juvenile Protective Association

INTRODUCTION

The taxi-dance hall is almost unknown to the general public. What little is reported in the press, by social workers, and by exploring visitors is colorful, but damning and shocking. Little wonder that crusades have been directed against the taxi-dance hall in several American cities, and that it has been outlawed in the city of its origin, San Francisco.

The campaign against the taxi-dance hall has run true to the traditional American pattern of reform, namely, reaction to the external aspects of a situation without any real understanding of the social forces underlying its origin and growth.

The present study, undertaken under the assumption that knowledge should precede action, had a threefold purpose. The first object of the inquiry was to give an unbiased and intimate picture of the social world of the typical taxi-dance hall with its owner and manager, with its bevy of pretty, vivacious, and often mercenary "instructresses," with its motley array of patrons: Orientals, older men, isolated and socially handicapped youth, eager for association with feminine beauty at "a dime a dance."

The second purpose of the study was to trace the natural history of the taxi-dance hall as an urban institution, to discover those conditions in city life favorable to its rise and development, and to analyze its function in terms of the basic wishes and needs of its male patrons.

The third objective of the study was to present as impartially as possible the present kinds of control operating to maintain order, to create codes of conduct, and to enforce

standards, whether on the part of managers, instructresses, patrons, police, social workers, or the press.

The candid reader of this volume will, I believe, agree that Mr. Cressey and his assistants have had a fair measure of success in achieving all three of these objectives. The reader is given an entrée into the social world of the taxi-dance hall such as the casual visitor never gains. Vicariously, he may imagine himself in the place of the taxi-dancer or her patron, participating, as it were, in their experiences, and getting some appreciation of their outlook and philosophy of life.

The reader secures a lively appreciation of the interesting way in which the taxi-dance hall arose to meet the demands for feminine society of homeless and lonesome men crowded into the rooming-house districts of our larger cities. He realizes that the owners of these enterprises are exploiting this interest of the patrons for financial gain. In the competition between various establishments for attendance, standards are lowered and the interest in sexual stimulation tends to find expression in unwholesome forms without control.

Normally an institution develops its own system of control from the inside which is enforced not only by its functionnaires but also by its members. In the case of the taxi-dance hall the only control is external. The managers as a rule are foreigners, unacquainted with American standards, intent upon "giving the public what it wants" in terms measured by financial receipts. The code of the taxi-dancer tends also to be commercialized, for her earnings are 50 per cent of her total receipts at ten cents a dance. The patrons are a true proletariat of foot-loose, generally propertyless persons, who attend as an aggregation of individuals with little or no sense of the influence of group control. In fact, the only

effective control is exerted by the presence of a policeman or "bouncer."

This study has a significance that goes far beyond the taxi-dance hall situation. It raises all the main questions of the problem of recreation under conditions of modern city life, namely, the insistent human *demand for stimulation*, the growth of *commercialized recreation*, the growing *tendency to promiscuity* in the relations of the sexes, and the failure of our ordinary devices of social control to function in a culturally heterogeneous and anonymous society.

In the city, the expression of the fundamental human craving for stimulation appears often to be dissociated from the normal routine of family and neighborhood life. In the village of past generations, all activities, both of work and of play, were integral parts of a unified communal existence. The desire for stimulation and adventure normally found wholesome expression in the varied program of events of village life, or in pioneering in the settlement of the West. But with the passing of the frontier, the bright-light areas or "the jungles" of the city become the *locus* of excitement and new experience. Family and neighborhood recreation have declined in direct proportion to the growth of city-wide enterprises intent upon commercializing the human interest in stimulation. The result has been the growing tendency to make the pursuit of thrills and excitement a segmented interest detached from the other interests of the person.

To grasp the tremendous social change that has taken place in our leisure-time habits in the last fifty years, it suffices to enumerate in brief review certain outstanding enterprises and facilities for recreation, most of which were nonexistent at the beginning of the period: the growth of pro-

fessional baseball, the building of stadiums seating tens of thousands for university football contests, the emergence of championship prize fights as national events, the mounting number of automobiles which now average almost one to a family, the rapid increase in the number of radios, the replacement of the neighborhood saloon by the "blind pig" and the speakeasy, the expansion of the motion picture with its twenty thousand theaters, "Miss America" beauty contests, endurance contests including dance marathons, the construction of magnificent dance palaces in our large cities, the night club, and the roadhouse.

