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# **Play in America from Pilgrims and Patriots to Kid Jocks and Joystick Jockeys**

## Or How Play Mirrors Social Change



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Drawing on a range of sources in the history of play, this article discusses how play for all ages mirrors social change, especially but not exclusively in America. The article explores three broad themes from colonial times to the present: first, how play was shaped by changes in work and time at work; second, how play activities were transformed by emerging technologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and by commercialization; and third and finally, how play and its meanings changed along with childhood and the family.

**C**OMMON IN MANY MAMMALS and birds, play may be universal in humans. Across cultures and times, what people called playful took on similar patterns and served similar needs. Most often associated with children, play offered them ways to imitate future adult roles and to cope with their powerlessness. But play was not absent from adult life, though it may have been renamed recreation, leisure, or even entertainment and art.

Play is also historical, built on past traditions, and transformed by changes that may seem only tangentially related to anything playful. I will not attempt to offer an encyclopedic treatment of that history, nor present a chronology of its development, nor even strive to cover the topic in its particular American setting. Instead I will trace the major themes of that transformation and offer examples of some of the ways in which play, its meaning, and its setting have changed since the arrival of the first white settlers in North America. I will show how play mirrors social change by exploring how it was shaped by work time, how play activities were transformed by technology and by commerce, and finally how play and its meanings changed along with the transformation of childhood and the family.

## Work and Time

Obviously and inevitably, play is shaped by work, but such shaping is much more complex and interesting than that statement might indicate. Work time and schedules invariably determine not only the duration and opportunity to play but also its character. And the type of work that people have done has had its impact on the kind of playful release they have sought. Conventionally, the history of the modern western world has been divided into three phases: preindustrial (ca. 1500–1800), industrializing (roughly the nineteenth century), and mass consumption or sometimes postindustrial (twentieth century). With interesting exceptions, American history shares in this three-stage development. Like most agricultural-based societies where goods were made chiefly with simple tools, in preindustrial America play was limited by the routine and time-consuming demands of tending animals, plowing fields, and spinning flax into linen yarn. This was a world of sunup to sundown toil, where muscles not machines did most of the work. Work was as much the lot of children, certainly any child over four years old, as it was of adults. Most families worked as an economic unit, though men, women, and children did different jobs. But this did not mean no one played. Rather, they did so in ways different from the ways we play today. Most preindustrial leisure took place during seasonal respites from work after the harvests were in and the pigs slaughtered (coinciding with the Christmas holiday, for example). In fact, most traditional festivals of the Christian calendar in Europe corresponded with seasonal lulls in farm work. Another characteristic of such play was its collective, often cross-generational nature. Poverty certainly called for group pleasures—no one had a room of his or her own, and most work took place in groups. Yet even for the rich there was no privacy, and thus dining, drinking, sports, games, and other leisure activities took place in large gatherings.<sup>1</sup>

American colonists did not transport the full European festival calendar with them across the Atlantic. They abandoned, for example, Carnival and Shrove Tuesday. In New England, Puritan leaders eschewed the celebration of Christmas, which they considered pagan and unbiblical. Workers in some skilled urban trades in England and France took informal time off on Mondays, which they often dubbed St. Monday, but such leave remained rare in America. Partly, Americans abandoned the old traditions of communal play in the colonies because of Puritan opposition, partly because, when they settled on isolated farms, they failed to reestablish the kind of European farming and village life

around which festival leisure was organized.<sup>2</sup> Still, communitarian festivities did not die in the migration; they were often simply expressed in different ways than in Europe. We see them in group hunting expeditions, in plantation house parties, in work frolics, in parades, and in celebrations around election days. Older collective traditions also survived. Cock fighting, horse racing, and rowdy holiday traditions formed around Christmas partying, especially outside Puritan-dominated areas. Sometimes, playful festivities occurred on the edges of crowds gathered for religious revivals, often with the organizer's disapproval. Not only were frontiersmen like Abraham Lincoln skilled wrestlers in their youth, but chaotic games like greased pig contests were common to American fairs and other festive occasions in the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

With labor that was mostly mind numbing, physically exhausting, and even humiliating, all under the strict supervision of slave masters and work bosses, play occasionally took on a Saturnalian character. Used in reference to the ancient Roman custom of a week of drinking in early December, Saturnalia was firstly a "binge," common in many poor societies. Economic and other practical matters encouraged the use of intoxicants. Beer, wine, and spirits were ageless means of conserving fruit and grain in a world without refrigeration and modern food preservation. American corn and wheat was, of course, cheaply converted into whiskey. Alcoholic beverages were often safer to drink than ordinary water and milk, and they were integral to the workday in most trades and on many farms. Beer, fermented cider, or wine at work was long viewed as nourishment. It "strengthened" the laborer and got him through a 10- or a 12-hour day, and the employer sometimes supplied it.<sup>4</sup>

Another central feature of these festive times was wagering. While the Virginia Company sought to outlaw gambling by Jamestown's settlers in 1607 in order to impose work discipline, the company nevertheless sponsored a lottery in England in 1612 to raise funds for the financially unstable colony. The adventurers who colonized Virginia scarcely saw any difference between the dangers of settlement and betting a tobacco harvest on a horse race. Both may have been long shots but both promised the potential for big payoffs. Settlers also commonly gambled on blood sports such as cock fighting, which paired roosters in duels to the death and was an obvious outgrowth of a rural agricultural society. As historian John Findlay has shown, gambling was at the heart of colonization and the western migration in America.<sup>5</sup>

Saturnalian play often expressed social tensions, especially protests against the rich and powerful. In holiday mumming, a British legacy to colonial cities

like New York and Philadelphia, groups of costumed youths went door to door demanding food and drink. Saturnalian outbursts could be violent, but the rich and powerful often tolerated them because holiday disorders were confined in time and place and authorities felt that these festivals released otherwise dangerous tensions. Even slaves were sometimes given the week between Christmas and New Year's for partying. The ex-slave, Frederick Douglass, reported disapprovingly that "it was deemed a disgrace not to get drunk at Christmas . . . .These holidays serve as . . . safety-valves, to carry off the rebellious spirit of enslaved humanity . . . .The slaveholders like to have their slaves spend those days in such a manner [of drunkenness] as to make them as glad of their ending as of their beginning."<sup>6</sup>

Hunting served as another form of play. In Europe, hunting remained mostly the reserve of the rich, who had private access to the forests owned by the aristocracy. The colonies boasted undeveloped and even public land that housed large bands of pigeons and other game birds as well as herds of deer and many bear, which made the hunt a democratic and often a group activity. Although group hunting provided Americans with a practical source of food, they engaged in it for sport and pleasure as well. In a circle hunt, men drove thousands of animals into a glen and there slaughtered them. A seasonal respite from farming, the hunt offered excitement and competition for men who led dull lives.<sup>7</sup>

For all that, when early Americans did engage in Saturnalian play, they had to fit it into lulls in the daily grind. While workdays were usually long in colonial America, settlers interrupted the toil and routine with play breaks—a few minutes several times a day taken to gamble, gossip, even drink. For working men, sports and contests were not only often welcome but probably necessary breaks in a long day. In Benjamin Franklin's description of journeymen at a London printing shop, the typical worker "drank every day a pint [of beer] before breakfast, a pint at breakfast with his bread and cheese, a pint between breakfast and dinner, a pint at dinner, a pint in the afternoon about six o'clock, and another when he had done his day's work," and did so often while playing games and gambling. Franklin thought he was merely describing an ancient tradition that thankfully Americans were abandoning.<sup>8</sup> But he was wrong—eighteenth-century Americans did indeed break from work to watch fistfights, drink hard liquor, and gamble. The modern division between work and play had hardly developed, and this was even true of Puritan merchants in New England. Their business of trading sugar, slaves, and naval stores was strung out over

months of waiting between the coming and going of cargoes. True enough, this left hundreds of hours free for religious activities, but it also provided time for conversation and for personal pleasures. As these presumably hard-working Yankees waited for their “ships to come in,” some, for example, played card and board games, which helps account for the New England origins of game companies like the Parker Brothers.

For women—who had few seasonal breaks, like those enjoyed by men, from their daily tasks of child rearing, food preparation, and spinning—socializing and entertainment often took place during special group work projects. The sewing bee was an obvious example, but “frolics” for candle dipping and other essential projects also involved a feast, some wine, and much dancing to the music of amateur fiddlers. Even so serious an event as childbirth often included partying by female friends of the mother on the birthing stool. This mixing of work and play, so strange to us moderns who segment activities to an extreme degree, is key to our understanding of preindustrial leisure and the societies in which it existed.<sup>9</sup>

The rich and powerful of colonial America, of course, were less circumscribed by work and found special times and places for their playful activities. In many ways, the play of the elite in the preindustrial colonies was similar to that of the everyday colonist. Especially in the South, the wealthy drank, gambled, and hunted. But they also began to introduce new, more “refined,” genteel, and individualistic forms of play. Many of these began or developed in Northern Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries during the so-called Renaissance.<sup>10</sup>

