

MALE INVESTMENT IN “WHITE SLAVERY,” 1880-1920

by

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ABSTRACT

Male Investment in “White Slavery,” 1880-1920

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My rationale for this study is investigating the motives behind the male investment in white slavery during the turn-of-the-century America. Why did males concern themselves with the ancient problem of prostitution? The first chapter, “Vigilance and Investigation,” studies the different vice commissions, white slave crusaders, and reformers of New York City and their fight against political corruption and lack of law enforcement. The Rockefeller Grand Jury and the Immigration Commission also investigated the white slave traffic, which revealed the existence of white slavery. By 1910, Congress was moved to pass the Mann Act, which made it illegal for the interstate travel of women for immoral purposes.

In Chapter 2, “Journalism and Cultural Productions,” I discuss the impact that the media and other cultural productions such as novels, magazine articles, and film had on the public’s view and knowledge on subjects of commercialized vice and white slavery. Cultural productions aided the work of reformers by publicizing the problems of commercialized vice, but hurt reformers by exaggerating facts and even making the public skeptical. Reformers published their works and findings in different ways, some believing in keeping their work in the circle of other reformers and other organizations, while some made them publicly available through magazines, books, and pamphlets.

There were different reasons why men invested in the problem of white slavery, whether they invested in reform work, journalism, or other cultural productions. Many wanted to uplift society and prevent innocent women and children from falling into the degrading life of crime or prostitution. Some sought profit from the white slave hysteria. Others wanted to expose the corruption of the municipality and police and sought legislation reform and improvement of the justice system. Reformers and antivice activists succeeded in closing down red light districts, but prostitutes became streetwalkers that were suppressed underground and transformed into “call girls.” The issue of sex work continues to the current day on an international level. Also, human trafficking still exists to the current day and can be historically tracked back to white slavery.

Dedication

*For Mom,
Thank you for your love
and encouragement.*

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Introduction

A young girl, Bertha, was compelled by an Italian procurer to leave her home, and was drugged, assaulted, and forced into prostitution. He had flirted with Bertha and her girl friend one Sunday afternoon at an amusement park, and in spite of her protests, had accompanied Bertha to her home and invited her to go to the theatre, she refused. Again he entered the hallway of the tenement where she lived, and sent word by a small boy that he wanted her to go to the theatre that evening. Bertha came down and told him not to come to her house again. At first he urged her, then he declared that she must go with him. "When he held the pistol right up to my face and said, 'I'll shoot if you holler!' I was afraid of my life," said Bertha. "First he claimed that he loved me and promised me a diamond ring; then he said if I didn't come with him, I'd be a dead one and never be able to speak. He threatened he'd kill my mother too, if I hollered." He took her to a saloon-hotel and threatened her again when she refused to take the drink he had ordered. Her will was overruled, and she became dazed and conscious of nothing until the next morning. Humiliated and disgraced, she would not have dared to return home then, even if she had been permitted to do so. Obeying the procurer's command, she sent a telegram to her mother, saying she was married. As a sign that this story was true, she wore a brass ring which he gave her. Two days later she went with him to a furnished-room house, and there submitted to earning money by prostitution. Another Italian stood in front of the house soliciting patronage, sent men up to her room, and collected the money. After this second procurer had been arrested and sentenced, and Bertha had been released on probation, she said: "I stayed in that awful place for nearly a week and I was praying to get out when the officer came in and got me. The only thing that I regret is that the man who put me in that life didn't get caught and punished. He might harm twenty more girls like he did me."

□ Maude Miner in *Slavery of Prostitution*¹

From Victorian to Progressive:

The "white slave hysteria" that erupted in the 1910s emerged out of the multiple changes that transpired during the turn-of-the-century. Industrialization, commercialization, and urbanization allowed for the growth of the population in major cities across the United States. Immigration and migration made a great impact on the geography, economy, politics, and commercialized vice. The Great Migration, the mass migration of African Americans into Northern urban cities, impacted racial boundaries in

¹ Maude Miner, *Slavery of Prostitution* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1916), 102-103.

Northern America. Young American women also traveled to cities in search of work because of the great increase in the number of women entering the workforce, especially among the working classes. Women could find employment in factories, department stores, restaurants, domestic service, offices as clerks or bookkeepers, millineries or dress shops. Women worked long hours and made wages that averaged anywhere around four to six dollars a week, less than half the wage men earned. For the majority of working class women, it was more economical to marry and find a sense of stability in family life. Beginning in 1886, the New York State legislature began restricting the hours of labor for minors and women. By 1912, the maximum hours that a woman could work was nine hours a day, or a 54-hour week, in factories and stores.² In the evenings, young working women would find pleasure and entertainment through the commercialized leisure that was available at the time by attending dance halls and theaters.

During the late 19th century, the Social Purity Movement gained hold in America because of new religiosity and the growth of commercialized vice. The movement was inspired by religious fervor for sexual purity and the abolition and censorship of immorality. Prostitution reform dates back to the antebellum era, most specifically from the 1820s to the 1850s. The work of early reformers, or moral reformers, differed from the reform sought by the later Social Puritans and Progressives because they sought only to lessen the impact of commercialized sex, by reforming the morals of women through Magdalene Houses, reformatories, and private moral reform organizations, most of which

² Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 42-43.

were religiously oriented.³ The efforts of reformers in the early 19th century did not last long and proved a lesson to reformers later in the century who adopted preventive measures in their reform work.

For example, municipal corruption spurred preventive reform such as Anthony Comstock's formation of the Society for the Suppression of Vice (SSV) in 1873. In 1878, Howard Crosby founded the Society for the Prevention of Crime (SPC), which would be taken over by Reverend Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst in the 1890s.⁴ Preventive reformers were male dominated but they fell under the Social Purity Movement, which included women's organizations. Some of the goals of the Social Purity Movement included prosecuting prostitute's customers, abolishing regulated prostitution, condemning male sex necessity, and advocating a women's right to refuse marital sex. Not all of these goals were met, but as Americans moved into the Progressive Era, their thinking changed regarding the "necessary evil" of prostitution. Instead, prostitution in the eyes of Progressive Americans became unnecessary and an act of crime.⁵

Kathy Peiss's study in *Cheap Amusements* illustrates that commercialized leisure transformed from homosocial leisure to heterosocial leisure, which led to the practice of premarital sex. Homosocial leisure only permitted the leisure of men, which included vices such as gambling, alcohol, drugs and prostitution.⁶ The new heterosocial culture was characterized by the interaction between the sexes. Commercialized leisure such as

³ Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 182-184.

⁴ Ibid., 186.

⁵ Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 10-13.

⁶ Peiss, 16-21.

dance halls, theaters, and amusement parks allowed working women to socialize with men of all reputations and classes. In addition, respectable working girls were exposed to the activities of professional prostitutes. Some young women would skim from their paychecks, which were usually given to their parents in a sealed envelope, in order to afford new clothing or afford cheap amusements on the town. A common practice for young women was “treating.” In order to afford their meals or late night amusements, girls would allow men to purchase them drinks, food, material goods, pleasure, and male company in exchange for sexual favors. Some women would find a “steady”, one man who would treat her and whom she planned to eventually marry. In the underworld, women who fully practiced treating were known as “charity girls” and differentiated from prostitutes because they did not accept money for sex.⁷

There was a loosening of sexuality among the women of the lower classes, which included the blending of respectable women and prostitutes in commercial dance halls. There was a change in sexuality especially after 1900, with the increase in premarital sex. Charity girls and the practice of treating undermined commercialized prostitution as men increasingly preferred premarital sex to prostitutes.⁸ Young women’s exposure to immorality and lewd behavior among commercial amusements held dangerous risks for the course of their lives which included falling under the influence of alcohol, drugs, seduction, becoming a victim of rape, and even coming to physical harm or threats of violence. Respectable young women may have turned to prostitution either voluntarily for financial gain or through coercion of a male who was secretly a pimp or procurer.

⁷ Peiss, 108-114.

⁸ Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 311; Peiss, 105-114.

Many of the gender politics transformed during the turn-of-the century, especially concerning the consumption of obscene literature and other forms of cultural productions. In the 19th century, sex was open and free in the city in both publications and prostitution. Books and magazines capitalized on male sexual interest and printed “bawdy” or “racy” literature and stories, such as those written by George Thompson. The Second Great Awakening and the rise of Evangelical Christianity roused crusades against sins such as drinking, obscenity, slavery, and prostitution. Radicals and freethinkers opposed traditional views of sexual matters, and instead proposed open discussion of sexual matter or free love, an ideology that people should be free to have sexual relationships outside of the strictures of marriage, like Victoria Woodhull or Robert Dale Owen. However, Anthony Comstock, an Evangelical Christian fought against obscene literature and succeeded gaining support for censorship laws and getting Congress to pass the Comstock Act, a law that forbade the circulation of obscene and lewd literature and images in 1873.⁹ Despite this, issues of white slavery and prostitution were disseminated along the media and popular culture during the late 1900s and 1910s. White slavery became the sensation in contemporary popular culture, becoming a subject of fiction and a character in silent film. The trope of white slavery allowed for the social control of immigrant and working-class women through these narratives.¹⁰ Social purity, censorship, and reform also became the object of censure and satire among radicals and socialists in periodicals like *The Masses*, *Current Opinion*, and *The Birth Control Review*, who had differing opinions of capitalism, justice, sexuality, and/or sex education. White

⁹ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, “Victoria Woodhull, Anthony Comstock, and Conflicts over Sex in the United States in the 1870s,” *The Journal of American History* 87 no. 2 (September, 2000): 403-434.

¹⁰ Gallagher-Cohoon, 36.

slave narratives had both a positive and negative effects on the work of reformers by bringing publicity to white slavery, while at the same time exaggerating reality and creating the public opinion that white slavery was a myth, subverting reform work and law enforcement. Despite this, the media and popular culture played an important role in the publicity of white slavery and even the creation of the white slave hysteria.

The transformations that occurred through the turn-of-the-century allowed for changes in Victorian ideologies and beliefs. One could even believe that there was a major break from Victorian sexual morals and that the dawn of the 20th century represented a sexual revolution. For example, in August 1913, a journalist for *Current Opinion* wrote an article titled “Sex O’Clock in America” exclaiming, “A wave of sex hysteria and sex discussion seems to have invaded this country. Our former reticence on matters of sex is giving way to a frankness that would even startle Paris.”¹¹ However, Michel Foucault’s theory of deployment of sexuality, argues that the discourse of sex grew since the 17th century and developed all the way up to the Victorian era. Foucault disputes the theory of repression, evidencing the sexual discourse that existed and was forbidden simultaneously.¹² The discourse surrounding sex grew exponentially until its producers became unabashed at publishing findings in newspapers, journals, and books in order to educate the general public about prostitution, the causes of prostitution, venereal disease, white slavery, and sex education. During the turn-of-the-century reformers had to inform the public about sex and the consequences for such immoral behavior, while still

¹¹ “Sex O’ Clock in America,” *Current Opinion* 55, no. 2 (August 1913): 113.

¹² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 1-13, 31-35, 41-49, 72-73, 156-159; Also see Christina Simmons, “Modern Sexuality and the Myth of Victorian Repression,” in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, eds. Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 157-177.

following the rules of censorship and advocating the repression of disorderly behavior and the abolition of regulated vice. Reformers' regulations and Comstockery were intertwined and a part of the sexual discourse of the period.

Thesis:

As Ruth Rosen indicates, the issue of white slavery pushed the abolition of prostitution because reformers linked the cause of white slavery to the existence of regulated vice districts.¹³ For example, Maude Miner declares:

“Vice districts have been markets for girls. Procurers can dispose of their victims or ‘break them in’ more easily in a district which is free from molestation by police. Segregated vice stimulates traffic in girls.”¹⁴

Despite that white slavery and prostitution varied in the degree of a woman's self-autonomy, the discourse of white slavery gave reformers the opportunity needed to abolish prostitution and other forms of commercialized vice through political and social action. This study will focus specifically on the reformers and vice commissions in the city of New York, with a side-glance at works published by Jane Addams and Clifford G. Roe for their national influence on white slavery discourse. The case of vice reform and white slavery differed from city to city in America, each having their unique obstacles to overcome. Each city had particular difficulties that other cities did not experience. New York City was viewed by contemporaries as the epicenter and source of white slavery in America, since it was the point of entry for the majority of immigrants during the turn-of-the-century.

Historians have mostly studied the white slave narratives and how they have been used to analyze the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class within the culture of

¹³ Rosen, 12-13; Miner, 155-161.

¹⁴ Miner, 156.

America.¹⁵ Other historians have tracked the history of prostitution such as Timothy Gilfoyle's *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920*, Ruth Rosen's *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918*, Kevin Mumford's *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century*, and Steven Robertson's article "Harlem Undercover: Vice Investigators, Race, and Prostitution, 1910-1930."¹⁶ Other scholars have studied the impact of American culture on young women's lives such as Kathy Peiss's *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* and Elizabeth Clement's *Love For Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945*. Progressive reform and the reform surrounding prostitution has been studied in works such as Paul Boyer's *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America*, Kevin Murphy's *Political Manhood*, and Roy Lubove's article "The Progressive and the Prostitute." While analysis of white slave narratives explains some of the motivations of reformers and politicians, they do not reveal the entire cultural and political landscape of the time period that aided the simultaneous production of white slave narratives and/or discourse. It is not clear from white slavery discourse the amount of political corruption, shoddy legislation, and the lack of law enforcement that impacted the practice of commercialized sex and the white slave traffic. Many historians have used the sources of

¹⁵ See Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917* (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2006); Laura Hapke, *Girls Who Went Wrong: Prostitutes in American Fiction, 1885-1917* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989.); Gretchen Soderlund, *Sex Trafficking, Scandal, and the Transformation of Journalism, 1885-1917* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2013).