In all of these the center of interest has gravitated from the home and the neighborhood to the outside world, in nearly all of them the effect of participation goes little beyond the stimulation of individual emotion and has little or no function for social integration, and practically all of them are operated on a basis of commercialization.

The predominant place of commercialization in present-day recreation has much the same consequences as indicated in the study of the taxi-dance hall. Commercialization of recreational activities tends almost inevitably, in the competition for patronage, to increase the emphasis upon stimulation. Stimulation for stimulation's sake tends to become a goal in itself as a profit proposition. Stimulation, under these conditions, ceases to be a natural and wholesome accompaniment of an activity of the entire personality. Not only in the taxi-dance hall but in all public dance halls and to a greater or less extent in all recreational life in the city, the factor of the commercialization of stimulation is complicated by the fact of promiscuity.

By "promiscuity" is meant intimate behavior upon the basis of casual association. The promiscuity of city life has its

extreme example in prostitution. Promiscuity, of course, does not necessarily end in vice, but it opens the door either to vice or to exploitation, or to both.

Promiscuity naturally arises under conditions making for casual acquaintanceship in city life. Conventional avenues for forming friendships are notoriously deficient in the city. The drive toward casual association, with the added piquancy of adventure and irresponsibility, is correspondingly strong. In the social relations of the sexes certain patterns of behavior come to be expected. These forms of behavior range in informality from the "pick-up" and the *gigolo* to the establishment of business bureaus to supply girl companions to visiting business men. Lonesome clubs in our large cities and matrimonial advertising journals are eloquent in their testimony either of the difficulty of making satisfactory acquaintances according to conventional modes or of the desire for romance outside of the usual and familiar.

The taxi-dance hall and all public dance halls are organized to exploit for profit a situation of promiscuity. This basic fact explains the essential problem of control in the public dance. Any solution of the problem that does not deal with this factor of promiscuity is, in the nature of things, external and superficial. A fundamental approach would grapple directly with the lack of provision for the social life of young people, and particularly of socially handicapped and lonesome persons in the large city.

The statement of the problem, as in this book, is the first step in its solution. It cannot fail to make evident the futility and stupidity of many of the current proposals of reform. As a matter of fact, crusades against the taxi-dance hall and other similar urban institutions are a part of the whole situation, since they are as chronic as the condition which they

periodically seek to reform. But, as Mr. Cressey insists, the problem should be worked out experimentally and constructively in the light of the facts and in the interest of all the human values so clearly revealed in his study.

ERNEST W. BURGESS

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Among the recreational institutions of the American city none perhaps reveals with as much clarity as many of the perplexing problems which make difficult the wholesome expression of human nature in the urban setting as does the public dance hall. In it can be found in bold relief the impersonality of the city, the absence of restraints, the loneliness and the individual maladjustment and distraction characteristic of the life of many in the urban environment.

It was with the belief that the public dance hall played a significant rôle in the life of the community which deserved more thorough study that the writer began this project in 1925. The taxi-dance hall was selected for special study because it was at the time a very new and questionable type of establishment with which even social workers were not familiar, and because it seemed to represent in their extreme many of the forces which shape behavior in all public dance halls. Since the study was begun taxi-dance halls have increased in number and in importance until they are now the dominant type of dance hall in the business centers of our largest cities.

Most of the data upon which this study is based was secured from the case records of social agencies, notably the Juvenile Protective Association, and from the reports of observers and investigators. Published material upon such a new phenomenon as the taxi-dance hall was found to be scanty and of little value; and formal interviews were abandoned as unsatisfactory. When the interests of the interrogator were revealed the proprietors and their associates

were all found to be unwilling to co-operate and often to be unable to understand adequately the purpose of this research. It was apparent that this study, if it were to be completed, had to be conducted without any co-operation from the proprietors and despite the deliberate opposition of some of them.

Observers were sent into the taxi-dance halls. They were instructed to mingle with the others and to become as much a part of this social world as ethically possible. They were asked to observe and to keep as accurate a record as possible of the behavior and conversations of those met in the establishments. Each observer was selected because of his past experience, his training, and his special abilities. These investigators made it possible to gather significant case material from a much more varied group of patrons and taxi-dancers than could have been secured through any one person. The investigators functioned as anonymous strangers and casual acquaintances. They were thus able to obtain this material without encountering the inhibitions and resistance usually met in formal interviews. Further, the independent reports from different observers upon their contacts with the same individual made possible a check upon the consistency of the documents obtained. Moreover, this information concerning patrons and taxi-dancers made it feasible to secure much ancillary social data from the records of social agencies.