These cultivated nonmilitary skills included formal dancing and music playing as well as pursuit of fashion in clothing, home decoration, and gardening. By the end of the seventeenth century, royal capitals were becoming centers of pleasure as well as power with the emergence of the secular theater, the concert hall, and even the tennis court. Urban aristocrats greatly refined the private dwelling, dividing space into areas for receiving guests and private chambers for residents. They also created specialized rooms and outdoor gardens for dining and entertaining separate from the public and its unruly crowds. In the larger towns, new venues for socializing appeared that promised more “refined” and genteel behaviors. Some coffeehouses, for example, became centers of lively conversation, while others featured gambling or newspaper reading. Pleasure gardens—expanses of green space featuring manicured gardens, fountains, alcoves, and walkways that charged an admission to keep out the poor—grew

prominent in eighteenth-century London and were soon imitated elsewhere. The urban nobility also introduced innovations like mechanical amusement rides and fireworks spectacles, launching new ideas about pleasure that would culminate in modern theme parks. Other new sites attracted an elite clientele. Inland springs like Bath offered a daily routine of morning bathing in and the drinking of waters, combined with rounds of socializing.<sup>11</sup>

In the American colonies, Newport, Rhode Island, served the same purpose, attracting wealthy visitors from as far away as the Carolinas. The resort's pristine isolation provided the rich its warm Gulf Stream waters and its cooling breezes in the summer. Verandas and piazzas for strolling or sitting in rocking chairs allowed plenty of opportunity to see and be seen. These resorts set the stage for the modern seaside resort in the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Although the pastimes of the urban aristocrats were European inventions, rich American colonists emulated them in their fashionable promenades around Hanover Square in New York. Members of the Southern colonial gentry, like George Washington, cultivated an exclusive culture of Sunday afternoon rounds of visits with occasional treks to Annapolis, Williamsburg, or Charleston for balls, plays, concerts, and lawn bowling. Elites, both north and south, attended dancing schools and imported wines, liquors, and expensive foods for their parties, adopting the individualistic and rationalist ethic of the Renaissance and even more the Enlightenment. By the eighteenth century, the violence, irregularity, and social chaos so evident in traditional play had begun to offend this new gentry and merchant class.<sup>13</sup>

An extreme and early form of such change could be found among the English and American Puritans. They sought not only to isolate themselves from Saturnalian play, but to reorganize daily life by creating the modern work ethic that also transformed play. As historian Bruce Daniels shows, while Puritans in England and the Northern American colonies had a well-deserved reputation for attempting to eliminate gambling, theater, and drunkenness, they embraced "improving" leisure, play that "joineth pleasure and profit together," as the English Puritan Richard Baxter put it. Moderate exercise, especially if it involved individual activities like walking, riding, or even shooting, was acceptable. Puritan passion for hymns and Bible reading translated later into new forms of leisure such as choral singing and the reading of modern literature. Few of us embrace the Puritan label, so much do we associate these Godly people with obsessive self-control and work. But their efforts to "redeem God's time" in commitment to steady labor had subtle effects. They undercut traditional

habits of mixing work and play and the old festival calendar. This led not only to opposition to a boisterous Christmas, but also to the Sunday family outing as a replacement for rough collective games. The Puritans helped to create a new locus of leisure by replacing the community or parish with the family for a more restrained, but also emotionally intimate social life. For them, the Sabbath became a day of weekly rest that guaranteed a new kind of balance between work and relaxation. This regular pattern—one day in seven—coincided with a new industrial and commercial rhythm of work. Unlike the rural cycle of seasonal labor and rest (or binging), the newer industrial pace was more steady and unwavering. Thus there emerged the notion of “recreation” as a restoration of the mind and body from and for work. The same methodical and individualistic attitude that Puritans adopted toward work was applied to recreation. These attitudes shaped the nineteenth-century movement for “rational” or purposive recreation, and they obviously are at the root of much of modern thinking about physical fitness and familial recreation.<sup>14</sup>

After the 1790s in the United States, industrialization began to change everything by mechanizing and disciplining labor in factories and offices and creating much more intense work time. But it also led to more wealth and eventually to more time free from work, both of which transformed the meaning of and opportunities for play. Especially key for notions of play, industrialization separated work time (for income) from “free” private time (eventually, in part, used for leisure). This separation occurred when jobs were removed from the family farm and cottage and centralized in the impersonal workshop and office. Among much else, this change, in turn, made possible the creation of a family-oriented leisure culture. Industrialization also broke up traditional seasonal “play times” insofar as work became more a day-in, day-out routine with no breaks because of the agricultural calendar. Bosses also clamped down on much on-the-job play. Moreover, the elite withdrew financial and moral support from festivals and attempted to create new, more regular and improving leisure patterns and to persuade a sometimes reluctant population to participate. American elites tried to weaken the Saturnalian communal forms of play by creating domesticated play (often child-centered—see the final section below) and by trying to control the play time of the “traditionalist” working and rural populations, especially men. In these ways, the history of leisure, especially in the nineteenth century, has been often about class identity and conflict.<sup>15</sup>

Scholars have persistently questioned just when and where mechanization actually changed work and leisure. It seems first to have affected textiles, then

mining, then metalworking, then—after 1830—the railroad. Still many artisans like tailors, woodworkers, shoemakers, and many other traditional craftsmen experienced little mechanization before 1850. Especially in skilled trades, workers were able to retain old leisure traditions (like workplace play and drinking breaks). And despite the efforts of owners and managers to increase supervision, employees found (and still find) ways of “goofing off” on the job.

Nevertheless, moving work indoors under the control of the machine (or the direct supervision of the employer) had a revolutionary impact on play. In a real sense, industrialization was about defeating a propensity of workers to play. Despite the cultivation of a work ethic among Puritans and other religious Americans, working-class Americans appeared more than willing to forgo additional income for a chance to take time off to hunt, to fish, or otherwise to “play.” In fact, economists in the eighteenth century believed that only by reducing the pay of rural workers, who spun yarn or wove cloth in their own cottages, would these “employees” put in a “full week’s work” and forgo play. An obviously more effective means of quickening the pace and lengthening the hours of the workday was to mechanize the job and centralize the management of work that came with the new textile mills. Removing the worker’s choice about whether to be at work or not proved one of the main advantages of the factory. Only those who accepted the employer’s hours got work, and only those submitting to the employer’s efforts to mechanize tasks and remove play from the workroom kept their jobs. To make the most of new machines and meet the competition, those hours increased to twelve or even fourteen hours in the early nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

What impact did this increase in work have on leisure? First, it led to more drinking. William Rorabaugh stresses how “solo-drinking” in America increased in this period of mass mobility and social breakdown. But historians of bars and other watering holes note also that industrial-age taverns served as social and cultural institutions for the working man, if seldom for women. Owners often replaced clergy and gentry in patronizing traditional sports—in cock fighting or in boxing, for example—or serving as the impresarios of musical entertainment. At the least, bars became homes away from home, escapes from domestic woes. Moreover, industrialization increased the social distance between the rich and poor in cities, which contributed to greater social disorder. Between 1834 and 1844, street toughs fought more than two hundred gang wars in New York City. Rivalries between Protestants and Catholics in Philadelphia produced armed conflicts in 1844. Throughout the 1840s and

1850s, St. Louis was continually disrupted by fistfights between rival voluntary fire companies.<sup>17</sup>

Civic leaders responded to these perceived threats by trying to control public leisure activities and especially by restricting or banning drinking and gambling. Certainly by the 1830s, American movements to restrict or even abolish the sale of intoxicants had grown significantly. Despite the fact that Sunday was the only day in the week available to working Americans for amusement, powerful religious elites attempted to prohibit access to public leisure (theater, travel, spectator sports) on the Sabbath so as to promote religious study and to honor God. As the western edge of the United States became “civilized,” settled, “respectable” business and religious coalitions drove out the gamblers.<sup>18</sup>

Others promoted new leisure customs that would compensate for the withdrawal of the industrial and propertied elite from popular culture. By the 1830s, reformers (many from Puritan backgrounds) began to recognize that unstinted labor had deprived industrial peoples of time to spend on religion, family, or self-development, which reinforced a trend toward private leisure. Temperance and other reformers advocated family picnics instead of the boisterous celebrations of July Fourth. As an alternative to the theater and tavern, merchants and bankers subsidized new institutions like the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in hopes of creating, for new-to-the-city, single, lonely, office workers, a substitute home where they could read and enjoy tranquil pleasures. Appearing first in Boston and New York in 1851, these facilities reached mostly middle-class transients. Only a generation later would the YMCA transform into a center of physical fitness.<sup>19</sup>

City parks and public libraries offered other alternatives to traditional crowd leisure activities. As early as the 1830s, British philanthropists built public parks in cities to provide a wholesome site for family fun. The Americans followed in the 1850s, notably with Frederick Law Olmsted’s Central Park, a project that generated much debate between those, like Olmsted, who wanted a morally uplifting setting and those advocating practical playgrounds for children and families. Many American cities built extensive complexes of parks and art and natural history museums in the 1890s. These facilities were supposed to reach out to a broad public, but the elite values they embodied and the didactic tone of their programs drew small crowds. In the late 1890s, hundreds of Neo-Roman structures were erected to house Andrew Carnegie’s libraries.<sup>20</sup>

Another setting of rational recreation was the Victorian “world’s fair.” London’s international exhibition of 1851 set the precedent for many world’s

fairs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe and especially in the United States. American cities showed off their growth and their wealth, but they also tried to instill civic virtue and culture via a long series of exhibitions beginning in Philadelphia in 1876, followed by Chicago in 1893, Nashville in 1897, Omaha in 1898, Buffalo in 1901, St. Louis in 1904, Chicago in 1933, and New York in 1939. But at these venues, the more exuberant plebeian amusements attracted the biggest crowds. Chicago's midway, for example, featured the exotic belly dancing of "Little Egypt" and the thrill of the new Ferris wheel. This blending of the respectable and the improving with the anarchic, the sensuous, and the emotional marked an increasingly commercialized leisure culture in the United States. That blend was evident in everything from music halls and theaters to picnic grounds and amusement parks.<sup>21</sup>