¹⁶ Also see Stephen Robertson et al., "Disorderly Houses: Residences, Privacy, and the Surveillance of Sexuality in 1920s Harlem," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 21 no. 3 (September 2012): 443-466.

reformers, vice commissioners, and investigators, and cultural productions but failed to fully investigate and analyze the investment of male reformers, investigators, and vice commissioners in subjects of white slavery and commercialized vice. Despite the number of women involved in trying to solve the problem of prostitution, women's organizations, both suffragist and anti-suffragist, tended to have more feminist views concerning white slavery and prostitution, whereas preventive societies and vice commissions were patriarchal and held paternalistic attitudes in their reform work.

I plan to analyze the male investment into white slavery and prostitution, whether as a topic of investigation, journalism, or subject of cultural productions. My methods include examining the motivations and investment of white males to investigate and abolish white slavery and regulated prostitution. One must consider the aims and goals of reform literature, journalism, and cultural productions, such as novels and films that stimulated public support for reformers or created skepticism of the existence of white slavery.

What is "White Slavery"?

What exactly is "white slavery" and how is it defined during the time period (1890-1920) and how can historians and scholars understand it? White Slavery in its most narrow definition was the procurement of innocent young women, usually depicted as a white Anglo-American young woman, and forcing or coercing them into prostitution.¹⁷ It also included trafficking young women across state, interstate, and international lines. With the progression of the 20th century, the definition of white slavery became more

¹⁷ Erin Gallagher-Cohoon, "The Dirt on 'White Slavery': The Construction of Prostitution Narratives in Early Twentieth-Century American Newspapers," *Constellations* 5, no. 1 (2014), 36.

vague, especially when reformers used the term loosely to refer to prostitution. The term was most commonly used to describe a woman who was coerced into prostitution and forced to remain a prostitute, including immigrant women. Maude Miner defines the different coercive tactics used to force women into prostitution in her 1916 book, *Slavery of Prostitution*: the promise of marriage, fake marriage, marriage, advertisement for female workers, employment agencies, promise of high wages and material goods, and the use of force and violence.¹⁸ Pimps, madams, and procurers exploited these women through the use of fear, threats, exploitation, gaining affection, and/or keeping them in financial debt.¹⁹

White slavery varied from normal prostitution, even though some contemporaries did not recognize the distinction. Ruth Rosen suggests envisioning prostitution as continuum with one end representing white slavery and forced prostitution at the other end representing voluntary prostitution. Along the spectrum are the varying degrees of power used to bring and keep a woman in prostitution.²⁰ The discourse surrounding white slavery debated the causes that led women into prostitution, whether women were coerced or willingly degraded themselves. This led also to the formation of several vice commissions and investigations throughout the country. White slavery was not conceptualized originally in America, but abroad in Britain and Europe.

The term of white slavery, in relation to prostitution, originated in Britain when Josephine Butler discovered the trafficking of women from London to Brussels in the

¹⁸ Miner, 93-104.

¹⁹ Ibid., 104-116; Rosen, 125-126.

²⁰ Rosen, 113.

1880s.²¹ British reformer, William T. Stead penned the reality of white slavery in Britain in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in his exposé, “The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon”. These stories reached America in the late 1870s and 1880s and outraged members of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) and social purity reformers.²² By the early 20th century, white slavery brought prostitution and other forms of commercialized vice under intense scrutiny by reformers, sparking investigations and the formation of vice commissions and other organizations with one central goal: the abolition of regulated vice in large cities throughout the nation. Despite this, the true hysteria over white slavery did not reach its peak until 1911-1916.²³ This was probably due to reports to Congress by the Immigration Commission (1907-1910) and the passage of the White Slave Act of 1910, now known as the Mann Act, by Congress. By 1920, white slavery was considered abolished and no longer attracted the attention of the media.

Cultural Anxieties caused by White Slavery:

White slavery and commercialized prostitution in general caused many anxieties along the discourse that it created. Chief among them was the belief that the corruption of the municipality and the police had a relation to prostitution and the white slave traffic. There was also the belief that the white slave traffic was associated with crime syndicates, which spurred nation-wide investigations into the white slave traffic. Medical

²¹ The term “white slavery” originally dates back to the antebellum period, when white working class men and labor leaders compared themselves to chattel slaves in order to describe their harsh working conditions. For more info see Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917* (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2006), 18-19.

²² Rosen, 116-117; William T. Stead, “The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon I: The Report of Our Secret Commission,” *The Pall Mall Gazette*, July 6, 1885, pp. 1-5, July 7, 1885, pp. 1-5, July 10, 1885, pp. 1-6.

²³ Rosen, 14-15.

professionals and organizations such as the American Social Hygiene Association also feared the spread of venereal disease and racial deterioration.²⁴

In America, white slavery was connected to the gender and racial norms during the time period. White slavery allowed for the suppression of female sexuality and the surveillance of female bodies in public. For example, investigators hired by reformers and vice commissions studied the practices of prostitutes and the leisure activities of young working class women. Plus, the open nature of prostitution was suppressed with the closure of red light districts. Racism was deeply rooted within white slavery and reforms surrounding prostitution and the abolition of commercialized vice. Reformers made an analogy between the abolition of the white slavery and the abolition of African slavery in America. Jane Addams comments on this analogy in her book *A New*

Consciousness and Ancient Evil. Addams states:

Those of use who think we discern the beginnings of a new conscience in regard to this twin of slavery, as old and outrageous as slavery itself and even more persistent, find a possible analogy between certain civic, philanthropic and educational efforts directed against the very existence of this social evil and similar organized efforts which preceded the overthrow of slavery in America.²⁵

Despite this analogy, racism was still evident in reform efforts regarding white slavery and prostitution. There was great social anxiety surrounding interracial sexuality and the sexuality of immigrant male population, especially the French, Jewish, Italians, and Asians. This resulted in increased social control surrounding racial and ethnic populations such as deportations, immigration detention, exclusion, and miscegenation laws.

²⁴ Rosen, xiii, 123-124; Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 259-265, 300-301; Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1913), 131; Jerome D. Greene, "Social Hygiene and the War: Our Great Opportunity," n.d., Box 9, Folder 1914-1916, Committee of Fourteen Papers, New York Public Library.

²⁵ Addams, 4.

Many people were involved in the investigation of the white slave traffic and the abolition of prostitution. Timothy Gilfoyle states that there were many concerned in the problem of prostitution in New York City including investigators of municipal corruption, antivice commissions, settlement house leaders, women's organizations, social hygienists, purity reformers, and wealthy businessmen.²⁶ This entailed many people, the majority of whom were men that dominated the discourses in both prostitution and white slavery alike.

A high number of middle class and elite women advocated reform in prostitution due to the increase in women's organization in the late 19th century. For the first time women insisted that prostitution was a "women's problem." The problem of prostitution not only highlighted women's unequal political status, but also their sexual subordination to men.²⁷ Jane Addams argued:

"If political rights were once given to women, if the situation were theirs to deal with as a matter of civic responsibility, one cannot imagine that the existence of the social evil would remain unchallenged in its semi-legal protection."²⁸

Emma Goldman, an anarchist who was deported for her radicalism, proclaimed that prostitution was just another form of sexual subordination similar to marriage in her essay, *The Traffic in Women*. Goldman asserts:

"it is merely a question of degree whether she sells herself to one man, in or out of marriage, or to many men. Whether our reformers admit it or not, the economic and social inferiority of woman is responsible for prostitution."²⁹

²⁶ Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 299.

²⁷ Rosen, 51-62.

²⁸ Addams, 192.

²⁹ Emma Goldman, "Traffic in Women." In her *The Traffic in Women and Other Essays on Feminism*. 1917. Reprint. (New York: Times Change Press, 1970), 20.

Rose Livingston, a suffragist and former prostitute, was dubbed among her supporters as “The Angel of Chinatown” for her efforts to save girls from white slavery in New York City’s Chinatown. Livingston’s lectures promoted the argument among suffragists that only women’s influence among government and legislation could protect women from sexual predators and exploitation³⁰ Furthermore, women activist leaders such as, Elizabeth Grannis, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Carrie Chapman Cott, and Mary White Ovington, encouraged New York’s Committee of Fifteen to investigate prostitution.³¹

³⁰ Mary Ting Yi Lui, “Saving Young Girls from Chinatown: White Slavery and Woman Suffrage, 1910-1920,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18, no. 3 (2009): 393-395.

³¹ Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 302.

Chapter 1: Vigilance and Investigation

I passed up and down Broadway taking in the side streets off Broadway and 42nd Street and below 47th Street, meeting all along here many dozens of girls out soliciting men. I was more than surprised at the outward methods used and it looked like a return to the old way of openly approaching passing men. Many of these girls I knew personally from the investigation of the cabarets during the Winter. I stopped and spoke to several. I asked them how they were getting along now that the cabarets had to close up at midnight and they said that it was bad for them as far as the cabarets were concerned in that they couldn't stay all night as they used to. They said that they had to go out and get them (meaning men) on the street. Several of the girls had never tried the streets they said, but it was a matter of necessity now. I know that this was true that some of these had never been on the streets before, always depending on meeting men at the cabarets or else by appointment. None of these girls knew of a place where they could go after one as I made suggestions to that effect and I knew they would have taken me some place if there was one of them open then after 1 A.M. Several of these girls solicited me. I promised to get in touch with them soon. The girls were parading up and down Broadway between 52nd St. and about 50th St. on both sides of the street, but mostly on the East side. All of the side streets above 42nd street (between Broadway and Sixth Avenue) were full of girls lolling along smiling at men and even speaking to them. I saw between these streets many girls get men (about a dozen pickups). I also saw many girls leaving the cabarets, girls whom I knew, with men. These were girls who would never walk always insisting on using a taxi even if only to go around the corner to another cabaret. Now they were walking.

□ J.A.S., investigator for the Committee of Fourteen¹

The conditions of commercialized vice and municipal corruption that existed in New York City during the turn-of-the-century provoked the formation of vigilant and preventive societies that sought improvement in socio-political conditions. In New York City, politics or “the machine” revolved around Tammany Hall, which was infamous for political corruption. The police were also corrupt, taking graft and abusing their power. Brothels, cabarets, saloons, gambling houses, and other places of commercialized vice paid the police for protection. Initiation fees cost \$500 and monthly fees could cost

¹ Investigator's Report, “Street Conditions In and About Times Square,” June 19, 1917, Box 31, Folder 1916-197, The Committee of Fourteen Records.

anywhere from \$25 to \$50, unless the establishment was favored.² Brian Donovan explains that Tammany Hall profited around \$7 million dollars from commercialized vice due to grafting around the turn-of-the-century.³ Reformers, politicians, businessmen, law enforcement, purity reformers, and social hygienists were motivated to invest their time and support in investigations, studies, municipal and law reform, and the enforcement of laws for the suppression of white slavery and prostitution for a variety of reasons. The corruption of the municipality and its connection with commercialized vice such as gambling and prostitution led to the discovery of the extent of the white slave traffic in America and legislative reform that pushed the eradication of red light districts. Reformers and anti-vice activists sought preventive measures to protect women, children, and adolescents from falling into the degrading life of crime, prostitution, and addiction to alcohol and drugs.

Society for the Prevention of Crime (1878-1973):

As mentioned in the Introduction, the Society for the Prevention of Crime (SPC) was organized in 1878 under the leadership of Howard Crosby. After the death of Crosby, Reverend Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst was elected president of the SPC on April 30, 1891. As the leader of the SPC, Dr. Parkhurst was the first to strongly attack Tammany Hall and discover the connivance of the municipality and the New York Police Department with prostitution and gambling. Parkhurst declared:

I commenced to push out quietly in the two directions of the gambling evil and the social evil, and the first obstruction against which I ran was the Police! The Department which, in my rustic innocence, I had supposed existed for the purpose of repressing crime, it now began to dawn upon me, had for its principal object to

² “Lexow Committee Report,” *The New York Times*, January 18, 1895, 2.

³ Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917*. (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2006), 90.

protect and foster crime and make capital out of it. It was a rude awakening to a cruel fact, but it was a fact in the light of which the last three years have been constantly lived.⁴

Dr. Parkhurst fought to end the corruption of the Police Department and the influence of Tammany Hall politics over the police. The SPC had some support from the male members of the New York community. On May 12, 1892, the SPC held a meeting with seven hundred men from around the city. Dr. Parkhurst advocated municipal reform and emphasized the obligatory civic duty of the citizen. Around two hundred of the men present were motivated to aid the SPC and took a pledge. These men pledged: "I hereby pledge myself to study the municipal interests of this city, and to do everything in my power to promote the purity and honesty of its government." Thus, the Civic Vigilance League (CVL) was created. The members of the CVL policed actions of commercialized vice and municipal corruption while also governing themselves. Most importantly, the CVL were able to investigate, monitor, and prevent fraudulent voting because of the high number of members of the CVL in each district of the city.⁵

The SPC hired private detectives to investigate brothels, saloons, gambling houses, policy shops, poolrooms, and other places that harbored commercialized vice in order to gain evidence of police and municipal corruption. Dr. Parkhurst felt that it was the responsibility of Christians to rid the city of immorality and disorderly conduct. He particularly preached to fellow Christians that it was their duty to fight the corrupt

⁴ Charles H. Parkhurst, *Our Fight with Tammany* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 107-112.

municipality that allowed sin and criminality to flourish.⁶ During a sermon delivered by Parkhurst on February 14, 1892, he declared:

The only object of my appeal this morning had been to sound a distinct note, and to quicken our Christian sense of obligatory relation in which we stand toward the official and administrative criminality that is filthifying our entire municipal life, making New York a very hot-bed of knavery, debauchery, and bestiality, in the atmosphere of which, and at the corrosive touch of which, there is not a young man so noble, nor a young girl so pure, as not to be in a degree infected by the fetid contamination.⁷

SPC and other preventive reformers were at odds with the Police Department because of their vigilant activities and their usurpation of the power of the New York Police Department.⁸ The SPC also investigated the conduct and actions of the police in order to discern if they were enforcing the law in relation to commercialized vice.

Most specifically, the SPC focused their investigations on police activity in one specific precinct, the Eleventh Precinct under Captain William S. Devery, to gain solid evidence of the corruption of the Police Department.⁹ At the end of 1893 and beginning of 1894, there was a public demand for “some kind of authoritative investigation of the Police Department that should be qualified to reach the innermost facts of the situation.”¹⁰ The Governor and State Senate responded by financing and forming a committee headed by Senator Clarence Lexow in 1894. The Lexow Committee

⁶ Parkhurst, *Our Fight with Tammany*, 1-25, 70-74; “Report of the Society for the Prevention of Crime, 1903,” Society for the Prevention of Crime Scrapbook, Flat Box 598, Society for the Prevention for Crime Records, Columbia University, New York.

⁷ Parkhurst, 8, 23-24.

⁸ Other preventive societies included the Society for Suppression of Vice (SSV) established by Anthony Comstock in 1873 and the Society for the Prevention of the Cruelty of Children (SPCC), created in 1874 by Eldridge Gerry.

⁹ Parkhurst, 165-176, 178-188.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 232.

investigated the findings of the SPC and conducted investigations of their own, making discoveries of election fraud, voter intimidation, police brutality, swindling, bribery, and extortion.¹¹ In 1898, the State Legislature and Governor Theodore Roosevelt funded another committee, the Mazet Committee, to investigate corruption in the municipality, especially in relation to Tammany Hall. In the early 19th century, the New York police began to enforce the laws despite the existence of the corrupt politics of Tammany Hall. In a pamphlet published in 1903, the SPC stated:

It should be stated by way of explanation, that during the past year with a Police Force intelligently and actively committed to the work of enforcing the law, the efforts of our Society have been largely expended upon matters of a less public interest and its operations therefore less in evidence.¹²

The SPC also discovered incidents of white slavery. In a pamphlet the Society published in 1903, they described scenarios of white slave trafficking that would become the norm in the next decade. They received letters from organizations in Britain, such as the Gentleman's Committee of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls, who implored them to search for young girls who had been seduced by white slave procurers and taken to America. In the case of Milly W., the SPC was able to find the place that the girl had been taken, but she had already been taken elsewhere. So the SPC spread the message that if the girl, Milly, was not returned to her mother, they threatened that "somebody would get into trouble." The SPC was notified that Milly had returned to her mother in London. However, in another case, a girl had been taken all the way to Chicago and the SPC forwarded the letter to the Children's Home and Aid Society and the Jewish Charities Association of Chicago in hopes that they would be able to find the missing

¹¹ "Lexow Committee Report," 1-3.

¹² "Report of the Society for the Prevention of Crime, 1903," SPC Records.

girl. It is evident from the pamphlet the SPC saw white slave trafficking and the imprisonment of innocent young women in brothels as a motivation for their work.¹³

Dr. Parkhurst made an example for other vigilance organizations of the period, most specifically the use of detectives and investigators in order to gain evidence of vice, disorderly behavior, and/or municipal corruption. Dr. Parkhurst also instilled in men a mentality of social and self-vigilant governance. As evidenced by Dr. Parkhurst, some reformers felt that it was their religious duty to clean up the city and suppress commercialized vice. Preventive societies like the SPC and CVL, felt a civic and patriotic duty to reform legislation and the municipal government, which would help efforts of the suppression of commercialized vice. The SPC would continue to function until it disbanded in 1973. While the SPC operated during the early 20th century, vice commissions would form and work for the suppression of commercialized vice during the Progressive Era.

Committee of Fifteen (1900-1902):

In 1900, the Chamber of Commerce created the Committee of Fifteen, one of the first vice commissions of the Progressive Era, for the purpose of investigating commercialized vice and its connection to Tammany Hall. The Committee of Fifteen was formed of primarily businessmen, reformers, and scholars who initially believed in the regulation and segregation of vice. During their first year of operation, the Committee of Fifteen conducted raids and investigations on gambling houses. They were aided by Justice William T. Jerome, who assisted the committee in raids against gambling houses

¹³ Ibid.

with “warrants, axes, pistols, and safe smashers.” Ex-chief of Police John McCullagh also provided aid as one of their chief investigators.¹⁴

By the summer of 1901, the Committee of Fifteen turned their attention away from the suppression of gambling houses and focused on the problem of prostitution in tenement houses and apartment buildings.¹⁵ The Committee of Fifteen was allied with the preventive societies such as the SPC and CVL. Like the SPC, the Committee of Fifteen initially did not wish to abolish prostitution, but only wanted to end the municipal corruption linked with commercialized vice. They initiated the passage of the Tenement House Law of 1901, which made landlords of tenement houses responsible for any prostitution on their property, and could be fined up to \$1,000. A woman caught in the act of prostitution in a tenement house could be arrested and imprisoned for up to six months.¹⁶ The Committee of Fifteen eventually dissolved in December 1901 and published their report in the publication, *The Social Evil*, in 1902. They discovered the “cadet system,” the system of white slave traffic conducted by pimps and procurers, and its connection to Raines Law hotels and houses of prostitution.¹⁷

The Committee of Fifteen made several recommendations for the fight against the “social evil.” They recommended better housing for the lower classes, better forms of amusement for lower-class youth rather than the dance halls and theaters that promoted immorality, an improvement in working conditions, better moral education, the increase

¹⁴ “Committee of Fifteen After Bigger Game,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 28, 1901, p. 3;
 “The Fifteen Will Abandon all Raids,” *The New York Times*, June 11, 1901, p. 1.

¹⁵ “The Fifteen Will Abandon all Raids,” p. 1.

¹⁶ Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 302-303.

¹⁷ Edwin Seligman, *The Social Evil, with Special Reference to Conditions Existing in the City of New York: A Report under the Direction of the Committee of Fifteen* (New York: Putnam, 1902), 181-185.

of accommodations for women suffering from venereal disease, minors who are victims of commercialized vice to be confined to asylums or reformatories, condemning prostitution as a sin and not a crime. The final recommendation was for:

“the creation of a special body of morals police, analogous to the sanitary police already existing, selected on ground of exceptional judgment and fitness, to whom and to whom alone should be entrusted the duties of surveillance and repression contemplated in the above recommendations.”¹⁸

Committee of Fourteen (1905-1932):

On January 16, 1905, the Committee of Fourteen was formed for the purpose to eradicate Raines Law Hotels.¹⁹ These hotels were created due to the passing of the Raines Law in 1896, which was only passed in order to shift the power of the liquor traffic to Republicans instead of the Democrats. However, the law had many ill effects, which included the changes in the duties of the Excise Commissioner, a person who previously practiced discretion in the selling of saloon or hotel licenses, now sold licenses indiscriminately in order to make state revenue, allowing the existence of too many saloons. The Excise Commissioner also made no inspections of saloons to determine if they abided by the law and left the giant mess of inspection up to the municipality. The Raines law also prohibited the sell of alcohol in saloons on Sunday between the hours of 1 A.M. and 6 A.M., but it permitted the sell of alcohol in hotels on Sunday during the same time period only if the drink was served with a meal. Because Sunday night was the busiest night for the saloon business, many proprietors just added ten rooms to the back of their saloons or bars and transformed their establishments into “hotels,” which were

¹⁸ Ibid., 171-180.

¹⁹ John D. Peters, “The Story of the Committee of Fourteen of New York,” *Social Hygiene* 4 (1918): 360-361.

used for either prostitution or rented for sexual assignations.²⁰ The main goal of the Committee of Fourteen was to eliminate these Raines Law Hotels through the passage of new legislation that would reverse the Raines Law. However, the Committee of Fourteen was not able to overturn the Raines Law through legislation. Therefore, the Committee of Fourteen decided to make a more permanent organization.²¹

In 1907, the Committee of Fourteen reorganized and was incorporated under the title, *The Committee of Fourteen for the Suppression of Raines Law Hotels in New York City*. They set up an office at 27 East and 22nd Street, and Frederick H. Whitin enlisted as part-time secretary. Only six of the original fourteen members remained on the new committee. The Committee of Fourteen discovered the relationship of brewers, bondsmen, and realtors to saloons and Raines Law hotels. The brewers and bondsmen were amenable to the suppression of Raines laws hotels and abiding by the law, but gaining the cooperation of realtors was more difficult.²² The Committee of Fourteen also established cooperation with the magistrates, the courts, the Tenements House and Health Commissioner, the Department of Correction, and the Excise Commissioner. The committee would inform them of their work and findings and sought information and guidance from them in return. The Committee of Fourteen also established a rapport with other vice commissions and organizations such as the SPC, SSV, and the Society of Social and Moral Prophylaxis.²³ Often these societies and commissions would exchange information and guide one another in their work for reform.

²⁰ Ibid., 348-353.

²¹ Willoughby C. Waterman, *Prostitution and Its Repression in New York City, 1900-1931* (New York, 1932), 97; Peters, 361-365.

²² Peters, 366-369.

²³ Ibid., 366.

Like their predecessors, the Committee of Fourteen hired investigators to comb the city's streets and observe the behavior in saloons and Raines law hotels, specifically determining if establishments abided the law. The Committee of Fourteen enlightened keepers of saloons and hotels, brewers, and bondsmen of the law and made them sign agreements such as:

We hereby agree to serve no unaccompanied woman in the rear room of our saloon, Seventh Ave., at any time, and no woman, even if accompanied after 7 P.M.

It is understood that a violation of this agreement will result in the withdrawal of our license certificate by the brewer and that no further appeal in our behalf will be considered by your Committee.

(signed)

.....²⁴
.....

If saloons or hotels were discovered breaking the law, the Committee of Fourteen would have it shut down by reporting it to the police. With the fear of losing their welfare, many establishments signed agreements with the Committee of Fourteen and abided the law. The Committee of Fourteen discovered through their investigative work that there was great overlap in the legal system and law enforcement. There was no communication between the police, court systems, Excise Department, correction facilities, District Attorney, Tenement House Department, and Corporation Counsel. No universal system of documentation existed that allowed the recording of punishment for prostitution such as fines, sentences to reformatories or asylums, and probation. This led to the unequal sentencing of young women with convictions of prostitution. An investigation in the lower courts instigated the reform of the New York courts in 1910. This reform brought changes such as the enlargement of the Court of Special Sessions, organization of the

²⁴ Waterman, 106.

Magistrates' Courts to avoid any confusion, creation of the Night Court for Women, use of fingerprints for identification, and the development of probation.²⁵ The Committee of Fourteen developed a Research Committee who published a report, *The Social Evil in New York City—A Study in Law Enforcement* (1910), a thorough study of the laws and the enforcement of the law in New York City that affected issues of immorality and vice.

The Research Committee recommended:

“that the Governor or Mayor appoint a non-salaried commission to take up this matter of further study of conditions, law amendments and enforcements, procedures, centralization of the responsibility for enforcement, and the creation of public sentiment for such measures as seem advisable.”²⁶

After the publication of the report, *The Social Evil in New York City*, the Committee of Fourteen determined that they had achieved their goal in the abolishment of Raines Law Hotels. They extended their work into other districts of the city by creating a sub-committee in Brooklyn and investigating “colored resorts.” After the Rockefeller Grand Jury recommended the arrangement of a committee that the mayor refused to appoint, the Committee of Fourteen felt obligated to continue the work begun by the Rockefeller Grand Jury and its own Research Committee, and reorganized in February 1912, under the title of *The Committee of Fourteen for the Suppression of Commercialized Vice in the City of New York*. The Committee dedicated their attention in repressing the exploiters of prostitution in all their shapes and forms. The committee enlarged themselves through the enlistment of representatives from organizations such as the Probation Society, the Dance Halls Committee, the National and New York Societies

²⁵ Peters, 370-371.

