Ambassadors of Pleasure: Illicit Economies in the Detroit-Windsor Borderland, 1945-1960

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
History Department
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Abstract

“Ambassadors of Pleasure” examines the social and cultural history of ‘sin’ in the Detroit-Windsor border region during the post-World War II period. It employs the interrelated frameworks of “borderlands” and “vice” in order to identify the complex ways in which illicit economies shaped—and were shaped by—these border cities. It argues that illicit economies served multiple purposes for members of local borderlands communities. For many downtown residents, vice industries provided important forms of leisure, labor, and diversion in cities undergoing rapid changes. Deeply rooted in local working-class communities, prostitution and heroin economies became intimately intertwined in the daily lives of many local residents who relied on them for both entertainment and income. For others, though, anti-vice activities offered a concrete way to engage in what they perceived as community betterment. Fighting the immoral influences of prostitution and drug use was one way some residents, particularly those of the middle class, worked to improve their local communities in seemingly tangible ways. These
struggles for control over vice economies highlight the ways in which shifting meanings of race, class, and gender, growing divisions between urban centers and suburban regions, and debates over the meaning of citizenship evolved in the urban borderland. This dissertation subsequently traces the competing interests brought together through illicit vice activities, arguing that they provide unique insight into the fracturing social lines developing in the postwar North American cities.
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Introduction

In March of 1950, Essex County Magistrate J. Arthur Hanrahan sentenced local bootlegger Joseph Assef to six months in jail and “plunged the city of Windsor into two weeks of explosive investigations of vice-related activities in what has long been Canada’s best publicized ‘wide-open town.’” During the course of the eight-week-long trial, the Crown presented evidence that Assef had received over 5,400 illegal liquor deliveries, sometimes as many as sixty times a day. Hanrahan was particularly angered by the fact that local police failed to stop such blatant violations of liquor laws, requiring the Ontario Provincial Police to step in. While sentencing Assef to the maximum penalty, the judge blasted the Windsor Police Department for its wanton disregard for vice-related crimes. Confirming Hanrahan’s growing conviction that there was something “seriously wrong” in Windsor, Assef’s sentence was meant to both set an example to other law-breakers and to call attention to what the judge believed was a growing problem in the city: the expansion and tacit acceptance of vice economies in the border region.¹

The public flogging of the Windsor police, which ultimately resulted in a provincial inquiry and the forced 'retirement' of the chief of police, placed an international spotlight on the Canadian border city. Local and international publications began to run stories about the rampant prostitution, gambling, liquor smuggling, and illegal drugs available in Windsor.² These stories

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¹ Gerald Anglin, “He Blew the Whistle on Windsor Vice,” Maclean’s (May 1, 1950), p. 62.
dominated the local media for several months, providing lurid details about the “sin-bins” that operated openly in the downtown core.\(^3\) Aided by the wartime industrial boom and the subsequent expanding expendable income of many local residents, prostitutes and other questionable characters were moving to Windsor in order to capitalize. In seedy establishments like the Blue Water Hotel, the articles explained, men and women could mingle virtually unhampered by provincial or municipal laws. If one listened closely he or she could hear jazz music, or the sound of loudspeakers calling out illegal bets, emanating from local establishments. Inside, men and women—often strangers to one another—sang, danced, and consumed too much alcohol. Illegal drugs were sometimes sold, and sexual favors were often bought as easily as glasses of beer. Americans from neighboring cities and states were key participants in these late-night adventures and on many nights it was common to find more Americans in the bars and brothels than Canadians.

The provincial inquiry and subsequent media firestorm also sparked outrage among many local residents. While charges of moral laxity and widespread vice were not new to the Detroit-Windsor border region (in fact the area had solidified its reputation as 'wide-open' during the Prohibition Era), local residents hoped their city had left behind its reputation as “wicked Windsor.”\(^4\) These accusations took on new salience in the 1950s, a time when many local residents viewed their city as clean and safe, as a shining example of postwar prosperity. Was it possible that Windsor was falling victim to urban problems common in American cities, where crime and violence seemed to be running rampant? Had postwar social dislocation indeed had a


serious impact on the border city? Could upstanding citizens help stamp out these unwanted elements without hampering the social and economic ties that linked residents of the Canadian border city to their American neighbors? Many Windsorites grappled with these questions in the immediate aftermath of the public scandal.