After the 1840s, a still more important phenomenon of industrialization grew increasingly significant—annual work time began slowly and episodically to decline, dropping from between about 3,000 and 3,600 working hours per worker per year to between about 1,600 and 2,000 today in Europe and the United States. Simultaneously, though again slowly, the work life of the average individual also decreased sharply at both ends. An individual's entry into the full-time workforce was eventually delayed until adulthood or beyond, and retirement before his or her death became common. This led to the curious and very recent notion of retirement (or at least part of it) as a "permanent vacation" and to the rise of childhood play. While industrialization drove play from labor and eliminated the seasonal ebbs in the flow of work so characteristic of artisan and agricultural life, it also made possible new forms of leisure time, including the modern notions of free evenings, the weekend, and paid summer vacations.<sup>22</sup>

This change didn't come without considerable struggle. During the nineteenth century, certainly the industrious middle and working classes found it hard morally to justify taking a week or more off from work. Vacations had their roots in the late seventeenth century in the aristocratic pursuit of social and health advantages at wells and mineral springs. They became annual pilgrimages for the elderly with means and the sickly rich, who drank or bathed in healing waters. Seaside resorts grew popular in the early nineteenth century in England and the United States, but they were still restricted to the wealthy and served as sites for quiet strolls, for breathing health-giving air, or for drinking salt water—not for sunbathing or for swimming. While vacations—like the courts and the schools—were part of the texture of normal life for the rich, few wage earners—who never had enough surplus to forgo work for more than a

few days—could afford them. “Vacations” came without pay for workers and came usually during seasonal downturns of business or machine renewal, as was the custom of the wakes week in English (but not in American) textile mill towns in the 1800s.<sup>23</sup>

The reduction of working hours has also been episodic and usually bitterly resisted by employers and governments. Efforts to shorten the workday to ten hours spanned the years from the 1840s until about 1900. Movements for an eight-hour day broadly stretched from the mid-1880s until 1919. Beginning in 1890, a generation of May Day and Labor Day marchers in Europe and the United States chanted slogans calling for the “three-eights,” the equal distribution of the day between work, rest, and leisure.<sup>24</sup>

Most historians have seen these short-hour movements as essentially wage driven, designed to make labor scarce by reducing the hours per day that it is available. But reduced work time served also to overcome losses of play time at work as industrialization expelled it from the workplace. Reduced work time also allowed for the recovery of some free time at home, which was now separate from work. Workers were ambivalent about these trade-offs associated with the reduced workday, but in the long run, they wanted time for social relationships off the job with family more than they wanted time for them on the job with work mates. Increasingly they found long evenings more attractive than long work breaks during a long workday. More and more it seemed that to deny workers the eight-hour day was to deprive them of citizenship, even “manhood.” But the eight-hour day did not become virtually universal until the upsurge in the political power of labor that accompanied the closing years of World War I and its unsettled aftermath. Then, in the 1930s during the Depression, the five-day week became common, especially after federal legislation in 1938 set the forty-hour week as the standard in the United States.<sup>25</sup>

Back then, many theorists believed that a progressive reduction of work time was the inevitable byproduct of mechanization and increased efficiency. Even John M. Keynes, noted father of modern mass-consumption economics, argued in 1931 that, within two generations, industry would satisfy the real needs of humanity and lead to “three-hour shifts or a fifteen-hour week.” This reduction in work time, said Keynes, would allow us to “devote our further energies to non-economic purposes.” Thus “man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem—how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure, which science and compound interest will have won for him, to live wisely and agreeably, and well.” Keynes expected that the new

leaders would not be “money makers” but “those peoples, who can keep alive, and cultivate into fuller perfection, the art of life itself . . .”<sup>26</sup>

Of course, this didn’t happen. Instead of using increased productivity to free humanity from labor for “wise” and “agreeabl[e]” play, we used it to increase our consumption. Since 1946, as the real incomes of Americans more than doubled, work times have remained stagnant or even increased. Vacations became routine for only about half of American wage earners (up from 5 percent in 1920), and today Americans get an average of just thirteen days vacation per year as compared to thirty-five in Germany and forty-two in Italy.<sup>27</sup>

There are a lot of reasons for this difference. These include relatively weak trade unions and a lack of a tradition of universal social benefits in the United States, making holidays—like health benefits—the choice of employers rather than a right of citizenship. Refusing to abandon entirely the old work ethic, with its disdain for time empty of purpose, more generally Americans have been reluctant to argue for the right and utility of a time completely devoted to recreation and play. In a poll conducted by Expedia in 2004, 30 percent of Americans do not take all of their allotted vacation time, leaving some 415 million annual vacation days unused. When it comes to attitudes toward work and play time, Americans seem to favor using economic abundance to fuel consumption rather than to create free time. The increased cost of maintaining the American standard of consumer spending since the 1970s has reduced the amount of play time available, especially to young couples with children. The old ideal of “family time,” of certain hours and days when all can share meals and activities together, has been frustrated by the spread of shift work and of Sunday and evening shopping, which requires the service of millions of sales workers. As important, the introduction of massive numbers of married women into the workforce—which has reached 60 percent or more in the United States and most European countries—has created double shifts of work for millions of women at home and on the job.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the occasional effort by unions and reformers to create alternatives to the commercialized leisure offered to work-harried wage earners, they had very little impact. In that vacuum, consumption emerged as a new “use” of time freed from work. And with consumption came more hours of work to earn the wherewithall to shop. The seeds of this new culture appeared in the 1930s when the New Deal opted to increase output rather than reduce work (and spread it out) via the thirty-hour week promoted by many in the labor movement. More work and ever greater purchasing power, not a freezing of work time at thirty

hours, was the only way out of the Depression according to prevailing Congressional and executive opinion. It has become orthodox ever since. No one with any hope of electoral or even intellectual success can dare argue that we should sacrifice growth to more play time. How to create “full-time” jobs and to encourage consumer spending have remained the twin and closely related goals of presidents and economists. Expectation that work time would decrease as productivity increased has vanished. Play remains suspect, especially for adults.<sup>29</sup>

### **Technology and Commercialization**

Work shaped play, but there were other ways that historical change affected American leisure. Technology and the related rise of a consumer capitalist economy equally transformed play. As we have just seen, the growing appeal of consumerism in the twentieth century reinforced what once seemed a limited commitment to work. But to get at the more subtle effects of technology and consumerism on play, we need briefly to recall a few points about preindustrial play. In colonial America, the play of ordinary people was local, seasonal, close to nature (and thus often crude, even violent), usually collective, and relatively unchanging. At the same time, a minority of elites on plantations and in the cities aspired to a more exclusive, even refined and individualistic leisure style, set by international fashion. Industrialization, however, made the play of ordinary people more homogeneous but also more individual and ultimately more passive and perhaps even more “civilized.” It also challenged the division between plebian and genteel play by democratizing access to formerly elite pleasures and, in the twentieth century, undermined the very ideal of gentility.

With industrialization, transportation technology made play less local. The railroad, beginning about 1830, and the electric streetcar, from the late 1880s, had the most dramatic impact on commercial leisure in the nineteenth century. Railroads made distant travel accessible to the middle class and, with the gradual reduction in prices, to time-starved workers, allowing an escape from the neighborhood and town. By the end of the century, for example, railroads and trolleys led to the decline of smaller local fairs and the development of larger, more commercialized amusements like picnic parks and amusement parks. The broader impact of this transportation revolution was to create cross-national and even cross-Atlantic exchanges of celebrities and entertainment technologies (e.g. amusement-park rides). This made possible the creation of large circuses

(transported by train by the time of the Civil War) as well as national chains of vaudeville troupes. Like other businesses, entertainment adopted modern capitalist business practices based on the mass market and competition that led to commercialized leisure centralized in the hands of relatively few triumphant corporations of national and even international influence. For example, impresarios like the Americans P. T. Barnum and Tony Pastor created wide audiences by appealing beyond the narrow and traditional tastes of local populations to a variety of social classes, ethnic groups, and ages.<sup>30</sup>

The circus of traveling menageries consisting of a few caged wagons of animals and acrobats that appeared at local fairs became extravaganzas as Barnum and others created circus trains after the Civil War. The variety (or vaudeville) show had its roots in the informal and often disreputable singing saloons where drink mixed with group singing and rough male fellowship. In the 1860s, New Yorker Tony Pastor enticed a family audience to his “Opera House” with a program of well-publicized music, comedy, and animal and acrobatic acts. Soon, troupes of vaudeville acts toured the country by train under the tutelage of centralized booking offices.