²⁶ The Research Committee of the Committee of Fourteen, *The Social Evil in New York City: A Study of Law Enforcement* (New York: Andrew H. Kellogg Co., 1910), xi-xxxvi.

of Social and Moral Prophylaxis, the Bureau of Social Hygiene, the Courts Committee, and the Church Mission. They continued to seek the help and cooperation of other organizations with similar interests in reform.²⁷ They conducted thorough investigations of dance halls, saloons, hotels, theaters, cabarets, burlesque theaters, balls, department stores, massage parlors, and excursions boats and resorts.²⁸ By 1917, with the entrance of the United States into World War I, the Committee of Fourteen began investigations at naval bases and army camps in order to “clean up” camps and prevent the spread of venereal disease.²⁹ It was during this time that Americans began to view venereal disease as harmful to the American Soldier and a hindrance to victory. For example, The American Social Hygiene Association (ASHA) conducted a study comparing the number of soldiers disabled from venereal disease in a training camp in New York to the number of soldiers who suffered from casualties overseas in battle. The result was that more soldiers suffered from venereal disease in the training camp than casualties received in battle. The ASHA concluded, “looking at the matter from a purely physical and military point of view, that vice may be an even more formidable enemy than the German.”³⁰

The Committee of Fourteen continued their work into the 1920s, continuing investigations of places that catered to prostitution and other forms of commercialized vice. The passage of the 18th Amendment, the prohibition of alcohol, created speakeasies and the practice of bootlegging. It became difficult for the police to enforce the law because of corruption. The Committee made investigations and suggestions of how the

²⁷ Peters, 377-380.

²⁸ Ibid., 384-385; Investigators’ Reports, Boxes 28-32, Committee of Fourteen Records, New York Public Library, New York.

²⁹ Peters, 387-388.

³⁰ Jerome D. Greene, “Social Hygiene and the War: Our Great Opportunity,” n.d., Box 9, Folder 1914-1916, Committee of Fourteen Records.

police department could improve law enforcement especially for controlling vice. Also, there was an investigation in the Women's Court and a study of the existing reports of the causes of prostitution.³¹ However, prostitution was in decline in the 1920s, and by the 1930s it was no longer the problem it had posed earlier in the century. Therefore, the Committee of Fourteen dissolved in 1933.³²

The Committee of Fourteen differentiated from preventive and vigilant societies because they did not seek punishment from criminals or prostitutes. Instead, the Committee wished to educate the public and amend the laws where necessary. In the words of Fredrick H. Whitin:

The sole purpose of The Committee of Fourteen is to promote through education of both public opinion and public officials a better enforcement of the laws relating to commercialized prostitution, and amendment of these laws where changing conditions and progress in public opinion make such amendments necessary and possible³³.

The Committee of Fourteen was able to do this through the use of investigators and the use of their investigations. The use of investigators, a strategy first used by Dr. Charles Parkhurst and adopted by other vice commissions of the Progressive Era, allowed the Committee of Fourteen to monitor the activities and law-abiding behavior of saloons, hotels, and other places catering to commercialized vice. For example, in the year of 1918, one investigator reported of the Clara Hotel:

³¹ Unpublished papers, n.d., Box 83, Folder "Prostitution-Causes," Committee of Fourteen Records.

³² Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 305-311; Waterman, 149-150.

³³ Memorandum, February, 1926, Box 82, Folder "Attacks on Committee of Fourteen," Committee of Fourteen Records.

the majority of the women appeared to be professional prostitutes, the balance all appeared to be game, don't think there was one respectable woman here amongst the lot. The men appeared to be a lot of toughs.³⁴

The investigator further described the mingling nature of the men and accompanied women in the room. The men and women talked to each other across the room. There were also three unescorted women who sat at a table by themselves. The investigator reported:

I got into conversation with Mickey the waiter, I told him this place used to be much livelier last year, I told him I was out of town almost a year and there seems to be quite a change in NY, he said you will find every thing changed. I said what became of all the women used to be around here, he said some of them still come around but not as many as before, I asked him if they let women in alone, he said yes, those that we know, we put them at some table with men. He said its funny, sometime I'll hang around all afternoon looking for a ---- and not one of them will show up and then other afternoons there will be about 20 cunts hanging around here. I said last year there was always a chance of picking up a piece of gash in here, he said you can do it now, too, . . . This place is still running pretty raw, there's no doubt of McNarma knowing what is going on in his place, he was in the room almost the entire time that I was there and couldn't help seeing it, HE came in from bar room and joined one couple at their table and sat with them the entire time. The majority of the women in the place knew the waiters and called them by name. The waiters are staking men that they know to women. Saw no men in uniform on the premises. This place will bear watching.³⁵

These investigative reports provided the Committee of Fourteen of the knowledge of the changes occurring in the underworld and the leisure activities of the of the lower-class youth, such as "treating." It also allowed them to determine why law enforcement was difficult for the police and the problems within the court system, especially the Women's Court. The Committee of Fourteen was able to determine, to the best of their abilities in

³⁴ Investigator's Report, 2150 8th Ave, March 5, 1918, Box 33, Folder 1918, Committee of Fourteen Records.

³⁵ Ibid.

an ever-changing landscape of vice, the workings of prostitution and how women were coerced and exploited.

Ultimately, the Committee of Fourteen is considered one of the most successful vice commissions due to the number of reforms they passed³⁶. This success was probably due to the close relationships and alliances that they formed with other Progressive reform organizations. Through the creation of a diverse organization that represented the ideas of several organizations and societies, the Committee of Fourteen was a well informed group and able to fight for reform successfully. The discoveries of the Committee of Fifteen and Committee of Fourteen provided evidence that vice only propagated more crime, aided the white slave traffic, and proliferated the spread of venereal diseases to innocent women and children. The Committee of Fourteen also took on the additional responsibility to further their investigations to fight all forms of commercialized prostitution, when they could have simply disbanded in 1910. The members of the Committee of Fourteen took their work further by seeking reform in the courts and in legislation. The SPC, Committee of Fifteen, and Committee of Fourteen were promoters of good government for the sake of better living conditions. It brought male reformers a sense of “political manhood” or “masculinity”. In the late 19th century, reform work was considered somewhat homosexual or too genteel. Politicians would often use gender inversion and slander reformers as “mollycoddles” or “mugwumps.” The use of investigative work and confrontational tactics adopted by reformers, beginning with Dr. Parkhurst, and associating with the working classes masculinized reform work. However, the promotion of good government was also prone to attack by

³⁶ Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 304.

politicians during the early 20th century, slandering reformers as “goo goos.”³⁷ Despite these incidents, male Progressive reformers no doubt found masculine satisfaction in their work, especially with a paternalistic instinct to protect innocent women, young men, and children.

As a result of reformers and vice commissions, vice was pushed underground and prostitutes had to find clients elsewhere, either by working the streets, or traveling to new areas that were less enforced such as the outer-boroughs or cities that had yet to be touched by vice commissions. Repressive measures made against commercialized sex led women deeper into the underworld and closer to other forms of vice and its consequences such as alcohol, gambling, drugs, disease, crime, syndicates, and violence. Prostitution became more invisible as it became more clandestine and the prostitute transformed into the “call girl.”³⁸

The Rockefeller Grand Jury:

Journalism had a big effect on reform work and public opinion; its biggest effect being sensational muckraking newspaper articles that provoked reform and investigations. In November 1909, George Kibbe Turner published his article, “The Daughters of the Poor: A Plain Story of the Development of New York City as a Leading Center of the White Slave Trade of the World, Under Tammany Hall” in *McClure's Magazine*. Turner's accusations and claims about white slavery's existence in New York City led Judge Thomas C. O'Sullivan of the Court of General Sessions of New York to form a special Grand Jury in January 3, 1910, to investigate if the claims made by Turner

³⁷ Kevin P. Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, & the Politics of Progressive Era Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.), 1-27, 61-63.

³⁸ See Rosen, xii, 30-33, 83; Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 305-312; Waterman, 149-151.

were true and if white slavery existed in New York City. O’Sullivan specifically ordered the Grand Jury to determine if a syndicate of white slavery existed in New York City.³⁹ Judge O’Sullivan told the Grand Jury “to keep in mind throughout your investigation . . . the uncovering not alone of isolated offences, but of an organization, if any such exists, for a traffic in the bodies of women.”⁴⁰

Judge O’Sullivan appointed John D. Rockefeller, Jr., as foreman of the special Grand Jury⁴¹. Rockefeller questioned public health experts, investigators, settlement house workers, policemen, members of immigration commissions, and people dealing in commercialized vice. The Grand Jury inquired people who investigated prostitution such as George Kibbe Turner, ex-Chief of Police Theodore Bingham, Chicago white slave crusader Clifford G. Roe, and representatives from the Committee of Fourteen, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Society for Social and Moral Prophylaxis, and other organizations that dealt with prostitution. From these inquiries, the jury had to conjecture if a syndicate in white slavery existed in New York City. But there was not enough evidence to conclude that there was a white slavery syndicate in New York City. The Grand Jury also conducted their own investigations and raids, and made a total of fifty-four indictments.⁴²

³⁹ “Man’s Commerce in Women,” *McClure’s* 41 (1913): 185; Rosen, 124-125.

⁴⁰ Presentment of Rockefeller Grand Jury, “White Slave Traffic,” 29 June 1910, Box 91, Folder “Prostitution-Printed Material,” Lillian D. Wald Papers, Columbia University, New York.

⁴¹ This Grand Jury was known by contemporaries as the “White Slave” Grand Jury because of its investigation into white slavery, while today it is known as the Rockefeller Grand Jury for John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

⁴² Rockefeller Grand Jury Presentment, 29 June 1910, Lillian Wald Papers; Donovan, 91-93.

The Grand Jury lasted around six months, and presented their findings to Judge O'Sullivan on June 9, 1910. However, Judge O'Sullivan refused to file the presentment and did not allow for the release of the report, explaining that he wanted the report censored of any illegalities or improprieties before filing the presentment.⁴³ It was not until June 29, 1910 that the jury officially filed their presentment and was made available to the public. A summary of the presentment made to the press led some members of the media to believe that there was no white slavery at all in New York City. On the same day that the presentment was released, it was reported in newspapers nationwide, that white slavery was merely a myth. For example, newspapers articles featured titles such as "White Slavery Called Myth" or "'White Slavery' is Nothing but Myth."⁴⁴ Clifford G. Roe explains that the distortion of facts was due to the rush of the press, who pushed for the presentment to be published in the evening newspapers on the same day the presentment was released. Even though some papers may have correctly informed the public, like *The New York Times*, and reverse statements were made in later newspapers, the damage was done and the public truly believed that white slavery was not a true problem in America.⁴⁵ For the most part, the public no longer believed that white slavery was the problem as portrayed in sensational journalism such as George Kibbe Turner's articles that portrayed the white slave traffic as a syndicate operation. The sensational accounts were proved false and calmed the public's fear of white slavery, especially in New York City.

⁴³ "Couldn't File their White Slave Views," *The New York Times*, June 10, 1910, p. 7.

⁴⁴ "White Slavery Called Myth," *The Boston Herald*, June 29, 1910, p. 12; "'White Slavery' is Nothing but Myth," *The Macon Daily Telegraph*, June 29, 1910, p. 8.

⁴⁵ Clifford G. Roe, *The Great War on White Slavery, or Fighting for the Protection of Our Girls* (1911), 216-218.

The Presentment of the Rockefeller Grand Jury filed on June 29, 1910, reported that there was no evidence of organizations conducting the white slave trade. However, the traffic was carried out by individuals acting on their own self-interest and informally knew others in the same business. The Grand Jury discovered that in the past, clubs and associations aided pimps and procurers. Only one of these clubs still existed, the New York Independent Benevolent Association, which had been incorporated since 1896, and provided monetary aid to members in cases of illness or death, and provided proper burial. The Independent Benevolent Association did not traffic women for immoral purposes, but some of their individual members carried out the nefarious business. Rockefeller also indicated in his report that the Grand Jury had difficulty obtaining evidence because the publicity of the actions of the Grand Jury allowed for “white slavers” to evade detection by shutting down business or traveling to other towns or cities.⁴⁶

Several recommendations were made by the Grand Jury as a result of their inquiries and investigations. Rockefeller emphasized the need to convict pimps and procurers conducting the white slave traffic. Recommendations also included that parents supervise children in theaters and the rigid enforcement of existing laws to ensure the safety of patrons, the prevention of Raines Law hotels becoming places for prostitution, that massage and manicure parlors should require licenses for conducting business, and the enforcement of laws prohibiting prostitution in tenement and apartment buildings, and if necessary, reforming the law so that it can be enforced. Most of all, the Rockefeller Grand Jury recommended the appointment of a commission by the city mayor “to make a

⁴⁶ Presentment of Rockefeller Grand Jury, 29 June 1910, Lillian Wald Papers.

careful study of the laws relating to and the methods of dealing with the social evil in the leading cities of this country and Europe with a view to devising the most effective means of minimizing the evil in this city.”⁴⁷

After his role as the foreman for the “White Slave” Grand Jury, Rockefeller established the Bureau of Social Hygiene (BSH) for the continuance of the legacy of the work of Progressive vice reformers. In a *New York Times* article, he reasoned that venereal disease was “the greatest single menace to the perpetuation of the human race.” Rockefeller also asserted:

It is my belief that less than 25 percent of the prostitutes in this country would have fallen if they had had an equally good chance to lead a pure life. That they have been dragged into the mire in such large numbers is due to a variety of circumstances, among which are poverty, low wages, improper home conditions and lack of training, the desire to gratify the natural craving for pretty things, &c.; but while all these and many others may be contributing causes, man is chiefly responsible for their fall.⁴⁸

This statement provokes that it was the responsibility of *all* men for allowing innocent women to fall into the life of prostitution, primarily blaming male sex necessity as the major cause of prostitution. Rockefeller also funded the works of the Committee of Fourteen, the New York Social Hygiene Society, and the American Social Hygiene Society. The BSH created the Bedford Hills Reformatory for Women and commissioned two studies about prostitution, George Kneeland’s *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City* (1913) and Abraham Flexner’s *Prostitution in Europe* (1914).⁴⁹ Rockefeller’s attitude toward commercialized vice after the Grand Jury is very significant when considering his reluctance to initially take on the role of foreman of the White Slave

⁴⁷ Presentment of Rockefeller Grand Jury, 29 June 1910, Lillian Wald Papers.