The desirability of securing statistical data was early recognized. But the inability of obtaining the co-operation of proprietors and the great cost in time and money which extensive individual investigations entail made this impossible. Nevertheless the considerable amount of case material which has been amassed through the experiences and observations

of investigators over a five-year period afford a reasonable basis for the validity of the generalizations made. It should be noted that the documents included within this book are but a portion of the case material and observations assembled in this study.

The writer wishes to take this opportunity to express his great appreciation for the assistance of the many friends, agencies, and institutions which has made this book possible. To Professor E. W. Burgess he owes a special debt of gratitude. If it had not been for his willingness to give generously of his time and advice and to give encouragement at many times during the past years, this book would never have been completed. To Professors Robert E. Park and Ellsworth Faris the writer is indebted for numerous suggestions and ideas which have been incorporated into this book. To Miss Jessie F. Binford, director of the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago, and to Mrs. Catherine Wright Page, formerly case-work supervisor for that organization, he is grateful for the original opportunity to study these dance halls and for their support of his work throughout the years. To the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago he is indebted for financial assistance at different times and for the privilege of quoting extensively from their records. The writer also wishes to express his gratitude to the Local Community Research Committee and the Department of Sociology of the University of Chicago for making it possible for him to pursue this study further through an appointment as a research assistant.

To Professor Frederic M. Thrasher and to Dean E. George Payne of the School of Education of New York University, the writer wishes to acknowledge an indebtedness for advice and counsel in the preparation of the manuscript. For tech-

nical assistance in the preparation of the manuscript he is also indebted to Dr. Ruth Shonle Cavan and Dr. Elinor Nims. Dr. Paul Frederick Cressey of McGill University also assisted in evaluating the material used in this study. For help in gathering and interpreting the material the writer is especially obligated to Mr. Philip M. Hauser, Mr. Phillips B. Boyer, Dr. Francisco T. Roque and Miss Ruzena Safarikova. Acknowledgment is due Miss Eveline Blumenthal for preparing the manuscript for the printer and also Mr. James F. McDonald for his assistance in completing the maps. And for valuable assistance in revision and the correcting of the proofs, the writer wishes to express his appreciation to Mr. Lewis L. McKibben and Mr. Jay Beck. If space permitted he should mention others who as investigators and in other ways have contributed materially to this study.

PAUL G. CRESSEY

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
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PART I

THE TAXI-DANCE HALL: WHAT IT IS

CHAPTER I

A NIGHT IN A TAXI-DANCE HALL

Taxi-dance halls are relatively unknown to the general public. Yet for thousands of men throughout the United States who frequent them they are familiar establishments. Located inconspicuously in buildings near the business centers of many cities, these taxi-dance halls are readily accessible. They are a recent development and yet already are to be found in most of the larger cities of the country and are increasing steadily in number. Today, under one guise or another, they can be discovered in cities as different as New Orleans and Chicago, and as far apart as New York, Kansas City, Seattle, and Los Angeles.

In these halls young women and girls are paid to dance with all-comers, usually on a fifty-fifty commission basis. Half of the money spent by the patrons goes to the proprietors who pay for the hall, the orchestra, and the other operating expenses while the other half is paid to the young women themselves. The girl employed in these halls is expected to dance with any man who may choose her and to remain with him on the dance floor for as long a time as he is willing to pay the charges. Hence the significance of the apt name "taxi-dancer" which has recently been given her. Like the taxi-driver with his cab, she is for public hire and is paid in proportion to the time spent and the services rendered.

In Chicago, with which this study is chiefly concerned, the taxi-dance halls almost invariably seem to have incor-

porated the name "dancing school" or "dancing academy" into their title as though to suggest that systematic instruction in dancing were given. The Eureka Dancing Academy may be considered typical of Chicago taxi-dance halls.¹

THE EUREKA DANCING ACADEMY

The Eureka Dancing Academy is lodged unimpressively on the second floor of a roughly built store building on an arterial street, but a half-block from an important street-car intersection. Only a dully lighted electric sign flickering forth the words "Dancing Academy," a congregation of youths and taxicabs at the stairway entrance, and an occasional blare from the jazz orchestra within indicate to the passer-by that he is near one of Chicago's playgrounds. But a closer inspection reveals a portable signboard on which is daubed the announcement, "Dancing Tonight! Fifty Beautiful Lady Instructors."