As early as the 1840s, dime museums were centralized in cities like New York, drawing audiences by train and horse tram from the increasingly sprawling city and its suburbs. Similar programs traveled by train to smaller towns. Dime museums appealed to middle-class audiences by offering historical and geographical education such as with dioramas, oversized paintings with scenic accessories depicting well-known dramatic events. They also offered a variety of curiosities, including those they called “freaks.” P. T. Barnum’s American Museum displayed “What Is It?,” a black American said to have been captured on the River Gambia and brought to America as the “missing link” between monkey and man. Other hits were the midget “General Tom Thumb” and a variety of bearded ladies, “giants,” and Siamese or conjoined twins. The appeal of the freak show was complex and by no means confined to the uneducated or the poor, at least until the twentieth century, when gawking at people who often had hormone imbalances became disreputable to the middle class.<sup>31</sup>

New technology of the 1880s and 1890s accelerated the impact of novelty across an increasingly more homogeneous popular culture. Mechanical games and gramophones, offered in penny arcades, hotel lobbies, and amusement parks, provided the “latest thing” rather than a traditional or seasonal form of play. These pleasures were enjoyed across the country on small town main streets as well as in Times Square.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, technology democratized former elite pleasures. A good example was the aforementioned seaside and inland resorts. Early in the nineteenth century, these sites attracted rich women and their children from both the North and the South, who sought to escape city and plantation life during the sweltering heat of summer. Newport and other seaside resorts—like Rockaway Beach on Long Island and Long Branch on the New Jersey shore—also promised distance from the hoi polloi and an opportunity to win social status by associating with the “right people.” Further inland, Virginia’s White Sulphur Springs and New York’s Saratoga Springs tried to follow the decorum of aristocratic Bath in England. All of these resorts remained sites of respectable gatherings, not crowds, where tradition not novelty prevailed, and where “nature” could be celebrated free from machines and industrial noise. Vistas of green hills, mighty rivers, and cascading falls or, of course, foaming surf and ocean breezes were required for genteel resorts. The site of natural beauty became part of the American Grand Tour and the See America First movement after the Civil War. Together, these values expressed a genteel culture of the wealthy and educated in Victorian America. While refined socializing did not easily cross class lines, middle-class reformers hoped to enlist the working classes (and especially their children, as we shall see later) in a mutually uplifting love of nature and thus to separate them from the Saturnalian crowd.<sup>33</sup>

These ideals, however, were far from the goals of most working people who sought “excitement” rather than repose in their brief moments of freedom from labor. Thanks to the train and especially the light rail or inter-urban trolleys that sprang up in the United States in the 1890s, new sites of play emerged that appealed to this more plebeian crowd. Take, for example, Coney Island. Located on the southwest tip of Long Island, it was nine miles from Manhattan’s teeming crowds. But, gradually, faster and cheaper transportation routes made it available to the working people of New York. The opening of a plank road in 1850, a horse tram in 1862, and a steam rail link in 1864 from Brooklyn made the center of the “island”—really an oval peninsula—into the ever-changing model of the crowded modern amusement center, displacing the west and east ends of the Island that had earlier attracted more genteel crowds.

Although Coney Island had long been a venue for freak shows, dance halls, saloons, and eateries, as well as privately controlled beaches, the construction of three enclosed amusement parks—Steeplechase Park in 1897, Luna Park in 1903, and Dreamland in 1904—changed everything. They featured a host of new mechanical rides, including roller coasters, scenic trains, and even me-

chanical water slides, as well as indoor shows that reproduced famous floods like those in Johnstown and in Galveston, famous battles, and even hell. This was the beginning of a thrill play culture that would be picked up again in the 1970s with the growth of a new set of amusement/theme parks. Luna Park and Dreamland also featured buildings that imitated Renaissance and Oriental grandeur, offering a fantasy environment—especially at night when they were lit by thousands of electric lights—that appealed particularly to young couples. Although these amusement parks faded quickly (with the largest at Dreamland destroyed by fire in 1911 and the others slowly decaying), they set the model of amusement parks for more than a half century. Many similar parks were built in the decade after 1896, often located at the end of trolley-car lines.<sup>34</sup>

By the last decades of the nineteenth century, technological change and commercialization had sped up greatly. The most obvious impact came from the automobile, originating in 1885 in Germany but developing into a consumer good in America by the end of the century. It facilitated rapid mobility and dramatically increased the role of private and personal leisure, but it also homogenized play. New media—first film, then radio, then television, and now the personal computer—created not only passive and isolated audiences but also common national and even worldwide entertainment experiences, reducing interactions in pleasure-crowd and recreational groups by creating a global culture.

American car ownership rose from 1 percent of households in 1910 to 60 percent by 1930.<sup>35</sup> In that brief period, except in large cities and among the poor, cars had become central to American life, making possible individualized tourism and a plethora of new leisure experiences. Parkways, first built in New York in 1911 and designed to be aesthetically pleasing as well as useful, encouraged private travel. Newly built or refurbished state and national parks became accessible only by car, which allowed car owners to avoid the traditional crowds of seaside resorts and amusement parks reached by the least affluent via public transportation. Thus Coney Island became the Nickel Empire by the 1920s, patronized by the poor who paid five cents to get there by subway. As a result, it slipped into decline. By contrast, Disneyland, which opened in 1955, thrived as the ideal car-based venue of family fun, being linked to a sprawling network of Southern Californian highways. Warren Belesco's study of the rise of modern car camping and the motel details how the misadventures of early car travel created a quest for predictability in lodging and service that led to modern name-brand accommodations and other roadside amenities. By the mid-1930s, travel lodging itself had become mobile with the advent of the trailer.<sup>36</sup>

The car culture produced other privatized pleasures, such as the drive-in restaurant, which appeared in the South and West in the early 1920s. The first drive-in theater opened in 1933, and by the 1950s, four thousand of the big screens dotted rural and suburban roads. They offered teenagers an opportunity for privacy and parents a way to take their baby-boom offspring to the movies with a minimum of frustration. In the 1950s and 1960s, the car led to the decline of the downtown business district when a lack of parking and increasing traffic congestion forced major retailers into the suburbs, where they built large stores and provided huge, free parking lots. The car privatized not only shopping, dining, and entertainment, but even life at home. Beginning in the 1920s, the front porch, which had so long served as a place to socialize with neighbors, gradually disappeared from new houses, replaced by the attached garage. More generally, the car intensified suburbanization and gradually destroyed the symbiosis that had made cities centers of entertainment and leisure and their suburbs “bed-room” communities. In the long run, suburbanites both worked and played on the periphery of the city along commercial strips, industrial parks, and shopping malls. Residential neighborhoods, with their reclusive backyards, became small, private islands accessible only by car. The disappearance of sidewalks from suburban streets testified to the decline of social interaction between neighbors. Finally, automobiles privatized American life simply by the fact that more and more of them were on the road, especially after 1960. While the automobile promised to bring the family together by focusing its needs and activities on the availability of private transport, that prospect changed with the gradually increasing disposable income of Americans, which made it ever more possible for households to possess two or more cars. There were 3.74 Americans for every car in 1950. That figure dropped to 2.9 in 1960 and to 1.86 by 1980. This trend fed the pursuit of individualized recreation, especially in families with older children.<sup>37</sup>

The car set all this in motion, but air travel also helped to transform leisure. As early as 1914, “flying boats” transported tourists between Florida and Caribbean resorts. In 1929, the first transcontinental service combined air and rail travel in a grueling forty-eight-hour trip. But airplanes remained for the adventuresome elite until 1954, when the Boeing Company revolutionized travel with its “707.” The plane could fly 189 people at 600 miles per hour, making possible winter vacations in Florida, in Mexico, in all the warm spots of the Americas, and contributing to the decline of older, closer, less exotic vacation destinations such as Atlantic City.<sup>38</sup>

The mechanized entertainment of film, radio, and television both homogenized and privatized leisure, making play time more passive. The phonograph, invented in 1876, but made practical in 1887, reduced a concert or a speech to a two- or three-minute record available at any moment in the privacy of the home. The peep show or kinoscope introduced commercially by Thomas Edison in 1894 offered the viewer a short show of boxing matches, comedy skits, even mock executions. Available in hotel lobbies and penny arcades, the first movies proved a quick thrill, compressing a story into an intense sensation. Projected onto the back walls of local stores and the ersatz screens of nickelodeons from 1896, the flickers attracted a mostly working-class, young audience before about 1913. In the teens, producers began modeling the motion picture on traditional theater. Making “feature-length” films, they were soon reaching middle-class viewers. This new entertainment technology offered an enticing alternative to the social and active pleasures of the bar, the playground, the home, and the neighborhood. While early movies gathered like-minded groups of mostly wage earners with fare appealing directly to their experiences, by the 1920s the long-term trend toward corporate concentration and the making of films that appealed to a broad, “mass” audience had become clear. These new moguls made films crossing gender and class lines. More subtly, while silent film exhibitors tolerated crowd interaction, with the coming of sound after 1926, the screen talked while the audience grew silent. Moviegoers became private viewers and listeners, individuals in a crowd. The simple fact that millions saw the same film featured in the same week had a profound impact on culture, accelerating the rise and fall of fads and celebrities. As movie houses shifted from the storefront nickelodeons, which appealed to the young and the working class, to the comfortable and even lavish movie palaces, which reached out to the more affluent, the movies offered couples a dark, but still “safe” place for experimenting with the new “dating” system of unsupervised courtship. Saturday matinees gave younger children a place for playful peer interaction, free from parents, but off the “dangerous” streets.<sup>39</sup>

Radio and television may ultimately have had an even more powerful impact on both homogenizing and privatizing leisure than did the movie. Only accessible for domestic use from around 1910, the radio remained a hobbyist tool (or toy) until the 1920s, when it became an entertainment appliance in the home. Through radios, national networks broadcast their centralized programming beginning in 1926 and created a nation of listeners, all of whom paid rapt attention to the same programs. The radio allowed home audiences to avoid

the crowd—and the trouble of going out—while enjoying national, even global entertainment. Radio became part of a new culture of what today we would call “multitasking,” as homemakers, children, and husbands combined listening with housework, studying, and other domestic chores. The networks developed a schedule of offerings that appealed to different age and gender interests in the family: quiz shows, advice programs, and “soap operas” during the day; children’s adventure stories in late afternoon; and comedy, variety, and drama programs in the evening, intended to appeal to men home from work as well as to women. Such targeted programming may have led families to congregate around the radio, but it also encouraged interests and tastes that separated families by age and gender. As Susan Douglas notes, radio changed dramatically after 1950 when network TV supplanted most of radio’s earlier functions and it began to serve more diverse social groups (teens, traveling salesmen, political conservatives, and specialized “taste” communities defined by interest in music).<sup>40</sup>