⁴⁸ “Grand Jury Service Guided Rockefeller,” *The New York Times*, January 28, 1913, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Donovan, 109; Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 305; Waterman, 84-87.

Grand Jury. Judge O'Sullivan, who was ironically a Tammany supporter, forced Rockefeller to take the position rebuking, "I have selected you for this task because of your standing in this community [...] You owe this service as a patriotic duty to your city."⁵⁰

The U.S. Congress and White Slavery:

Investigation into white slavery also took on the national stage as Congress formed an Immigration Commission for the purpose of investigating the behavior and lifestyles of immigrants. The Immigration Commission was formed by a Congressional act on February 20, 1907. Members of the Immigration Commission were comprised of three Senators chosen by the President of the Senate, three House of Representative chosen by the Speaker of the House, and three people selected by the United States President. The purpose of the committee of Immigration Commission was the investigation and study of the matter of immigration. The Immigration Commission made many reports, covering issues of immigrating such as emigration conditions in Europe, immigration conditions in other countries, industrial work, occupations, geographic locations, crime, education, health, state and federal legislation, definitions of race and ethnicity, banks and businesses, first and second generation immigrants, etc. The commission also investigated the white slave traffic or "the importation and harboring of women for immoral purposes."⁵¹ The Immigration Commission hired undercover investigators to inspect white slavery nationwide. The commission concluded that the evils white slavery brought to America, besides prostitution, included the waste of the

⁵⁰ "Rockefeller Heads Vice Grand Jury," *The New York Times*, January 4, 1910, p. 5.

⁵¹ U.S. Congress. Senate. *Reports of the Immigration Commission, Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission*, S. Doc. 747, Vol. 2 (1910).

wholesome life of men and women and the spread of venereal disease to innocent women and children. This report was presented to Congress on December 10, 1909 and motivated Congress and the President to amend Section 3 of the Immigration Law of 1907 on March 26, 1910. The commission made other recommendations for reducing the possibilities of international prostitution. They especially recommended that the States adopt more rigid legislation pertaining prostitution and that “the transportation of persons from any State, Territory, or District to another for the purposes of prostitution should be forbidden under heavy penalties.”⁵² Such a law was in the works in Congress during the years of 1909 to 1910.

Senator James R. Mann, a chairman of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce proposed a bill in 1909 for the prohibition of the interstate and international trafficking of women for prostitution and immoral purposes and declaring “white slave trafficking” a Federal felony⁵³. The bill was approved by the House of Representatives and Senate and named the “White Slave Act,” now known as the Mann Act for Senator Mann, and was signed by the President on June 25, 1910.⁵⁴ As a result of this act there were some convictions of white slavers. A *New York Times* article published in February 1913, cited that since the passage of the act there had been 337 convictions with only 35 acquittals.⁵⁵ However, the Mann Act was not always implemented as it was intended, as women used the law as a weapon of blackmail against men. For example, *The New York*

⁵² U.S. Congress. Senate. *Reports of the Immigration Commission, Importation and Harboring of Women for Immoral Purposes*, S. Doc. 753 (1910).

⁵³ U.S. Congress. House. *White Slave Traffic*, H. Rept. 47 (1909).

⁵⁴ U.S. Congress. Senate. *White Slave Act of June 25, 1910*, S. Doc. 702 (1910).

⁵⁵ “White Slavers Get Varying Penalties,” *The New York Times*, February 22, 1913, p. 8.

Times condemned the Mann Act for its ability to be used by blackmailers.⁵⁶ The Mann Act also federally punished men for transporting willing women.

The most famous case of the misuse of the Mann Act was the conviction of Jack Johnson, the popular black boxer who was federally prosecuted and sentenced for taking white women, such as his white girlfriend and later wife Lucille Cameron, across state lines. This conviction came after his defeat of James Jeffries in the “The Fight of the Century.”⁵⁷ In Gail Bederman’s *Manliness and Civilization*, she brilliantly connects manliness, race, and civilization. In the case of the Jeffries vs. Johnson fight, white males predicted that Jeffries would win based on his white masculinity even though he had been retired since 1905 and was not in prime shape. When Johnson defeated Jeffries, whites were outraged and incited riots against blacks. White males were especially concerned that Jack Johnson threatened superior white masculinity and wanted him brought low.⁵⁸ White men were troubled about the sexual interactions between white women and foreign immigrants and colored men, especially how it reflected upon white manhood or masculinity. In the eyes of white men, white women needed the most protection from foreign immigrant men and colored men.

⁵⁶ “The Blackmail Act,” *The New York Times*, September 20, 1916, p.8.

⁵⁷ “Jack Johnson Held in \$30,000 Bonds,” *The New York Times*, November 8, 1912, p. 3;
 “Jack Johnson Dies in Auto-Crash,” *The New York Times*, June 11, 1946, p. 1;
 “Seek Case Against Johnson,” *The New York Times*, October 27, 1912, p. 11.

⁵⁸ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1-5, 8-10, 41-42.

Chapter 2: Journalism and Cultural Productions

This is the story of one girl's life—accurate in every detail. For obvious reasons the girl's name, those of her family, and her home address have been changed to avoid recognition. All other names and addresses are exactly as they appear in the court records. Other stories just as real, just as absorbing, and just as close to this menacing phase of present-day civilization will follow at intervals. The series is based on scientific investigations by the United States Government and by private authorities.

□ Arthur Gleason, "The Story of Rosalinda"¹

Journalism and cultural productions such as novels and films played an integral role in publicizing white slavery. Journalism made issues of the lower classes visible to the upper classes and their effects on society. However, these cultural productions had both positive and negative effects on the works of reformers. The majority of white slave narratives and cultural productions were created by men, and should not be excluded when considering the male investment in white slavery. One must question why these cultural productions were produced in the first place and why the topic of white slavery and prostitution was highlighted and emphasized to the degree of sensationalism. Through the creation of cultural productions, men and some women disputed and argued their own political statements and criticized the statements and opinions of others.

Cultural productions such as journalism provided a platform for the discourse of changing sexual beliefs and morals and strayed from traditional Victorian ideologies. Newspapers, journals, books, and other publications provided a space for reformers to publish or report investigative findings and discoveries. Cultural productions also educated the middle-class about the realities of lower-class life and the necessity for reform. One of the major arguments of the time period was the argument over regulated

¹ Arthur Gleason, "The Story of Rosalinda," *Collier's* 51 (10 May 1913): 16.

vice districts. The argument for these districts in terms of prostitution was that it helped regulate the women practicing the business, such as regulating venereal disease and keeping commercialized vice in check. However, as vice commissions began their investigations during the late 1890s, they made discoveries that regulated vice districts actually fed crime and prostitution, especially white slavery.² As new social hygiene and medical discoveries were made, it became necessary to change the beliefs surrounding venereal disease. Victorian medicine held that venereal disease was curable, in a time before vaccinations and penicillin. Cultural productions and reform publications made efforts to educate the public about the serious consequences of venereal disease, such as ophthalmia neonatorum, a condition that caused blindness in children due the infection of parents.³ Discourse also included debates over sexual and moral education. Many reformers and social hygienists believed that if young men and girls were educated about the facts of life that they could avoid being led down the wrong path. Leaving young children and adolescents in ignorance left them vulnerable to take up immorality in the form of sex, alcohol, drugs, and crime. Many publications would emphasize the responsibility of the parent for educating children and chaperoning young girls.⁴ Thus, white slavery discourse was the result of both media sensationalism and the prevailing notions of reformers and social hygienists.

²Clifford G. Roe, *The Great War on White Slavery or Fighting for the Protection of Our Girls* (1911), 313-315; Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 12-13; Peters, "The Story of the Committee of Fourteen," 378-379; Miner, *Slavery of Prostitution*, 155-161.

³ Roe, *The Great War on White Slavery*, 307-309.

⁴ Ibid., 45-47, 51-52, 298-302; Addams, *A New Conscience and An Ancient Evil*, 97-137; Miner, *Slavery of Prostitution*, 250-282.

Journalism and Muckraking:

Journalism had the greatest impact on white slavery and prostitution. If anything, journalism brought attention to the problem of the international white slave traffic.

William T. Stead's four-part exposé, "The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon" was published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in July 1885. Stead revealed the procurement of young innocent girls and women for sexual slavery in London. Stead undertook the exposé because the Criminal Law Amendment Act, legislation that would repress underage prostitution and raise the age of consent, was in danger of being dropped by Parliament. Therefore, Stead, prodded by Benjamin Scott the city chamberlain and chairman of the London Committee for Suppressing the Traffic in English Girls, made investigations and wrote his exposé, which proved to Members of Parliament (MPs) that young innocent girls were unwillingly sold to procurers or procuresses and prostituted to rich men.

"The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" caused a great stir in both Britain and America. In the first installment of the exposé, Stead compares white slavery to the Greek myth of the Minotaur. The city of Athens had to make a tribute of seven young men and seven maidens to Crete for the Labyrinth of Daedalus every nine years. The fourteen tributes were sacrificed to the appetites of the Minotaur, which was unknown to the Athenians. Stead describes:

This very night in London, and every night, year in and year out, not seven maidens only, but many times seven, selected almost as much by chance as those who in Athenian market-place drew lots as to which should be flung into the Cretan labyrinth, will be offered up as the Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon.⁵

⁵ William T. Stead, "The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon I: The Report of Our Secret Commission," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, July 6, 1885, pp. 1-5, July 7, 1885, pp. 1-5, July 10, 1885, pp. 1-6.

Stead used muckraking techniques using street investigations and interviews. Stead even went as far as to purchase a virgin, “Lily”, for the sum of £5. The publication of “The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon” caused scandal throughout London, both in terms of the techniques of journalism and the lack of action in Parliament to protect innocent girls. The publication provoked Parliament to pass the Criminal Law Amendment Act on August 14, 1885. This act raised the age of consent from thirteen to sixteen and repressed sexual trafficking and prostitution of underage girls. In September 1885, the connection was made between the “Lily” of Stead’s “Maiden Tribute” and Eliza Armstrong, the daughter of Elizabeth Armstrong, who made charges against William T. Stead for abduction. Stead was charged with abduction and sent to Holloway Prison for three months. The *Pall Mall Gazette* also forced him to give up his position. Despite this, the public viewed Stead as a martyr for his work.⁶ Stead’s work reached America through the aid of the telegram and excerpts were printed in newspapers such as the *New York Sun* and the *New York Daily Graphic*. The New York newspapers did not make comparisons of London to New York City, but found entertainment in the London scandal. This may have been due to the fact that the sensationalist accounts of Stead’s exposé dovetailed with the sensational and racy dime novels of the mid-19th century, such as the ones written by George Thompson. Thompson wrote novels titled *The Countess; or Memoirs of Women of Leisure* and *The Housebreaker; or The Mysteries of Crime* under the penname of Greenhorn. Thompson disdained idealistic romance and created his

⁶ Gretchen Soderlund, *Sex Trafficking, Scandal, and the Transformation of Journalism, 1885-1917*. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2013), 24-66.

“romance of the real,” which was still full of sensationalism, eroticism, and violence.⁷

“The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon” inspired Social Puritans and women temperance activists to reshape their views of prostitution as a form of slavery, especially with the aid of Josephine Butler when she toured the Northeast and Midwest America. White slavery was an issue added to the agenda of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union by president Frances E. Willard. Social purists and anti-vice activists viewed Stead’s article as inspirational work that would spur similar reform in the United States.⁸

Sex trafficking and prostitution was not deemed as a serious social problem in America in the early 1900s, despite the work of Social Purists, preventive reformers, and vice commissions such as the SPC and Committee of Fifteen. It would take the work of sensational journalism to bring white slavery and prostitution to the attention of the American public and the national government. George Kibbe Turner, a muckraking journalist, wrote two articles covering white slavery that were featured in *McClure’s Magazine*, a popular muckraking magazine of the time period, in 1907 and 1909. The first article that Turner wrote was “The City of Chicago: A Study of the Great Immoralities” (1907). This article spurred Chicago’s white slave crusade led by legislators, attorneys, reformers, social hygienists, and activists.