Before long the patrons and taxi-dancers begin to arrive. Some patrons come in automobiles, though many more alight from street cars. Still others seem to come from the immediate neighborhood. For the most part they are alone, though occasionally groups of two and three appear. The patrons are a motley crowd. Some are uncouth, noisy youths, busied chiefly with their cigarettes. Others are sleekly groomed and suave young men, who come alone and remain aloof. Others are middle-aged men whose stooped shoulders and shambling gait speak eloquently of a life of manual toil.

¹ The following is not a description of any specific taxi-dance hall in Chicago but is rather a delineation of what could be seen in 1927 and 1928 in almost any Chicago taxi-dance hall. In order to present a more complete picture for the reader many of the personal impressions and reactions of the observer have been retained. A more objective treatment will be found in the succeeding chapters.

Sometimes they speak English fluently. More often their broken English reveals them as European immigrants, on the way toward being Americanized. Still others are dapperly dressed little Filipinos who come together, sometimes even in squads of six or eight, and slip quietly into the entrance. Altogether, the patrons make up a polyglot aggregation from many corners of the world.

The girls, however, seem much alike. They wear the same style of dress, daub their faces in the same way, chew their chicle in the same manner, and—except for a few older spirits—all step about with a youthful air of confidence and enthusiasm. But one soon perceives wide differences under the surface. Some approach the entrance in a decorous manner, others with loud laughter, slang, and profanity. The girls most frequently alight from street cars, sometimes alone, often in groups of two and three. Some seem to live within walking distance, and a few arrive in taxicabs, with an occasional girl perched in the forward seat beside the driver. Frequently an overflowing taxicab conveys three or four girls, accompanied by an equal number of men. The girls, trim in their fur coats and jauntily worn hats, hurry across the sidewalk, through the entrance and up the stairs, followed by their escorts. When the escorts are Filipinos, they too hasten toward the doorway, themselves the object of a none-too-friendly gaze from the men about the entrance.

Admission to the dance hall is easy to secure. In a narrow glass cage at the head of the stairs sits the ticket-seller, with immobile countenance. He indicates by a flicker of the eyelids and a glance toward the sign stating the admission fee that entrance will be granted upon the payment of the prescribed charge of \$1.10. Stuffing into convenient pockets the

long strip of dance tickets, the patron is then ushered through the checkroom and into the main hall.

It is a long narrow room with a low ceiling festooned with streamers of red-and-green crêpe paper. Wall panels of crudely painted pastoral scenes serve only to accentuate the rude equipment. On a platform at one end of the hall the five musicians of the orchestra wriggle, twist, and screech. But their best efforts to add pep and variety to the monotonous "Baby Face, You've Got the Cutest Little Baby Face" win no applause. The dancers are musically unappreciative, entirely oblivious to the orgiastic behavior on the orchestra stand.

Most of the two hundred men in the hall do not seem to be dancing. They stand about the edge of the dance space or slouch down into the single row of chairs ranged along the wall and gaze fixedly upon the performers. No one speaks. No one laughs. It is a strangely silent crowd. The orchestra stops with a final squawk from the saxophone. The couples dissolve, and for the next half-minute the crowded dance floor becomes a mass of seething, gesticulating figures; sideline spectators dart hither and thither after girls of their choice, while other men slump down into the vacated seats. Above the commotion the ticket-collector shouts loudly for tickets. As soon as the girl receives a ticket from the patron, she tears it in half, gives one part to the ubiquitous ticket-collector; and the other half she blandly stores with other receipts under the hem of her silk stocking—where before the evening is over the accumulation appears as a large and oddly placed tumor. She volunteers no conversation; as the music begins, she nonchalantly turns toward her new patron ready for the dance with him.

This time the orchestra offers the snappy little jig, "I Like

Your Size, I Like Your Eyes, Who Wouldn't?" The newly elected couples move out upon the floor, and the side-line spectators again line up to ogle. Ogling, in fact, seems here to be the chief occupation of the male. Twice as many men ogle as dance. They jostle each other for room along the side line and gradually, involuntarily, they encroach upon the dance space. "Back to the line, boys, back to the line!" An Irish policeman in uniform walks along the side lines pushing back the overzealous with vigorous, persistent shoves. The men retreat, only to press forward a moment later.