Television, perhaps even more than radio, reinforced the domestication of leisure, even as it produced cultural uniformity through broadcasting. Television emerged from the same companies that had marketed radio. In the 1950s, television took over radio’s family format, reaching each age and gender segment over the course of a day’s programming. Even more than radio in the 1930s, television expressed the personal power to experience the world without having to join a crowd. While in 1950, only 9 percent of American homes had television, four years later, the figure had reached 55 percent. By 1967, virtually all households (95 percent) contained at least one set. That year Americans watched an average of five hours of television per day.<sup>41</sup>

Television viewing has changed dramatically since the 1970s with the emergence of multiple-TV households and the proliferation of cable channels. As Joseph Turow shows, these trends have led to diverse and divided tastes and a reversal of the mass cultural trends of early TV. This process speeded up as television sets became cheaper in the mid-fifties with the replacement of electronic tubes by transistors (and later by integrated circuits). When families could own two or more radios, television sets, and other entertainment devices, members no longer had to share space or spend time together. If the early television set was an electronic hearth in American living rooms, several sets located in bedrooms, in kitchens, in so-called “family” rooms, made the home into a multiplex theater, with each family member finding a private refuge to enjoy his or her own entertainment. The general tendency for the average American home to increase in size (the median square footage of new homes grew from 1,385 square feet in

1970 to 1,950 by 1998) reinforced this trend. The development of the personal computer radically intensified these trends, especially with the introduction of the Mac and Windows in 1983 and the introduction of the internet browser in 1994. Personal computers created increasingly privatized and segmented leisure communities, even if sometimes on a global scale. The growth of consumerism spread by American affluence has made it possible for each family member to have an increasingly large array of personal play “tools,” be they a child’s own toy box (shared with no sibling), a teenager’s Playstation video game console and collection of game cartridges, a basement hobby shop full of father’s tools, or a kitchen equipped with exotic cookbooks and appliances.<sup>42</sup>

A similar trend is the rise of personal vacations and separate activities on family vacations. Children’s street games (such as marbles, Hopscotch, and hide-and-go-seek) have been replaced with video games. Face-to-face encounters have been transformed by e-mails, electronic chat groups, and web surfing. Revolutionary as all this may be, it represents the clear culmination of a century of developments in media technology.

Twentieth-century technology privatized and homogenized play, but it also intensified it. The intensification took place on many fronts, involving everything from cars and speedboats to fast food and fad toys. Let me focus here on just a couple of examples: the thrill ride and the video game. Inventor La Marcus Thompson began this trend by introducing the first modern roller coaster in 1884. Daring loop roller coasters appeared by 1900 in America’s new electrified amusement parks and, by 1910, improvements in safety led to the era of the mammoth roller coaster. In addition to the thrill of the drop and sudden turn on a whimsical track circuit, Thompson in 1886 also created for Atlantic City the scenic railroad with tunnels and exotic painted images of nature and fantasy. “Travel” here took on a whole new meaning. Bodily sensations that would normally have signaled danger or even death on a real train, as well as sights and sounds that would have required days of “regular travel,” were concentrated into a span of a couple of minutes.<sup>43</sup>

Although these rides declined in the 1930s, they returned by the 1970s when new amusement parks like Six Flags as well as old ones like Cedar Point built progressively higher, faster, and seemingly more dangerous coasters. The development in 1975 of a system of three sets of wheels on tubular steel track made it possible to create much more thrilling coasters that, for example, turned riders upside down.<sup>44</sup> Recently, new technologies have pushed the envelope further. At Six Flags Magic Mountain, Superman: The Escape uses a new linear

induction motor (LIM) that reaches 100 mph in 7 seconds, carrying passengers up a 126-meter tower before they fall back. The whole experience is compacted into merely 6.5 seconds, with a feeling of weightlessness throughout. The quest for ever greater visceral thrills of coaster enthusiasts was mirrored in those who engaged in bungee jumping, skydiving, and other extreme sports that emerged about the same time.<sup>45</sup>

A very similar intensification of play marks the history of video games. They have their roots in pinball, an arcade game that emerged in 1933. Based on the old bagatelle machines of nineteenth-century arcades, pinball games used a spring-powered plunger to drive a steel ball up an incline and onto a board full of holes, pins, and bumpers that impeded its slide to the bottom and out of play. When the ball hit these obstacles, players earned points, which were registered electronically. Pinball held a major spot in the casual play of teens and young adults through the 1960s in bars, in soda shops, and in arcades.

The digitizing of these electric games dramatically changed the play. Computer scientist William Higinbotham invented a crude electronic tennis game in 1958 called Tennis for Two. In 1961, MIT lab technician Steve Russell taught a new minicomputer—the PDP-1—to play Spacewar!, in which spaceships annihilated one another with blips of light across a black-and-white TV screen. In 1967, Ralph Baer developed a video gaming system that could run on a home television. But computer video gaming took off only when engineer Nolan Bushnell founded Atari in 1972 to merchandise his arcade versions of Spacewar! and Pong, a reinvention of Higinbotham's game, for play in bars and lounges. As important, in 1975, he mass-retailed Pong as a toy, this time for kids. In 1977, he added cartridge software and an ordinary television screen to a primitive computer, the Atari 2600. Soon more exciting and fast-paced games appeared—Space Invaders in 1978, as well as the Japanese innovations, the gobbling Pac Man in 1980 and Donkey Kong in 1981.

This first wave of video gaming failed in 1983 due to an oversupply of uninviting games. However, the Japanese Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) introduced to the United States in 1985 greatly improved the graphics. The NES quickly became the most popular toy in America, with sales of \$3.4 billion by 1990. In 1989, Nintendo introduced a much-improved handheld computer game, Game Boy. It diverted children from person-to-person interaction, but kept them occupied on long family trips.<sup>46</sup>

Subtly, the video game changed as it began to appeal to the older player with increasingly fast-paced violence. In 1991, the Japanese firm Capcom offered a

new level of graphic conflict when it introduced the arcade game Street Fighter II, which simulated Asian Kung Fu. Then Mortal Kombat appeared, a game that presented players with the opportunity to electronically tear off the head or pull out the heart of a defeated opponent. Doom and many others followed, including the Grand Theft Auto series, renowned for their cynical carnage. The topic is complex, but two issues are clearly germane here. First, video games, like thrill rides, have become progressively more intense both because of improved computer graphics and because of the demand of users for more action to retain their interest. Second, video games, unlike other “toys” appealing to children and teens, have not been abandoned by the generation brought up on them as its members aged and, we presume, matured. Although in 1997 half of all video-game players were younger than eighteen, by 2005 the average age rose to thirty-three (about the age of players who first experienced video games as children in the 1980s). So powerful are these games psychologically—and even physiologically—they entice players bored with earlier games to keep picking up their game pads when new ones appear. No longer, it seems, do youths abandon the play of their childhoods when they become adults and, again we suppose, adopt more refined pleasures.<sup>47</sup>

This leads me to my last point in this section about the historical impact of technology and consumer culture on play in America—the decline of the genteel and rational recreational ideas of the nineteenth century. Of course, proponents of the sublime virtues of rest, contemplation, and uplift survived in classy resorts and retreats. Across the twentieth century, there have been numerous calls for the renewal of simplicity and a culture of slow time. The genteel contemplation of nature, nurtured in bourgeois Victorian vacations to hot springs, seaside resorts, and the sites on the American Grand Tour, certainly survived a long time and still has adherents. Facing the threat of a fast-paced novelty culture in the early twentieth century, advocates of gentility tried valiantly to maintain their cultural notion of distant uplift—from adult liberal-arts education and ad-free classical music on the radio to the Book-of-the-Month Club.<sup>48</sup>

But genteel play has been in decline for a century. Many found it to be hypocritical. As Thorstein Veblen pointed out in his 1899 masterpiece *Theory of the Leisure Class*, the American rich used their leisure time to display their status through an elaborate culture of parties, extravagant homes, fashion, and touring—even playing time-killing games like golf in display of their freedom from the daily grind. Wives of businessmen surrounded themselves with ser-

vants and luxury and intentionally wore impractical clothing in order to show that they did not have to work. Such women provided successful, hard-working businessmen with “vicarious leisure.”<sup>49</sup>

As we have seen, the new technologies of intensity attracted working and young people. But from the beginning of the twentieth century, middle-class adults began to abandon restful gatherings and quiet strolls for the thrill of the car, and eventually for the “fast” life of movies, discount shopping, commercial radio, and amusement parks. Beginning in the Roaring Twenties, the American middle class embraced the vitality of youth, if not the tawdry pleasures of the working class (though they were often the same). Historian Jackson Lears identifies this change in middle-class leisure with an erosion of the religious and moral underpinnings of the conception of rational recreation. Replacing the genteel ideals of spiritual uplift and moral progress was a quest for sensual experience and individual fulfillment. In the early twentieth century, an entrepreneurial, production-oriented economy, which required self-control and thrift, gave way to a bureaucratic and consumer economy, which demanded more free-spending attitudes. The excitement of novelty consumption also helped to overcome the growing feelings of “emptiness” that result from a decline in religion and contact with nature. Combined with a revolt against the formality and repressive self-control of the Victorian era, this sense of vacuum led to the popular embrace of youthful vitality and an openness to playful innovations. The middle classes also abandoned the Victorian belief that it was really necessary to embrace genteel values in order to rise in social status or to enjoy life fully. By the end of the 1920s, middle-class magazines (like *Time*, for example) had abandoned long and pretentious articles for a focus on novel trends and breezy prose. Parents had begun to adopt more playful and more tolerant views of children’s games and fantasy.<sup>50</sup>