In 1909, Turner wrote “The Daughters of the Poor: A Plain Story of the Development of New York City as a Leading Center of the White Slave Trade of the World, Under Tammany Hall,” which tracked the history of the “cadet” or white slave procurer and Tammany Hall’s support of the white slave traffic. He defines the three

⁷ Christopher Looby, “George Thompson’s ‘Romance of the Real’: Transgression and Taboo in American Sensation Fiction,” *American Literature* 65, no. 4 (December, 1993): 651-672.

⁸ Soderlund, 67-97.

centers of white slave traffic in the world as “the group of cities in Austrian and Russian Poland, headed by Lemberg,” Paris, and New York City. Turner goes back to ancient times tracking the origin of procurers to the Jewish *kaftan* who sold Eastern European women to the Orient through Constantinople. In the 1850s, the *kaftan* would immigrate and develop the white slave traffic in Argentina, especially in the city of Buenos Aires. Stead claims that the French *maquereau*, a term that literally means “mackerel” in French but referred to the procurers in France, developed white slavery in North America. The influx of Eastern European Jews in the 1870s and 1880s took up the practice of white slavery with the protection of Tammany Hall. Organizations were formed such as the Essex Market Court Gang (or the Max Hochstim Association) and certain members of the New York Independent Benevolent Association, which expanded white slave trafficking into New England and Pennsylvania and eventually procured Eastern European Jewish girls from tenement districts. Turner claims that New York cadets expanded the network of white slave traffic all the way to Chicago and as far San Francisco and Los Angeles. Turner explains that the growth of white slave network, especially the number of cadets, is due to the decline of gambling, which had been a source of income for poor men. Cadets and procurers aided Tammany Hall by providing them with fraudulent votes. Turner further reveals that dancing and theatres were the amusements of the working girl, places where cadets plied their trade. Italians also became cadets and exported foreign women to the United States.⁹ Throughout Turner’s article, he makes use of anti-semitism and nativism to reach his intended audience of white middle-class and upper-class

⁹ George Kibbe Turner, “The Daughters of the Poor: A Plain Story of the Development of New York City as a Leading Center of the White Slave Trade of the World, under Tammany Hall,” *McClure’s* 34 (1909): 45.

readers. The white female body is depicted as a symbol of the nation of America, and the victim of foreign immigrant men.¹⁰

Unlike William T. Stead, Turner did not write his articles with the intention to provoke governmental reform. However, “Daughters of the Poor” led to the formation of the Rockefeller Grand Jury discussed in Chapter 1, which investigated and inquired the existence of organized white slave traffic in New York City. Due to the delay in the filing of the presentment of the Grand Jury and confusion over the summary released to the press on June 29, 1910, journalists led people to believe that white slavery did not exist. Even though correction statements were made and additional newspaper articles reported the existence of white slavery, this would lead to skepticism and disbelief in the white slave traffic. The *Current Opinion* article, “Is White Slavery Nothing More than a Myth?,” reports the statements of people’s disbelief in white slavery, especially A.W. Elliott, President of the Southern Rescue Mission. Elliot claims:

We frankly say that there never was a joke of more huge proportions perpetrated upon the American public than this white slave joke. There is scarcely a simmering of truth in the various stories of so-called white slavery.¹¹

Elliot believed reforming prostitutes was a waste and instead expressed the need for preventative measures and education.¹² However, the *Current Opinion* article “Popular Gullibility as Exhibited in the New White Slavery Hysteria,” informs the readers of journalism’s efforts to “extinguish the conflagration of hysteria.” Through newspaper accounts, the article claims that the American public had become gullible to white slavery stories and tales such as hypodermic needles and the abduction of young girls. One

¹⁰ Soderlund, 115.

¹¹ “Is White Slavery Nothing More than a Myth?” *Current Opinion*, no. 55 (1913), 348.

¹² Ibid.

newspaper even made an analogy of the white slavery hysteria to “witchcraft mania.”¹³

This article proves that on a national scale, the white slave hysteria still existed until the dawn of America’s entrance into World War I.

With the publication of Turner’s article, “Daughter’s of the Poor,” magazines and newspapers began covering the topic of prostitution, especially the pioneer of journalism, *The New York Times*, which would approach the topic with an objective view.

Sensationalism played an important role in muckraking journalism and may have caused the skeptical reactions to white slavery. Gretchen Soderlund explains that sensationalism had both dual effects because it created shock that led to economic and social changes but also had the stigma of exaggerating facts for the sake of an exciting story that would sell.¹⁴ Certainly some journalists wanted to propagate their own political views through writing stories and exposés that revealed the conditions of commercialized vice and white slavery. Some journalists may not have had a political views in mind, but only wanted to report the conditions of white slavery and prostitution to the masses. However, these cultural productions were a bit exploitive in their ability to investigate and portray the lower and working classes versus the middle and upper classes.

Reform Publications:

A lot of reform publications were not available to the public and were only available to those who could pay membership fees for journals or pamphlets. However, some reformers made their publications available to the public in magazines or books. Some of the most popular reform publications of the time period were Clifford G. Roe’s

¹³ “Popular Gullibility as Exhibited in the New White Slave Hysteria,” *Current Opinion*, 56 (February 1914): 129.

¹⁴ Soderlund, 15-17.

Panders and their White Slaves (1910) and *The Great War on White Slavery* (1911). In *Panders and Their White Slaves*, Roe creates a narrative of his discovery of the white slave traffic in Chicago and the rise of the white slave crusade in Chicago and the state of Illinois. Roe reveals the nature of white slavery and the extent of the white slave network throughout America and the world.¹⁵ Roe's second book, *The Great War on White Slavery*, also published under the title, *Horrors of the White Slave Trade*, dramatized the issue of white slavery by creating narratives of actual white slaves and procurers. *The Great War on White Slavery* parallels some of the information found in *Panders and Their White Slaves*, but provides additional information about the reform and investigative work on white slavery in New York, New England and San Francisco. Roe also tracks the existence of white slavery to other cities such as Jersey City, New Jersey; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Cleveland, Ohio; St. Louis, Missouri; Des Moines, Iowa; Los Angeles, California; and Seattle, Washington.¹⁶ Roe's narratives addresses issues such as educating Christians not to judge women or girls by their pasts and giving up the double standard of morality and male sex necessity. In the book, Roe expresses the necessity to eradicate the double standard of morality by declaring:

There should be but one standard of morals, and the same rules of conduct should be applied to the man and the woman. That which is wrong for the woman should be wrong for the man, and when civilized society shall have established such a standard then we shall have gone a long way toward the solution of the social evil problems.¹⁷

¹⁵ Clifford G. Roe, *Panders and Their White Slaves* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910).

¹⁶ Roe, *The Great War on White Slavery*, 27-124; 237-280.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

Roe also stated the need for parents to give up false modesty and educate children about sex and morality.¹⁸

Jane Addams's *A New Conscience and An Ancient Evil* (1913), originally published in *McClure's Magazine* in 1912, writes about the issue of white slavery, or what she phrases as the "social evil," in Chicago. Through the legal actions of reformers, revelations were made about the nature of the white slave traffic. Addams gives many examples of how girls entered the life of prostitution through white slave procurers. She explains how procurers broke young women down to the point where they accepted that they had entered the business of their own free will and gave up all legal protection. Addams also argues that economic conditions drove women into prostitution, especially before the passage of the eight-hour wage law because the low wages and long hours drove women to the easier and more profitable work of prostitution. Certain jobs were also dangerous for young innocent women such as working in department stores, restaurants, or hotels. She explains that the independent women with no family support were the most vulnerable. Addams also advocated moral and sex education of children and the need for legal protection, such as raising the age of consent. Most importantly, Addams made a plea for the innocent women and children who suffered from the actions of the men who "sowed their wild oats" and continued to do so after marriage. Addams also makes it clear that the issue of white slavery was a women's issue and aided the

¹⁸ Roe, *Panders and Their White Slaves*, 158-175; Roe, *The Great War on White Slavery*, 42-67, 95-108, 298-304, 410-441.

suffrage movement because giving women the vote would protect women and young girls from the social evil.¹⁹

In 1913, George J. Kneeland published, *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City*, an investigation funded by the Bureau of Social Hygiene and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Kneeland investigated the conditions of vice during the year of 1912. Kneeland investigated the different “vice resorts,” such as brothels, tenement house apartments, furnished room houses, disorderly hotels, and massage parlors. Kneeland describes the conditions and practices of these different resorts and reports statistics such as prices charged and the number of resorts in Manhattan. Kneeland also investigated places that catered to vice whether directly or indirectly. Businesses that catered to vice directly were saloons, concert halls, and cabarets. And places that indirectly catered to vice were public dance halls, burlesque theaters, amusement parks, boat excursions, and other miscellaneous places. The different exploiters of prostitution are defined as proprietors, procurers, pimps, and madams. The number of prostitutes in New York is also investigated, inquiring their former occupations and the causes for entering the business. Kneeland discovers four major causes for women entering prostitution are a connection with family life, a connection with married life, personal reasons, and economic reasons. Kneeland also investigates the costs of running a house of prostitution and the police activity of enforcing the law. In the fourth edition of *Commercialized Prostitution*, Kneeland compares the conditions of vice in 1915 and 1916 to the conditions reported in 1912. The reader discovers that there was a major reduction in the number of vice resorts

¹⁹ Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1913), 17-140, 179-219.

between the years of 1912 to 1916. Kneeland attributes the improvement to the Mayor and the Police Commissioner, but also credits the work of organizations such as the Committee of Fourteen.²⁰

Maude Miner, a female probation officer who worked with prostitutes in Waverly House and Bedford Reformatory, equates all forms of prostitution to slavery and advocates prevention in her book, *Slavery of Prostitution: A Plea for Emancipation* (1916). Miner begins her narration in the Night Court, which would later be known as the Women's Court, and details cases that she encountered in her work there. The reader learns the different factors that led women into prostitution such as home conditions, economic conditions, recreation conditions, and white slavery. Miner judges the law and legislation against prostitution, especially how the law is aimed against women practicing prostitution and makes it difficult to convict the male pimp or procurer. Miner also judges the effectiveness of prisons, reformatories, farm colonies, and probation houses. She also documents the work of Waverly House and probation work. Miner makes a plea:

There is a need of an increasing number of competent women to give themselves unreservedly to it. Probation work demands women of strong personality, judgment, tact and faith, women who have abounding hope, love, spiritual insight, and a clear vision of the possibilities of the task.²¹

Miner advocates prevention such as better relationships between parents and children, government guardianship of orphans and children of dissolute parents, better recreation, laws regulating commercial recreation, censoring films, better homes for the poor, better

²⁰ George J. Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City* (New York: The Century Company, 1913).

²¹ Maude Miner, *Slavery of Prostitution: A Plea for Emancipation* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1916), 222.

working conditions, the protection of feeble-minded girls and runaway girls, and sex education.²²

Reformers liked to keep the majority of their work private, publishing findings in journals, pamphlets, and books that revolved in the circle of reformers and members of other organizations. However, some reformers published work in books and magazines in order to publicize the subject of white slavery to the masses. It is of some significance that reform publications only had the accessibility to reach the middle and upper-classes. The lower-classes did not have the means to purchase these type of publications, save for cheaper publications that appeared in magazines that were priced around 15 to 20 cents, which is still a great sum of money for the poor that needed to pay for food and other necessities. All reform publications provided rigorous social critique, and some added sensationalism in their works in order to shock readers. Reformers did not like sensational or exaggerated journalism believing that it worked against the enforcement of the law. For example, the Committee of Fourteen claimed:

If the public desires its laws enforced, it must provide a judicious publicity which will reach the respectable profit sharer and discourage sensational stories of crime and exaggerations of existing conditions.²³

The works of reformers helped provide a foundation for social work and social hygiene.

Cultural Productions:

White slavery not only provided journalists and reformers a topic of discourse, but also allowed writers and artists opportunities to create fictional creations of white slavery and prostitution. Artists such as George Fellows and John Sloan would create

²² Miner, ix-308.

²³ The Research Committee of the Committee of Fourteen, *The Social Evil in New York City*, xxxvi.

ashcan drawings and paintings with prostitutes as the central subject, making the prostitute a more approachable and human creature that was ubiquitous in cities such as New York. Short stories were featured in magazines such as *Colliers* and *The Masses*. Typically, the artwork featuring prostitutes was displayed near stories of the same topic such as evidenced in *The Masses*.²⁴ The short stories served the dual purposes of entertainment and political statements. Short stories featuring prostitution highlighted writers' political stance, especially dissident views of white slavery narratives.

John Reed, a Socialist activist and journalist, wrote several short stories for *The Masses*. In "A Taste of Justice," a cop approaches a man standing on the corner of Fifteenth and Irving Place and threatens to arrest him. The man proclaims he knows "no law that prevents a citizen from standing on the corner, so long as he doesn't hold up traffic." The man even gets a male passerby to witness his arrest. The man is taken to the Night Court where a prostitute is being sentenced for ten days on Blackwell Island for soliciting. The cop charges the man for "resisting an officer," but the Judge recognizes the man as his friend, Reed, and invites him "to sit up on the Bench for a while."²⁵ It is unknown whether this account is based on a true event because of the name given in the story. However, one can conclude that Reed wanted to point out that a middle-class man was privileged and received no punishment if committing the similar act of standing on the corner like a prostitute. In the patriarchal society of the turn-of-the-century, women were discriminated against and justice was unbalanced. John Reed also illustrated that prostitutes were capable of self-autonomy, disregarding the idea of white slavery. In

²⁴ See Frank Shay, "The Machine," *The Masses*, 4 (August, 1913): 9; John Sloan, "The Women's Night Court: Before Her Makers and Her Judge," *The Masses*, 4 (August, 1913): 10-11.