The dance-hall girl, on closer inspection, seems to represent a type in more than appearance. She may be either blond or brunette, but apparently she is required to be slender, lithe, youthful, and vivacious. She perhaps need not be thought virtuous, in the conventional sense; she must at least be considered "peppy." Occasionally a girl more brazen than the rest, with cynically curled lips and too generously applied rouge, dances by, exhibiting in her actions a revolt against the conventional. But for the most part the dancers appear to be giddy young girls in the first flush of enthusiasm over the thrills, satisfactions, and money which this transient world of the dance hall provides. Their stock in trade seems to be an ability to dance with some skill a great variety of dance steps, and, more important, sufficient attractiveness to draw many patrons to the hall. They apparently seek to enhance their attractiveness by every feminine device—rouge, lipstick, and fetching coiffures. Even the silken dress seems sometimes to serve its mistress professionally. When business is dull the unchartered girls frolic together over the floor, their skirts swish about, the side-line spectators gape and reach for more tickets.

The taxi-dancer's job is an arduous one. The girl must

have almost unlimited physical stamina to stand up indefinitely to the many forms of physical exercise which the patron may choose to consider dancing. As a matter of fact, dancing is anything but uniform in the taxi-dance hall. Some couples gallop together over the floor, weaving their way in and around the slower dancers; others seek to attain aesthetic heights by a curious angular strut and a double shuffle or a stamp and a glide. Still others dance the "Charleston," and are granted unchallenged pre-emption of the center of the floor. Some couples are content with a slow, simple one-step as they move about the hall. At times certain dancers seem to cease all semblance of motion over the floor, and while locked tightly together give themselves up to movements sensual in nature and obviously more practiced than spontaneous. These couples tend to segregate at one end of the hall where they mill about in a compressed pack of wriggling, perspiring bodies. It is toward such feminine partners that many of the men rush at the end of each dance; these are the taxi-dancers who, irrespective of personal charm, never seem to lack for patrons. "It's all in the day's work, and we are the girls who get the dances," would seem to be their attitude.

A majority of the patrons, however, do not appear to be seeking this type of activity. Many obviously enjoy dancing for its own sake. Others frankly crave youthful feminine society of a sort which can be enjoyed without the formality of introduction, and are willing to pay liberally for it. A few appear to be those who have taken the "dancing academy" advertisement seriously, and have come to be instructed. The girls make no attempt to teach these men, but simply walk them about the hall in an uncertain manner. But for most men attending this "dancing school" it is certainly a place of amusement, not of instruction.

The patrons of the taxi-dance hall constitute a variegated assortment. The brown-skinned Filipino rubs elbows with the stolid European Slav. The Chinese chop-suey waiter comes into his own alongside the Greek from the Mediterranean. The newly industrialized Mexican peon finds his place in the same crowd with the "bad boys" of some of Chicago's first families. The rural visitor seeking a thrill achieves his purpose in company with the globe-trotter from Australia. The American Negro remains the only racial type excluded from the taxi-dance hall.

Age likewise involves little or no restriction for the patron of this dance hall. Gray-haired, mustached men of sixty dance a slow, uncertain one-step in response to the vivacious jigging of their youthful companions, or, perhaps, sit alone in some corner puffing at a cigar. Then there are pudgy men of forty or fifty who dance awkwardly but obviously with great pleasure to themselves; and a few spectacted, well-groomed, middle-aged gentlemen who move quietly, politely, and discreetly among the others. Then also there is the florid-faced, muscular giant of middle years, uncouth in manner and dress, who occupies a prominent place on the side lines, his huge hairy paws extended over the shoulders of his diminutive partner. And standing a little removed from the others is the anemic little man, short of stature, meekly getting out of everyone's way.

Young men are there too, boisterous youths who enter in groups of three and four and hang together at the outskirts of the side-line spectators. They dance little, but instead seem preoccupied in noisy disputes with one another. At first impression they do not seem to be interested in the taxi-dancers. But when they address a girl it is with a certain directness of manner which frequently seems to win favor.