The trend away from a genteel culture of paced refinement and the separation of leisure from the crush of the crowd and commerce culminates in contemporary multitasking on computers. Here, we welcome intensity and break the “brackets” that, since industrialization, have kept work and play apart. The computer has transformed the experience of time. It has created the 24/7 culture where markets and entertainment are available at anytime. If the nineteenth-century train and twentieth-century car annihilated time (and space), the computer certainly completed the process by moving information at the speed of electrons. The computer’s capacity for multitasking encourages users to expect to do more than one thing at a time and to accelerate the

pace of life. As Thomas Eriksen pessimistically remarks, “growing numbers of people become accustomed to living in a world where colourful fragments of information flit by, lacking direction and cohesion, [and] do not see this as a problem.” Computers undermine the “pleasures of slow time” (like fishing or savoring a skill) and create instead the “tyranny of the moment.” In a world where we actually gain much psychic and physical satisfaction from the ever-quickening pace of sensation, it is difficult to relax and gaze at a rising moon (even if we say we want to).<sup>51</sup>

Of course, all this is far too simple. Privatization, homogeneity, and a quest for intensity were not the only trends or the inevitable product of twentieth-century technology; in fact, that technology also facilitated difference. A significant theme of popular cultural studies is the persistence of working-class, ethnic, and regional deviations from the middle-class norm. In part, this is the story of the income lag of these groups and, in part, of how they rejected middle-class “uses” of new technology and affluence to preserve their own identities. Gambling traditions may have changed form (from playing the numbers at storefronts in the 1930s to Nevada’s casinos and state-sponsored lotteries after World War II in the United States, for example), but similar, often complex, attitudes survived.<sup>52</sup> We shouldn’t neglect the persistence of church going and church socials, which especially sprouted after 1950 in suburban church additions (often called Fellowship Halls). Church attendance, notably for many working-class and black women, remained a counterculture to male drinking and sports culture. The new affluence ultimately created a far more complex variety of identity groups built on play that can hardly be touched upon here: historical re-enactors, devotees of extreme sports, collectors and restorers of antique cars, fan clubs, and thousands of other “enthusiasms.” Increased free time and greater disposable income only begin to explain these activities. Longing for communities of identity in a world of mobility, unanimity, and accelerating change certainly explains more. And many draw on the same technologies that we have described above to preserve their differences. Some are driven by a relatively new emotion, nostalgia, born of rapid cultural change. Others are reacting to a sense of loss of contact with nature; others appeal to the needs of competition. The age of consumerist leisure produced as much diversity as conformity.

## Childhood and the Family

Play has been shaped not just by changes in work and technology but also by other key components of social life—family and childhood. In preindustrial America, family life and childhood were infused with work obligations. The household was the center of most labor. All members of the household, except for infants, were expected to contribute. Most play, too, took place within the domestic work group. The traditions of play were passed down through the group, even the wild and rebellious customs of youth like drinking, mumming, and holiday mischief. Yet, because houses were small and largely devoted to work, play took place largely outside the home—in bars and other public places or on the street and otherwise out-of-doors. Most typically, preindustrial play served the needs of adults more than those of children. Of course, children found the time and a place of their own in which to play outside the supervision of busy parents. As did the adults, children often played rough games that tested especially boys' courage and loyalty to the group. Philippe Ariès, in his celebrated *Centuries of Childhood*, may have exaggerated when he described how, until modern times, children and adults intermingled in play. Adults, he said, played more like kids, and children were exposed precociously to such adult vices as drinking, promiscuous sex, gambling, and violent and boisterous games. Still, there is much evidence that “toys”—such as, say, balloons in eighteenth-century France or toy soldiers much earlier—were enjoyed first by adults and then passed down to children. The carousel had its origins in an aristocratic game played by adult men riding wooden horses, presumably to train for the ancient sport of jousting.<sup>53</sup>

With industrialization we see work being gradually removed from the home with the expansion of factories, offices, and other specialized workplaces. But the same process also had just as profound an impact on leisure. In fact, the home became a place of leisure for many in the nineteenth century—in historian Christopher Lasch's words, a “haven from a heartless world” of increasingly impersonal labor and economic competition.<sup>54</sup> The industrial system tended to oblige women either to withdraw from the economy (especially if their husbands enjoyed high incomes) or to work outside the home until marriage and especially childbirth forced them to remain at home raising children and doing housework. Increasingly freed from arduous work thanks to the hiring of servants, and later aided by the purchase of domestic appliances, middle-class women were also liberated from life-long childcare as they bore fewer children,

half the number in 1900, for example, as in 1800. Such changes made possible the domestication of leisure as women devoted time to decorating, entertaining, and organizing family holidays. For the industrial-era housewife, the home remained a place of both work and leisure, while husbands tended to view the domestic realm as exclusively for relaxation, the place where they compensated for their loss of control and lack of creativity on the job. In many ways, women's leisure remained more traditional, interspersed with the demands of home and family care. In the nineteenth century, the home grew increasingly into a retreat from the market, one for a small circle of family members, one opened only on special events to a few friends and distant relatives.<sup>55</sup>

Prosperous middle-class Victorian families tried to isolate themselves from the boisterous public and make the home an effective alternative to the distasteful crowd. One of the principle motivations for modern suburbanization was to separate middle-class families—and especially their children—from the “dangers” of the busy city and the street play of working-class youths. The suburban neighborhoods that sprang up early in the nineteenth century served as a laboratory for the new leisure culture—private, familial, ultimately uplifting. These suburban homes set many precedents. Situated on large private lots, they could have gardens and, in a later American variant, extensive front and back lawns, providing opportunities for family games. The Victorian suburban home, totally bereft of economic purpose, developed into a multipurpose leisure center. Well-appointed parlors boasted displays of female accomplishments in the handicrafts, witnessed the performance of amateur singing and piano playing, served as the stage for demonstrations of magic lanterns and other precursors of movies, and provided a safe space for the playing of uplifting parlor games, often educational card and board games. On the second floor, the nursery not only isolated the very young from their parents but was really a playroom that provided a special place for toys and games. By the late nineteenth century, even the respectable working class devoted a large share of scarce living space to the dining room and parlor, which were often never used except for the formal visit of guests on Sunday evenings.<sup>56</sup>

Again family change gives us another way of understanding the disappearance of the old festivals and the transformation of holidays like Christmas. From about 1810 on, reformers in New York City and elsewhere promoted the turning of Christmas from an often rowdy holiday of public drinking, feasting, and theater into a private celebration of family, focused especially on young children. Americans, who in the early nineteenth century had celebrated July

Fourth with the bacchanalian abandon of a village Mardi Gras, turned to family picnics by the 1850s. And after the Civil War, the American Thanksgiving became a tradition of family reunion. Holidays, once expressions of deep communal needs and occasions for expressions of Saturnalian tomfoolery, metamorphosed into celebrations of the genteel values of family harmony and the delight of the child.<sup>57</sup>

At the heart of this change was a new attitude toward children's play. Earlier, adults excluded kids from their parties and sent them to the protected environment of playgrounds and nursery rooms. This paralleled the long-term commitment of adults to separating children from adults in work and younger from older children in age-graded schools. By around 1850, new manufacturing techniques, greater affluence, the coming of department stores, and mail order catalogs made children's games and toys cheaper and more plentiful. Innovative interlocking building blocks and comical wind-up toys appeared in the 1860s and 1870s. But more common were simple miniatures of adult work tools—toy hammers and saws and garden tool sets for boys and dolls and miniature houseware sets for girls. In homes progressively devoid of productive tasks, toys served to simulate adult roles. Fairy tales from the late 1840s began to supplant the moralistic tales of Puritan writers. Play became the “work” of the child and the tools of play (toys, games, children's literature) the parents' indirect way of shaping their offspring.<sup>58</sup>

Older children came to be increasingly isolated in play. Consider the effort of middle-class reformers to transform sport. An activity that had been part of the Saturnalian festival culture, where men and youth gathered for rough and often chaotic play, gradually gained legitimacy in the nineteenth century as sport became equated with character building and with moral as well as with physical perfection. A new attitude toward the body emerged in the 1840s, and middle-class reformers—especially clergy and schoolmasters—no longer viewed it as merely a source of temptation, something that had to be disciplined by the mind and spirit. By training the body, they now decreed, one disciplined the will. Morality continued to connote self-restraint but it also increasingly implied vitality and action in the “real world.” Educators and clergy subscribing to this doctrine, often called Muscular Christianity, believed that moral courage could be cultivated through playing sports. Such beliefs necessarily led to the reform of physical contests. Educators outlawed disorderly, unsupervised games and blood sports, replacing them with games that stressed individual achievement (gymnastics, for example) and especially teamwork.<sup>59</sup>