²⁵ John Reed, "A Taste of Justice," *The Masses*, 4 (April, 1913): 8.

“Where the Heart Is,” a man goes to the Haymarket, a cabaret in New York City, and catches up with a former acquaintance, Martha. Martha had traveled to Europe, saving her money to tour London for two weeks and travels with men to explore the rest of Europe and even Brazil. The man is shocked to discover that Martha actually travelled and toured the sites for the sake of learning instead of visiting sporting places.²⁶ John Reed proves that prostitutes are human women who experience human emotions and desires such as the will to dream and learn.

Additional stories of prostitution include Frank Shay’s “The Machine” and Arthur Gleason’s “The Story of Rosalinda.”²⁷ Frank Shay wrote “The Machine,” a short skit that highlighted the machine of the economic system that caused women to enter prostitution and the police and court system that punished them for trying to survive, but did not punish the pimps and cadets that profited from the entire system. The skit reveals the court proceedings of the Jefferson Market Court and the unjust sentences that the Judge gives to various prostitutes for the same crime. One prostitute in particular was picked up by a “plainesclothesman,” which could either be a plaines-clothes policeman or a man in collusion with a cadet. This prostitute prefers the workhouse to living in the city streets, and does not care if she is punished for soliciting. She tells the judge that she entered prostitution because she could not live off \$4.50 per a week and it is hinted that she made an extra ten dollars by prostituting herself to the factory foreman. A bondsman, Mr.

²⁶ John Reed, “Where the Heart Is,” *The Masses*, 4 (January, 1913): 8-9.

²⁷ For additional information on short stories and sketches on white slavery see Laura Hapke, *Girls Who Went Wrong: Prostitutes in American Fiction, 1885-1917* (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2006), 161-165.

Blanck, pays her fine, and in the next scene, the reader learns that the bondsman is also a cadet that prostitutes the woman.²⁸

Arthur Gleason recounts a story based off of investigations in his article, “The Story of Rosalinda” published in *Colliers* magazine in order to expose the horrors of the white slave traffic. Rosalinda, a young woman of New York City’s Italian community was courted and wooed by an Italian man by the name of Francesco Mariano. He asks her to marry him, but she is hesitant, so Mariano takes Rosalinda to a flat where he takes her innocence at gunpoint. Mariano marries Rosalinda and asks her to become a prostitute. After a failed attempt to place her in a house of prostitution in New York, Mariano takes her to Chicago where he sells Rosalinda to another man, Nino Sacco and is beaten until she consents to become a prostitute. Mariano traveled back to New York and his real life as Demetrio Mariano with his real wife and child. Rosalinda is imprisoned in the brothel for three months until her brothers pay \$100 for her safe return home. These short stories sought to expose the conditions of prostitution, especially highlighting the economic factors and such as capitalism that drove women into poverty and desperation.

In the work of novels, the white slave replaced the figure of the “fallen woman” that was popular in Victorian literature. Reginald Kauffman, a Socialist journalist and writer, made investigations of several cities in order to write fictional novels that would publicize the issue of white slavery and prostitution. Kauffman’s first novel, *The House of Bondage*, originally published in 1910, was reprinted a total of sixteen times and was popular nationwide. John D Rockefeller, Jr. even sent copies of the

²⁸ Shay, “The Machine.”

book to 200 leading American citizens such as J.P. Morgan and Cleveland Dodge.²⁹ The novel includes a couple of subplots, the hardships of Hermann Hofmann and Katie Flanagan and the relationship and work of Wesley Dyker and Marian Lennox, which interweave with the life of the main character Mary, who also goes by the name Violet. *The House of Bondage* is a morbid tale that tries to mimic the reality of prostitution and the economic, social, and political conditions that make women victims of men.

The House of Bondage focuses on the life of Mary Denbigh a young girl from a rural town in Pennsylvania. A young immigrant man who is traveling through the town, Max Crossman, convinces Mary that he loves her and promises her marriage. Mary runs away with Max to New York City. However, Max double-crosses Mary and sells her to Mrs. Rose Légère, a madam, after violating her. Mary is renamed Violet upon her entrance into prostitution. Violet plots her escape from the brothel, trying many different avenues including spying on Rose and her lover, Rafael Angelelli. Violet succeeds in gaining the attention of Wesley Dyker, a patron who is campaigning for magistrate and wants Rose to spy on Angelelli. Violet informs Dyker that Rose is playing him and makes him promise to help her escape. Dyker aids her escape with her promise to testify against Rose. Violet makes her way to Katie Flanagan's, the sweetheart of Hermann Hoffman, the former brewer deliveryman of the brothel who promised to aid Violet. At this point, Violet changes her name to Mary Morton. After giving her testimony for Dyker, Mary turns hysterical. Katie takes Violet to a settlement house where Marian Lennox finds her a job in service. However, Mary is fired after her employer catches her in a lie about her birthplace. After negotiating with an employment agency, Mary gets

²⁹ Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusaders: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 36.

another position in service. In this point of the story, Angelelli finds Mary and forces her to recant her testimony against Rose Légère. She is dealt another blow when her employer's son returns to the house, Philip Beekman, one of the patrons of the Rose's brothel, and demands her to leave. Mary begins streetwalking and rents an apartment. After a while she goes to a doctor and discovers that she has contracted venereal disease. Mary plots revenge against the man who led her down the wrong path, Max Crossman. After crossing him on the street one day, she pretends to have no hard feelings against him and takes him to the saloon where she buys him several drinks and gets him drunk and takes him back to her apartment where they copulate. In the morning she reveals to him as he is leaving that she gave him venereal disease, giving him the knowledge that she infected him. Soon Mary becomes too ill to make any money and becomes homeless. Soon she is taken by Billy Stevens to a seedy prostitution house near the docks where she runs into Philip Beekman again. Stevens gets jealous of Beekman's familiarity with Mary and stabs him. Mary escapes and wanders around until she travels to her home town where her mother rejects her because of the shame she will bring to the family. On her way back to New York City she tries to commit suicide, but she does not have the willpower to carry it through. Instead, Mary goes back to Rose's and pleads to take her back. Rose refuses, explaining, "I'm sorry, but I can't do that. It wouldn't be good business. You see, the life's got you Violet: you're all in."³⁰ The haunting ending of *The House of Bondage* sticks with the reader, reminding them of the real lives of prostitutes and provoking them to action. Similar to the short stories, Kauffman's novel is more socialist in nature in highlighting the different causes of prostitution despite his

³⁰ Reginald Kauffman, *The House of Bondage* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Gregg Press, 1968).

sensational feature of a white slave narrative for Mary's downfall. Economic hardships, the double standard of morals, keeping youth innocent of sexual relations, and bad family relationships all affect Mary's path in life.

In *The Girl that Goes Wrong*, Kauffman provides sketches of sixteen different scenarios of how young girls enter prostitution based on his observations and research of white slavery and prostitution. In other words, these stories are not works of fiction but are based on true events that Kauffman mediates. Each story emphasizes the young girls' lack of sexual knowledge, the economic conditions in which they lived, and society's double standard of morals between men and women. Kauffman writes one sketch where a girl escapes the fate of prostitution and a sketch where a woman was a successful prostitute. The sketches describe women's different causes for entering prostitution such as poverty, curiosity and adventure, harsh work in domestic service, bad influences, seduction by older boys and running away in shame, studying art in Paris, material and financial gain, shame, and hunger. *The Girl that Goes Wrong* emphasizes Kauffman's political stance in advocating contemporary readers to take action in aiding immigrant women and support of sexual education.³¹

Susan Lenox: Her Rise and Fall was a novel written by David Graham Phillips, a writer and novelist. The novel was not published until after Phillips death in 1917. *Susan Lenox* is an uplifting tale of Susan Lenox, a young woman who encounters multiple experiences of white slavery and prostitution and ultimately triumphs in the end. Susan Lenox, the illegitimate love child of Lorella Lenox, is raised by her Aunt and Uncle until her "love" for Sam Wright, a prominent neighborhood lad, is misunderstood for her

³¹ Reginald Kauffman, *The Girl That Goes Wrong* (New York: Macaulay, 1911.)

ruination. Believing the worst of Susan, her uncle arranges her marriage to a farmer, Jeb Ferguson. After being raped by her husband, Susan runs away. Susan's life experiences include traveling on a thespian showboat, working at a box factory, living in the dirty tenements, streetwalking, prostitution, cloak modeling, trimming hats, being exploited by a pimp, drinking alcohol, smoking, and even being sold to a madam that runs a brothel. Susan dreams of making her life on the stage, and eventually meets the famous playwright, Robert Brent. However, Brent is murdered by the jealous Freddie Palmer, who vied for Susan's hand in marriage. Brent willed his mansion and fortune to Susan, which aided her to become a famous actress.³² In the introduction, Phillips claims, "Don't look on woman as mere female, but as a human being. Remember that she has a mind and a heart as well as a body."³³ Through Phillips narration he shows the human nature of women as well as the double standards that they suffer in the contemporary society. Critics claimed that "the story is grotesquely and conventionally false to life," especially concerning Phillip's use of the assumption that women had to be sexually dependent upon men to move up in society.³⁴ Years later, the biographer of David Graham Phillips, Isaac Marcossan, claimed that "if 'Susan Lenox—Her Fall and Rise,' had first been published in its entirety a decade later there would not have been the slightest outcry against it."³⁵ In comparison to *The House of Bondage*, *Susan Lenox* was a popular mainstream novel. It did feature some elements of white slave narratives, such as when Susan was drugged by a procurer in a Raines Law Hotel and sold to a madam. *Susan*

³² David Graham Phillips, *Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise* (New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1917).

³³ Phillips, x.

³⁴ "Latest Works in Fiction," *The New York Times*, February 25, 1917, 60.

³⁵ "Finds D.G. Phillips Ahead of His Times," *The New York Times*, September 23, 1932, p. 20.

Lenox is more idealistic and reads more like a romance, except that the romance does not end well. However, Susan is able to rise from poverty and prostitution and achieve her dream of becoming a famous actress. This novel was more likely written for the sake of entertainment, even though it highlighted the issues of prostitution and poverty.

Novels and fictional short stories based on true life allowed writers to subtly voice their political opinions through the fictional and entertaining portrayals of prostitution and white slavery. Some cultural producers probably had interest in making profit over provoking societal change. While cultural producers could have had the same goals as reformers, radicals and socialists had opposing or dissenting views, such as highlighting the economic causes of prostitution or emphasizing the corruption of the justice system. Novels and other cultural productions, such as film, were also viewed as harmful, spreading immorality, instead of helping propagate the message of reformers. Cultural productions definitely aided in viewing prostitutes as mere human beings during the early 20th century. However, white slave narratives also reinforced the fears and anxieties surrounding race, gender, and sexual relations helping create the white slave hysteria.

The new technology of film also capitalized on the topic of white slavery. Several white slave films were made in the period of the early 20th century. Unlike other cultural productions, film or “moving picture shows” were able to penetrate the public masses, such as the working classes and youth, but had the downfall of portraying a false picture of white slavery. This caused backlash against the showing of white slave and vice films because of their vulgarity and immoral influence. For example, Mrs. Barclay Hazard of the New York branch of the National Florence Crittenton Association declared, “we are

extremely opposed to the airing of these subjects in drama and fiction. The only way they should be discussed is sanely and quietly by experts.”³⁶

A prominent example of a white slave film is the popular *Traffic in Souls*, a pioneering full-length film of seventy minutes. *Traffic in Souls* was produced by Universal Film Manufacturing Company, under the direction of George Loane Tucker in 1912 and released to the public in New York City in November 1913. The film passed the board of censors and hit it big at the box office, and profiting around \$450,000.³⁷ *Traffic in Souls* opens in the home of the Barton family, Mary Barton, her father and her younger sister, Lorna. Mary and Lorna are getting ready to go to work at Smyner’s Candy Store. Mary heads off before her sister and meets her fiancé, police officer Burke at a check-in station and share a kiss. Lorna lags behind and is late for work and is reprimanded for being late all week. The story then changes to the family of the “Man Higher Up,” Mr. William Trubus, his wife and daughter, Alice Trubus. Mr. Trubus heads the Citizen’s League against the “traffic in souls,” or white slavery. The scene changes to multiple cadets and madams who traffic in women and go to an office where they are financed by Mr. Trubus’s private secretary. Mr. Trubus listens to these dealings through a dictograph, a telephonic device used for eavesdropping, in his private office on the floor above. Look-outs and procurers watch for vulnerable women at the railroad station and the harbor where they pick up two Swedish sisters and a lost country girl and take them to a house of prostitution. One cadet enters the candy shop and flirts with Lorna and even buys her candy, pretending to court her. Officer Burke discovers the house of prostitution

³⁶ “The White Slave Films.” *Outlook* 106 (1914): 122.