They draw her to one side where with appropriate display of braggadocio they press their suit, collectively or singly. Failing in their quest, they seek out other favorites. But should success attend their efforts, they conduct themselves more quietly, very probably awaiting closing time when they will be able to escort from the hall the girl of their choice. The taxi-dancer in question meanwhile goes on about her business—collecting dance tickets.

In addition to the old or middle-aged and the young men there are "rough and ready" fellows of marriageable age who seem to be unable to assimilate completely some of the modes of city life. In a more rustic setting they may have been the Brummels of the party; in the impersonal contacts of city life they play a more obscure rôle. Many appear to be recent industrial recruits from the country, eager to experience some of the thrills of city life. Others may be foot-loose globe-trotters, hobo journeymen "traveling on their trade," for whom the normal steps in feminine acquaintanceship must be sped up. Still others, however, constitute a different type and suggest the sleekly groomed, suave young "business men" of questionable antecedents. A man of this last type will stand politely at the side lines smoking his cigarettes, and, when wishing to dance, will select invariably the prettiest and youngest of the girls. Finally, there are a few men, handicapped by physical disabilities, for whom the taxi-dancer's obligation to accept all-comers makes the establishment a haven of refuge. The dwarfed, maimed, and pock-marked all find social acceptance here; and together with the other variegated types they make of the institution a picturesque and rather pathetic revelation of human nature and city life.

The orchestra passes from the snappy little jig "I Like

Your Size, I Like Your Eyes, Who Wouldn't?" to "Honey Bunch, You Know How Much I Love You; Honey Bunch, I'm Always Thinking of You"; and then to "I Wish I Had My Old Girl Back Again; I Miss Her More than Ever Now." This last offering is a slow, dreamy waltz, and seems popular with the patrons. There is a scurry for partners; laughter and conversation cease, and except for the shuffling of feet and the labored measures from the orchestra, nothing disturbs the rhythmic movements of the dance. Overhead lights go out, and from one corner a spotlight throws a series of colors over the revolving figures. They appear weird shapes, gliding in and out of the kaleidoscopic colorings, one moment in a blaze of color and the next instant retreating to ashen-gray hulks in the dusk that enshrouds the room. Here are mystery, fantasy, and romance. A strange quiescence pervades all. But only momentarily. The incandescent clusters again light up the room, the saxophone croons forth its final notes, and the dance is done. The spell over, all are back again in a practical, money-making world. Girls disengage themselves from their erstwhile captors, and hurry unescorted to the side lines or to a prearranged rendezvous with other partners. Patrons, grown suddenly active, finger hurriedly for tickets, and pace up and down the row of unappropriated girls along the side lines seeking out favorites. The traffic in romance and in feminine society is again under way.

It is a mercenary and silent world—this world of the taxi-dance hall. Feminine society is for sale, and at a neat price. Dances are very short; seldom do they last more than ninety seconds. At ten cents for each ninety seconds of dancing, a full evening would total the man a tidy sum. Since the average patron does not seem to belong to the social class of easy

affluence, he spends much of his evening on the side lines balancing his exchequer against new stimulations in the dance—apparently with the result that his exchequer loses. The more popular taxi-dancer accumulates an enormous number of tickets in the course of an evening. These young girls by a few hours of dancing each evening may secure a weekly income of at least thirty-five or forty dollars. By the sale of nothing more than their personal society for a few hours each evening they may earn twice or three times as much as they could by a long disagreeable day in a factory or store.

There is little conversation. The patron may sit for hours beside others of his sex without conversing with them. Instead, the attention of all patrons focuses upon the jiggling couples in the center of the floor. The girls, likewise, when not dancing stand for long periods beside each other without talking. Conversation, at best, does not seem to be a highly developed art in this taxi-dance hall. Even when dancing couples do not converse, although it is almost the only situation in the dance hall in which men and girls may become acquainted.

The evening in the dance hall is coming to a close. It is past one o'clock in the morning and the "dancing academy" adjourns at two. The jazz musicians, now thoroughly tired, grind out their music mechanically. It is now a matter of physical endurance. So it is also for the taxi-dancer. Her vivacity and enthusiasm—so evident earlier in the evening—are now gone. She stands indifferently on the side lines, shoulders drooping, or shuffles toward a chair where she slouches dejectedly, awaiting closing time, when she will be permitted to leave. Many patrons also show signs of fatigue. Some who have imbibed too freely sleep noisily in their