The Victorian British elite ideally wished to isolate a boy in school until age sixteen or seventeen. There the boy not only obtained a formal education, but also found diversion in increasingly formalized sports. Organizations like England's Football Association, founded in 1863, imposed strict rules that penalized bodily contact, encouraged team play, and developed individual skills such as kicking and passing. In America, organized sports emerged from different settings—from community groups like volunteer fire companies (baseball), from the YMCA (basketball), and from colleges (American football). But in America, too, sports in schools became almost as important as in England. American patrician Henry Cabot Lodge claimed in 1896 that college sports inculcated the skills of competition and accountability that were at the root of success in business. At the same time, sport could offer an alternative to what many found harmful in the modern industrial world. President Theodore Roosevelt, for example, found in the “strenuous life” an antidote to the moral degeneration of modern wealth and materialism. The temptation to self-indulgence and indolence could be averted by the self-sacrifice required by disciplined, competitive sports. The key, according to Roosevelt, lay in following the rules of competition and in winning and losing gracefully. In effect, sports underwent what Norbert Elias has called a “civilizing process.” So powerful were these values that they eventually transformed the games of those in school and church sport lower down the economic and social scale.<sup>60</sup>

Many institutions inculcated similar values of building character in the young through play. By 1870, the American “Y” had become a sports and physical fitness center for the urban middle class. The Boy Scouts, founded in 1908, aimed at a younger male. Historians like David Macleod and Michael Rosenthal stress the conservative, middle-class orientation of the scouts. Summer camp for youths, begun as an extension of the schools and churches after the Civil War, was unique to North America, offering a fresh-air environment for cultivating cooperation and appreciation of nature, something that could not be taught in a strict school or church environment. By the 1920s, local governments were building parks and even public golf courses. Perhaps more impressive were New Deal public works projects that constructed a wide array of playgrounds, parks, tennis courts, swimming pools, and cultural centers.<sup>61</sup> These recreational facilities were designed to challenge commercial amusements that promised immediate pleasures rather than cultivated useful skills.

Despite efforts of parents to create more child-centered homes and to shape the young through play, kids—especially teens—often broke from the older

traditions of play their parents had known. Especially for the children of the less-well-regulated poor, the industrializing city offered both new (and sometimes dangerous) diversions and new forms of play that parents did not identify with their own youthful sowing of wild oats. Whereas the play of the young had previously been bound to tradition—rituals and rules of their trade or the informal strictures of the festival—the newly urbanized youths of the nineteenth century were largely cut adrift from time-honored codes of behavior. By 1850, the youth gangs in most American cities had formed a street-corner society built around social clubs. Parents as well as civic leaders worried about how play could turn into crime. By 1900, commercial dance halls were sweeping American towns. In New York, writes Kathy Peiss, they attracted respectable young working women with cut-price entrance fees, which allowed females to break from their ethnic and family traditions but also caused great worry among parents and moralists.<sup>62</sup>

In response, some reformers advocated new, repressive laws that prohibited traditional games, outlawed mumming and bawdy singing, and improved the policing of street gangs. One interesting response tried to “domesticate” Halloween pranksters. Traditionally, young urban males paraded through town, demanding money of passers-by or “dusted” them with bags of flour. By the end of the nineteenth century, some derailed streetcars and set fires. Masquerading as goblins and witches, young males in small towns removed gates, broke or waxed or soaped windows, tied doors shut, even put buggies on roofs and tipped over outhouses. Sometimes householders avoided these “supernatural” assaults with gifts of food and drink. While some complained, adults accepted within limits these acts of petty vandalism because they were customary, something that now-respectable fathers and husbands themselves had done not so many years before. Because adults knew the youths involved, they considered them just “boys being boys.”<sup>63</sup> However, increasing urbanization and the social tensions especially sharpened by the Depression of the 1930s soon made the traditional rowdyism of Halloween unacceptable. Beginning in 1920 in Minnesota, and expanding in the 1930s, voluntary organizations like the American Legion, Rotary Club, Lions Club, and municipal recreation departments sought to cajole pranksters to join in Halloween fairs and parades. By the end of the 1930s, we see signs of the modern rite of trick-or-treating restricted to smaller children “mumming” for candy from door to door in costume.<sup>64</sup>

Another response was to attempt to build bridges to the poor youth of the new cities and remake them in the image of the middle class. Hence the urban

park movement that began in northern England in the 1840s and was copied in the United States in the 1850s with New York's Central Park. In the 1870s, members of small-town churches participated in the Fresh Air Fund by opening their homes to slum-dwelling children from New York City during summer vacations. The campaign for public libraries followed a similar course. The hundreds of Carnegie libraries built beginning in the 1890s aimed to civilize the leisure of working people, and so did the public swimming pools of the same period. While civic elites fostered large showy parks, sometimes associated with zoos or museums, social reformers advocated smaller neighborhood parks to make green space accessible to the poor in their own neighborhoods—sometimes created from slum clearance. Beginning with Kansas City in 1893, soon most American cities had park commissions and networks of parks. The American playground movement was a natural outgrowth of these trends. Beginning modestly, in 1885, when Boston's public schools first provided sandboxes for poor children, soon playground advocates sponsored neighborhood parks throughout the immigrant districts of American cities. In 1906, Luther Gulick and others founded the Playground Association, which later became the National Recreation Association.<sup>65</sup>

The concept of the playground movement was quite simple: the government must provide alternatives to the street and its degrading commercial leisure in the form of safe, regulated fun. Games and play areas should be age-graded and sex-differentiated in order to prevent the older from corrupting or bullying the younger child and to train the sexes for their appropriate roles. In many ways this movement was a modern update of the old reformers' battle with traditional play. As one early leader of the Playground Association noted, "It is not the play but the idleness of the street that is morally dangerous. It is then that the children watch the drunken people, listen to the leader of the gang, hear the shady story, smoke cigarettes. . . ." As an antidote to the violent, self-destructive activity of the urban gang, the Playground Association offered "a wholesome outlet for youthful energy." The playground movement aimed at providing regulated, rather than violent, games and at organizing team and individual, rather than gang, play. And the playground reformers shared these goals with the rational recreationists of the early nineteenth century and the Puritans and evangelicals of an even earlier period.<sup>66</sup>

Added to all this was the notion, popularized by psychologist G. Stanley Hall, that play provided a necessary means of turning the natural "barbarian" instincts of the boy into the virtues of the gentleman. It radically challenged the

older goal of training boys in the self-restraint suitable for success in business and refined bourgeois domesticity. Hall saw virility and self-controlled domestic manhood not as the opposites that many women quite naturally believed them to be. Demanding that young boys learn self-restraint had only made them obsessive or incapable of dealing with stress (that is, made them wimps). Instead, Hall argued that by letting boys be “primitives” in aggressive play and sport, they would develop and give expression to their “nerve force” thus avoiding wimpishness. At the same time, as in sportsmanship, this set the stage for later self-control, which would make them vital but rational leaders of men. For Hall and others, the barbarian stage would not make boys into permanent primitives, but serve like a smallpox inoculation, creating the conditions in which they could develop into ideal gentleman—self-controlled, but also vital, and courageous, and capable of manly action.<sup>67</sup>

But what influence did these play reformers achieve? Historian Dom Cavallo doubts that more than 10 to 20 percent of immigrant youth visited urban playgrounds in the period from 1900 to 1920.<sup>68</sup> Most preferred the freedom and independence of the street. It was the middle class who mostly adopted Hall’s goals. Play reformers were not entirely successful in transmitting their values down the social ladder. Yet they helped to solidify a recreational style and ideology that still permeates modern youth and sports institutions.

Youth leisure had long been a “problem,” but a rapidly changing consumer culture directed toward the young made for greater intergenerational conflicts. Soon after 1900, amusement parks, dance halls, neighborhood candy stores, soda fountains, penny arcades, and nickelodeons became sites of youth recreation and spending in cities, later described in William Whyte’s *Street Corner Society*.<sup>69</sup> High school and college also became major settings for a new peer culture of play in the thirty years after 1900 when attendance increased explosively. Historian Paula Fass shows how a new peer-group culture built around dating, parties, attending football games, and style-setting organizations like fraternities and sororities emerged at American colleges in the 1920s. Adults tried to control these practices by introducing teacher-supervised extracurricular activities (especially in high schools), but they hardly challenged the peer culture. By the 1940s, class and ethnic divisions were often reproduced in these youth leisure groups in high schools as middle-class students dominated the extra-curriculum and working class “greasers” remained outside in peer groups organized around hot-rod cars, for example. Increased mobility due to cheap streetcars and—by the 1930s—used cars, accelerated the liberation of the young. Children and youths picked up new

media earlier than did their elders, using it as a venue for autonomy—movies in the 1910s and 1920s, radio in the 1930s, new fantasy literature, especially the comic book after 1938, rock radio and records after 1954, action figures in the 1970s, and video games in the 1980s.<sup>70</sup>

In part, adults feared youth leisure because it symbolized rapid change and the inability of parents to control the culture of their offspring, which seemed to be dominated by commercial entertainment. Commercialized youth leisure grew impressively during and after World War II. Parents away as soldiers or off at work lost control over their offspring, and increased affluence encouraged commercialized play. In the 1950s, new technologies like the 45 rpm record and the transistor radio were quickly adapted by the young to declare their independence. While males dominated these “deviant” cultures and became the focus of early studies, more recent scholarship looks also at the consumer culture of girls, especially that coalescing around their magazines. Despite repeated efforts, adults found it difficult to control the youth culture. As James Gilbert shows, middle-class parents feared that their children were adopting minority or working-class pleasures, as they sometimes were. Many so-called “moral panics” were eventually resolved when adults embraced at least part of the innovation of the youth culture, for example, rock music and dancing by the early 1960s.<sup>71</sup>

The battle between the longings of youth for autonomy in play and adult worries about the dangers of uncharted waters certainly remains an abiding issue in the modern history of play. But the issue of children’s (more than youth) play went beyond these moral panics. In the twentieth century, children remained a focal point in the reform of many traditional festivals like Christmas and Halloween, but also in the emergence of the child-centered family vacation. Let me return briefly to the seaside resort and amusement park to elaborate. Like the “traditional” celebration of Christmas, these pleasure sites were often occasions for outbreaks of Saturnalian disorder and “dangerous” delights that deeply offended middle-class taste and morality. Although amusement parks like Coney Island were at the heart of these sites, few children attended them in the early years. Instead, crowds consisted mostly of single young adults. In 1900, young children with mothers appeared on the beach and, oddly enough, occasionally at midget shows. But even rides that appear childlike, such as carousels and roller coasters, were patronized by adults. The crowds that these venues attracted were playful, attracted not to contemporary genteel or later family, child-centered values, but to an intense excitement, to a sensuality of sights and sounds, and to a public flirtatiousness between the sexes.<sup>72</sup> In the

twentieth century, the interjection of the child and parent into these pleasure sites made “dangerous” into “playful” crowds, thus creating a new middle-class culture distinct from its genteel predecessors.