³⁷ Janet Staiger, *Bad Women: Regulating Sexuality in Early American Cinema* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 128-129; Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights* (New York, 1926), 617.

where young women are being kept imprisoned. He heroically fights off cadets and procurers while the women fight for their escape. Burke single-handedly arrests all the suspects and takes the victims to the police station. Later, a cadet abducts Lorna, taking her to a dance hall where he drugs her drink and takes her to a brothel. Mary pleads Burke to find her sister. The next day Mary loses her job, but Mrs. Trubus who is a patron of Mary's get her the job as Mr. Trubus's secretary. When Mr. Trubus spills ink on his desk, Mary cleans it up and is left alone in the office when Mr. Trubus goes to a charity meeting. Mary hears the voice of the man who abducted her sister through the dictograph. She follows the wire of the dictograph to the room below and discovers that Mr. Trubus and his private secretary are in connivance with the white slave traffic. She meets with her fiancé at lunch and that night they plan to use her father's invention, a device that can record dictograph sounds on a phonographic record. Mary and Burke plant the device in the offices that night in order to record the conversations of Burke and his secretary and provide evidence for arrest. After gathering the evidence, Mary and Burke take the recording to the Captain. The Captain gathers his force and, in several police cars, travel to the brothel where Lorna is kept prisoner. The police surround the place and raid the brothel and make their arrests, which includes several fights and shootings. Officer Burke chases down the cadet who abducted Lorna and shoots him in the chest, resulting in his fall off the roof of the building. The madams and procurers are arrested and placed behind bars. Mr. Trubus is arrested, but is able to afford bail. However he comes home to the death of his wife and his daughter's cold shoulder

blaming him for her mother's death. Lorna is reunited with her family and accepted by her father and sister.³⁸

Traffic in Souls does not support any clear ideology within the white slavery discourse. The film may feature major elements of white slave narratives such as abduction, drugging by drink, cadets, and imprisonment in houses of prostitution, but the film strays from traditional white slave narratives and makes ridicule and satire of the current day events of white slavery. For example, Mary Barton, Lorna, and their father seem to be pretty well off financially and have amiable relationships with one another. Economic hardships play no part in Lorna's ruin. Also, the film portrays the New York Police as saviors and figures who were not corrupt. The scenario of Burke's rescue of the two Swedish immigrant sisters and country girl in the brothel shows a cadet trying to pay Burke off with a wad of cash. However, Burke merely smiles and laughs at the money that is placed in his hand and puts the money back in the man's suit pocket. The exchange smacks at the system of graft practiced by the city's police and municipality. The film also ridicules prominent businessmen and politicians by suggesting that a reformer or vice commissioner could be in connivance with the white slave traffic. Some even suggest that Mr. Trubus is meant to portray John D. Rockefeller due to the resemblance between the two.³⁹ *Traffic in Souls* compares the wise decision-making of Mary Barton and her thoughtless and reckless younger sister, who easily falls for the lies told by cadet. If there is any message about white slavery in the film, it is for young women to use their

³⁸ Jack Cohn, Walter McNamara, David Shepard, and George Loane Tucker, *Traffic in Souls* (Los Angeles: Flicker Alley, 1913).

³⁹ Staiger, *Bad Women*, 136.

brains and be smart in the city such as asking a police officer for directions and not a strange man. It privileges self-autonomy and individual agency.

Traffic in Souls came under a lot of scrutiny by the media, and even went under attack for using John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s name for promoting the film. *Outlook* published a positive review of *Traffic in Souls* that claimed:

It is too much to say that there were no objectionable features in these films. They were false in some particulars of fact, and out of proportion in the presentations of others. Yet there can be little doubt that, no matter from what motives observers came to witness their production, they could hardly leave the theater save with a heightened disgust for the horrors necessarily attendant upon the continued existence of the social evil, and a determination to help, if only by thought and word, in the fight for its extinction.⁴⁰

In the next month's issue of *Outlook*, the journal published letters that were sent in criticizing the *Outlook*'s review of the *Traffic in Souls*. Readers criticized *Outlook* for not viewing other white slave films, especially *Inside the White Slave Traffic*, a graphic documentary, that "many [men] seemed to gloat over the horrors portrayed" in the film.⁴¹ The melodrama displayed in *Traffic in Souls*, was considered acceptable and tame in comparison to other white slave films, but the genre was suppressed in 1914 and moved underground.⁴²

⁴⁰ "The White Slave Films," 121.

⁴¹ "The White Slave Films: A Review." *Outlook* 106 (1914): 347.

⁴² For more information on white slave genre films affect on film history, see Lee Grievson, "Judging Cinema," in *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth-Century America*. (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 151-191.

Conclusion

Approximately 200 cities, including every one over 100,000 population, have closed their [red light] districts. Not the trace of one (much less several) is to be found in New York or Chicago.

–Joseph Mayer (1918)¹

During America's turn-of-the-century, reformers and cultural producers were concerned about legislation around white slavery and the eradication of regulated prostitution. Preventive reformers and vice commissions sought municipal and legislative reform including the eradication of the graft system and fraudulent voting, a better justice system, and the enforcement of laws. Reformers also wanted to change the attitudes surrounding the double standards of morality. They believed that it was archaic that parents turned out their daughter for one misstep, when their sons could "sow their wild oats" and receive praise for it. New medical discoveries heralded the need for changing the public's beliefs about venereal disease. Both cultural producers and reformers stressed the serious consequences of venereal disease— it could not be cured and could spread to innocent women and children. Reformers also revealed that regulated vice districts fed crime, white slavery and venereal disease. Additionally, reformers and cultural producers promoted wholesome recreation for youth, sexual and moral education, and better family relationships.

While cultural productions focused their attentions elsewhere with the onset of World War I, especially with America's entry into the war, reformers continued their efforts in reforming laws centered around prostitution and crime prevention. White slavery was a cultural phenomenon that was created by reformers and the media in order to achieve social and political gains.

¹ Joseph Mayer, "The Passing of Red Light Districts," *Social Hygiene* 4 (1918): 197.

Male reformers and cultural producers were motivated to confront issues of commercialized vice such as white slavery and prostitution in order to bring uplift to society, giving people a more wholesome life, especially white women of the lower and working classes. They also viewed their work as part of their civic and patriotic duty to the city and the nation. Reform work was masculinized with the work of investigators, who embraced the habits and life-styles of the lower classes. Men who invested in white slavery and prostitution had a paternalist instinct and wanted to protect innocent women, children, adolescent girls and boy, in order to prevent their entrance into a life of crime, prostitution, and degradation by alcohol and drugs. Reformers and cultural producers wanted to expose the corruption of the municipal government and the lack of law enforcement. However, cultural productions sometimes subverted the work of reformers by providing false information and sensational entertainment for the sake of profit instead of propagating reform.

America's entrance into World War I, allowed the media to move away from the topic of white slavery and focus its attention on the war. However, reformers such as the Committee of Fourteen continued their work through the war and after. But the decline in prostitution and the change of its form caused its disbandment. The discovery of the serious consequences of venereal disease during the war caused prostitutes to be viewed as criminals and enemies of the nation. No longer was the prostitute afforded sympathy or characteristics of humanity. Instead, she would be pictured as the cause of decay and death in propaganda posters warning of venereal disease in the late 1930s and 1940s.

The white slave genre films made a mark on Hollywood, popularizing sex and romance in films. In 1931, a film of the same name was based loosely off of David

Graham Phillip's novel *Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise*. Directed by Robert Z. Leonard and featuring famous actors Greta Garbo as the main character of Susan Lenox and Clark Gable as Rodney Spencer, the film changed the names of characters and changed and shortened the plot of the original novel. For example, Susan's name was originally Helga, and was named "Susan Lenox" by a tattooed woman of a traveling carnival. The film successfully changed the story of the Susan's struggle through poverty, hardship, and prostitution and her rise into a famous actress into a dramatic romance between Susan Lenox and Rodney Spencer.² The end of the movie and Rodney's acceptance of Susan's love could perhaps reflect the changes in sexual relations and marriages during the 1930s.

The white slave slowly faded from American memory and is rarely remembered as the exploited woman coerced into prostitution. In today's society the term "white slavery" can be easily confused for the literal slavery of white peoples. This could be due to the change in terminology, when feminists in the anti-white slave traffic movement during the 1920s changed the term "white slavery" into the more accurate term of "trafficking."³ Reformers succeeded in eliminating red light districts, but they did not save the prostitutes who went underground and suffered worse from the closer association to crime and drugs. Despite this, reformers were able to reform laws and close the red light districts. In addition to cultural and economic changes, less women had to turn to prostitution out of desperation. Premarital sex became the norm among couples along with more companionable marriages. Steadily, men no longer accepted the double

² Mourdant Hall, "The Screen," *The New York Times*, October 17, 1931, 31.

³ Jessica Pliley, "Vice Queens and White Slaves: The FBI's Crackdown on Elite Brothel Madams in 1930s New York City," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 25 no. 1 (January 2016): 143.

standard of morals and it became unpopular for married men to visit prostitutes.⁴

Eventually, white slavery was written off as a myth. The public no longer believed in the “traffic” or the abduction of young women by procurers. Ruth Rosen points out in *Lost Sisterhood* that the public denied the idea that men could sell women’s bodies for profit because it was counterintuitive of “gentlemanly” behavior. Therefore, women were held accountable for their own victimization.⁵

Call houses still existed in the 1930s and 1940s. J. Edgar Hoover led the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) in investigations and raids against call houses and brothel madams, who were known as “vice queens.” Hoover targeted elite brothel madams in order to propagate his “War on Crime.” During the 1930s, prostitution was connected to organized crime that the FBI was cracking down on. There was also concern that the Great Depression would lead homeless and desperate women into the practice of prostitution. Hoover dug up old white slavery arguments in the publicity surrounding his investigations of call houses, demonizing madams as deviant procurers who promised wealth to innocent girls and treated their sex workers poorly in order to make wealth for themselves. According to Jessica Pliley, Hoover “sought to protect the hearts of innocent, naïve, white girls from the machinations of madams consumed with greed, ambition, and perversity.” Additionally, Hoover believed that madams endangered innocent and vulnerable white women and violated the Mann Act by trafficking sex workers across interstate lines.⁶ His motivation for prosecuting brothel madams was similar to the motivations of earlier antvice activists and reformers. However, many of the prostitutes

⁴ Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 311-312.

⁵ Rosen, *Lost Sisterhood*, 114.

⁶ Pliley, “Vice Queens and White Slaves,” 137-138.

who worked in the elite call houses worked as prostitutes of their own free will and were not coerced into the profession like the white slaves of the earlier 20th century. Hoover's investigation of the call houses only lasted from the years of 1936 to 1937, but provided the base needed for further investigations into organized crime.⁷

Most recently, human trafficking has appeared in scholarship of international law and sociology. Human trafficking has been equated as "modern day slavery." Some scholars have compared the current day practice of human trafficking with the historical white slavery of the early 20th century. Human trafficking has become a broader problem than the issue of trafficking women and young children for the purpose of prostitution, including the international smuggling for labor or illegal crossings of international borders. The definition of international law pertaining to human trafficking is vague and problematic for enforcement and the protection of vulnerable populations.⁸ Similarly prostitution, or sex work, is also compared to slavery while others claim that it is an occupation that can provide women with liberation and easy wealth. The debate of regulated prostitution continues to the current day.⁹ It is important to consider the language that is used when discussing human trafficking and prostitution. Referring to human trafficking as the "modern day slavery" should be questioned. Such language may be harmful for certain people. The word "slavery" is loaded and denotes that a person is being exploited and has no self-autonomy. The term should especially be avoided if it is only used for the purpose to incite shock and moral indignation with the public. The

⁷ Pliley, "Vice Queens and White Slaves," 137-167.

⁸ Rachel Salazar Parreñas, Maria Cecilia Hwang and Heather Ruth Lee, "What is Human Trafficking? A Review Essay," *Signs* 37 no. 4 (Summer 2012): 1015-1029.

⁹ Gilfoyle, "Introduction," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18 no. 3 (September 2009): 359-366.

conditions and forms of trafficking have evolved over time in a transnational world. The arguments found in white slavery discourse are somewhat replicated in the present day, but are further complicated by the visibility of the media and the fame that comes with it. In the current day, it is important to question why people invest their time and money in issues of human trafficking and the messages that they propagate. Today, paternalism is questioned and criticized by feminists such as Laura Agustín who attacks paternalistic journalists and authors who seek male “saintliness” such as Nicholas Kristoff and Siddharth Kara. Agustín describes Kristoff:

He is too pleased with himself and demonstrates no capacity for self-reflection. He is too earnest. He claims to be in the vanguard of journalism because he tweets. He is said to be Doing Something about human suffering while the rest of us don't care; he is smarmy. He doesn't write particularly well. But most important, he is an apologist for a soft form of imperialism.¹⁰

¹⁰ Laura Agustín, “Sex Trafficking,” *Counterpunch*, February 27, 2012, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/02/27/sex-trafficking/>; Laura Agustín, “The Soft Side of Imperialism,” *Counterpunch*, January 25, 2012, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/01/25/the-soft-side-of-imperialism/>.

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