As exhibitors and officials attempted to attract a middle-class crowd after 1900, they began to make accommodations to the play of children. In 1920, Steeplechase Park at Coney Island introduced Babyland at one corner of the Pavilion of Fun, featuring two child-sized slides, hobbyhorses, and a kiddie carousel. In the summer of 1925, the National Association of Amusement Parks promoted new children’s rides at member parks.<sup>73</sup>

Although children slowly became part of the new playful crowd, even more important to this transformation were new ways of understanding children’s fun. A new middle-class ideal of fun abandoned some traditional delights, such as freak shows, and found new ones in the wide-eyed wonder of children. In fact, the freak was cutesified. Over time, dwarfs and other oddities were taken from the world of the bizarre into the realm of the innocent. All sorts of gnomish figures found their way to children’s amusement park rides. Disney perfected this trend in his cartoon animals with their neotenic or childlike features, reflecting a shift in adult sensibilities—abandoning the fascination with the boundary of nature for nostalgia for cartoon innocence.

Despite Disney’s rejection of those “dirty, phony places run by tough-looking people,” his Southern California amusement park opened in 1955 was far less a break from the tradition of Coney Island than he thought.<sup>74</sup> His park provided a playfulness that attracted a mass audience of the second half of the twentieth century as much as did Coney fifty years before. What made his park survive while those at Coney did not was that he was able to sustain a middle-class clientele. Disney not only cleaned up the pleasure site, but reconstituted the playful crowd by inviting its individual members to focus on their family units, especially the delighted innocence of their children. What made it both playful and middle class was that it was driven by the evocation of childhood wonder and the nostalgic longings of the “child within.” This, as opposed to the Saturnalian, became central to the meaning of play.<sup>75</sup>

Disney appealed to “timeless” childlike delight and the “cute” through many visual cues. Disney buildings evoke the feeling of a toy, and, as Walt Disney noted, “the imagination can play more freely with a toy.”<sup>76</sup> Because the overall impression is reassuring, elements of topsy-turvy could run through the design of Disney parks. In all this the buildings appealed to the delight of children. The fact that most Disney stories and buildings took the perspective of a child allowed

a cross-generational bonding insofar as grandparent, mother, father, teenager, and child were expected to enter into a shared “innocent” fantasy. This was more than “taming” the imagination, defanging the old world of the carnival. The cute was a celebration of the seemingly untethered delight of innocence.<sup>77</sup>

Not only did Disney rally the family around the child’s imagination and invite the old to regress to their own inner child, but he encouraged the adults to “recall” the *worlds* of their own childhoods. For Disney that meant the time of his own youth, a magical era of childhood wonder, 1900s America, expressed in his romantic reconstruction of Main Street, U.S.A. Main Street recalled a youth that was foreign to most young visitors, and, over the years, it grew alien even to parents and grandparents. However, Disney’s fantasy of his youth, because it was made delightful, became the nostalgia of subsequent generations. This was possible in part because American nostalgia was not about returning to an ancestral village. After all one family in four moved every year in the 1950s, and mobility and marriages across ethnic and neighborhood groups meant that there was often no obvious home to return to. Going home in such a setting meant “returning” to a romantic idea, one easily blended and idealized in an all-white, all-American Main Street U.S.A.<sup>78</sup>

Of course, Disney’s creation did not go unchallenged. Children rebelled against the cute and longed to be cool. The dark and violent images of science fiction, gangster stories, or monster movies; pinball games; and the thrill rides of the modern roller coaster and bumper cars were associated with youth and the cool by the 1930s. But Disney had nothing to do with the emerging culture of the cool. Even haunted houses would only come much later to Disney and they would be systematically cutesified. Eventually Disney as a company did have to make concessions to the cool but not until the late 1970s, a decade after Walt’s death.<sup>79</sup>

By then the decrease in births was beginning to translate into smaller numbers of young families. Moreover, children’s, especially boys’, attraction to the mystique of the frontier, global adventure, and science upon which Disney built three of his “lands” was in decline. Between 1977 and 1983, the *Star Wars* trilogy and its licensed products, along with a more cynical popular culture that “bled” into children’s culture, challenged these older ideals. The striking manifestation of this was the young’s attraction to the thrill rides that their parents and grandparents had rejected decades before in the old amusement parks.<sup>80</sup>

Company officials began to recognize this trend especially as Disneyland was competing with amusement parks that built roller coasters rather than fantasy rides.<sup>81</sup> As early as 1977, Disneyland began to adapt with Space Mountain, an indoor roller coaster, pretending to be “educational.” Today Disneyland

and its progeny in Florida and its new cousin, California Adventure, have fully conceded to the appeal of the cool.

We see a similar shift in the toys of children. A tradition of toy making that developed about 1900 and ended in the 1960s offered parents an opportunity to present their young offspring with teddy bears, baby and companion dolls, and cutesified images of animals and everyday life. For older children, toys promised to enchant and teach about the world that boys and girls would grow up to inherit (electric trains, construction sets, and doll houses, for example). For generations, parents passed down playthings that were very similar to the ones that they had known. But from the end of the 1960s and then with greater force in the 1980s, all this changed. Toys reflected, in Barbie dolls and action figures, the culture of the cool as much as the cute. They no longer were a bridge between parent's memories of play and children's play as the old traditions of dolls and electric trains disappeared and toys became increasingly linked to children's TV, movies, and video games.<sup>82</sup>

While much remains unchanged in the playful longings and activities of children and adults, what play means and when and how we engaged in it has changed greatly over the course of American history. Large events and processes—the transformation of work, of technology and consumption, and of the family and childhood—have all shaped play. And this history, as incomplete as it is, remains crucial to our current understanding of play.

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67. Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 77–120.
68. Cavallo, *Muscles and Morals*, 46–48.
69. Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (1972, first published 1909); Paul Cressey, *The Taxi-Dance Hall: A Sociological Study in Commercialized Recreation*

and *City Life* (1932), 34–67. See also William Whyte, *Street Corner Society* (1955, first published 1943).

70. Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (1977), 23; Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (1996), chaps. 7–8; Edward Radlauer, *Drag Racing: Quarter Mile Thunder* (1966), 28; H. F. Moorehouse, *Driving Ambitions: An Analysis of the American Hot Rod Enthusiasm* (1991), 42–44; Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'n' Roll Changed America* (2003), 8.

71. James Gilbert, *Cycles of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (1986); Dawn H. Currie, *Girl Talk: Adolescent Magazines and Their Readers* (1999).

72. Register, *Kid of Coney Island*, 12, 16; Sterngass, *First Resorts*, 272–73.

73. Cross and Walton, *Playful Crowd*, 123–24.

74. Walt Disney cited in “Insights to a Dream,” *News from Disneyland* (1979), Anaheim Public Library, Disneyland Collection.

75. Cross and Walton, *Playful Crowd*, chap. 5.

76. Karal Ann Marling, ed., *Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance* (1997), 81; Beth Dunlop, *Building a Dream: The Art of Disney Architecture* (1996), 25.

77. See my *Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and American Children's Culture* (2003), chap. 3.

78. Margaret King, “Disneyland and Walt Disney World: Traditional Values in Futuristic Form,” *Journal of Popular Culture*, 15 (1981), 116–40; Jean Starobinski, “The Idea of Nostalgia,” *Diogenes*, 54 (1966), 81–103. See also Peter Fritzsche, “Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile, and Modernity,” *American Historical Review*, 106 (2001).

79. Konrad Lorenz, *Foundations of Ethnography* (1981), 164–65; Steven Jay Gould, “Mickey Mouse Meets Konrad Lorenz,” *Natural History*, 88 (1979), 30–36.

80. See Cross, *Cute and Cool*, esp. chaps. 3, 5.

81. From the late 1970s, Six Flags' Magic Mountain of Valencia, California, catered to teens with thrill rides like Free Fall (a 55 mph drop in two seconds) and a series of roller coasters (Revolution, featuring a scary loop, and the Colossus noted for its height). By 2003, Magic Mountain offered sixteen roller coasters. Even the once-staid Knotts Berry Farm adapted to change by opening the Wild Water Wilderness complex in 1987 and a teen night club and restaurants serving adults alcohol in the mid 1990s. Sea World of San Diego offered, as an alternative to Disneyland, a clean and more modern image of childhood wonder around a theme of nature and ecology that appealed to “soccer moms.” “Southland Thrill Rides,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 1987; “Batman vs. Mickey,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1987; Susan G. Davis, *Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience* (1997).

82. I develop this theme in *Kids' Stuff*.