For all the publicity the provincial inquiry received, though, illicit economies continued to boom in the border region. Just months after the inquiry took place, a front-page *Windsor Star* article declared that the police probe had failed to “cool off” vice joints; instead, Americans and Canadians alike continued to partake in the illicit leisure activities offered in the border cities.\(^5\) Well into the 1960s, prostitution, drinking, gambling, and illegal drug economies continued to be lucrative enterprises in Detroit and Windsor. Men and women crossed the national line for illicit leisure pursuits, aided by international syndicates that operated across the border. Thus, despite vocal public outrage, government investigations, media campaigns, and police crackdowns, many local residents reaffirmed the central place vice industries played in the social and economic life of the border region. Illicit industries brought Americans and Canadians together in search of pleasure and excitement, and in doing so, shaped the cultural life of the border region in important ways.

Debates over the social and cultural meaning of vice in the Detroit-Windsor border region reflected a profound tension many local residents felt during the postwar years. On the one hand, the close of the war brought an extreme sense of optimism about the future. Breaking free from depression and war, the cities of Detroit and Windsor seemed uniquely poised to ascend to great prominence in the new era. Industrial growth, expanding expendable income, and the increased mobility afforded by the very automobile that brought Detroit and Windsor their international

stature seemed to climax in a period of extreme economic optimism. Windsor was hyped as the most important, up-and-coming city in Canada, poised to become the largest and most powerful city in the nation. Detroit similarly retained its position as a vibrant industrial city, with bustling night life, strong social networks, and safe suburbs where one could buy a home, make a living, and raise a family. At the same time, though, there were underlying fears over the changing nature of life in a world that had just witnessed the unimaginable horrors of a world war. Along with unprecedented growth came white flight, increasing racial tension, deterioration of urban centers, Cold War paranoia, and fears over a perceived moral decaying of society. With the rise of these competing issues, Detroit and Windsor began to look more and more like other urban centers across North America—if residents were not attentive to these serious issues, they too could face an environment where lax moral attitudes, racial antagonism, and economic decline would stunt the growth and potential of the local communities. Within this context, vice became one distinct lens through which Americans and Canadians expressed their competing optimisms and fears in the postwar period.

“Ambassadors of Pleasure” employs the interrelated frameworks of “borderlands” and “vice” in order to identify the complex ways in which illicit economies shaped—and were shaped by—the border cities of Windsor and Detroit. An examination of prostitution and drug use in particular provides a fruitful way to reconcile the contradictory narratives of optimism and

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6 As Mary Louise Adams points out, it is necessary to emphasize that the term ‘postwar’ is not simply a convenient labeling of time, but that it also refers directly to the social configurations that arose as six years of war came to an end. To this end, it is necessary to understand these social changes, including postwar prosperity, in relation to the tremendous loss and disruption that directly preceded them. Franca Iacovetta notes that these various ‘disruptions’ included the rise of Cold War hysteria, economic transition, mass migration, and changes in marital and familial arrangements, including a resurgence of a familialist ideology that retained significant moral and political power. See: Adams, The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Iacovetta, “Gossip, Contest, and Power in the Making of Suburban Bad Girls: Toronto, 1945-60.” The Canadian Historical Review Vol. 80. 1 (December 1999), p. 18.
despair, of booming urban growth and industrial stagnation. Indeed, for borderlanders, illicit economies served multiple purposes. For many downtown residents, vice industries provided important forms of leisure, labor, and diversion in cities undergoing rapid changes. Deeply rooted in local working-class communities, prostitution and heroin economies became intimately intertwined in the daily lives of many local residents who relied on them for both entertainment and income. For others, though, anti-vice activities offered a concrete way to engage in what they perceived as community betterment. Fighting the 'immoral' influences of prostitution and drug use was one way some residents, particularly those of the middle class, worked to improve their local communities in seemingly tangible ways. These struggles for control over vice economies highlight the ways in which shifting meanings of race, class and gender, growing divisions between urban centers and suburban regions, and debates over the meaning of citizenship in the urban borderland shaped the evolution of Windsor and Detroit in the postwar world. This dissertation subsequently traces the competing interests brought together through

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7 In its broadest sense, historians define citizenship as on-going and competing struggles over who does or does not belong to the nation. This takes place at multiple levels, from official state policies to everyday interactions. Citizenship, then, is not simply about passports, or a legal declaration of belonging to a nation, though these aspects are also important. It is about who does or does not belong, broadly speaking, and about who can and cannot participate in the promise of the American nation. The answers to these questions have been in flux throughout North American history, and historians have been adept at tracing these shifts along axes of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and empire. This dissertation employs the concept of citizenship in these multiple ways, as something that is both embed and defined by the state, but also by broader communities who determine who does or does not belong along those multiple social lines. See, for example: Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); J. Douglas Smith, Managing White Citizenship: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia (University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Eithne Luibheid, Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Laura Briggs, Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Mai Ngı, Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Jonathan Auerbach, Dark Borders: Film Noir and American Citizenship (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Dorothy E. Chunn, Robert J. Menzies, and Robert L. Adamoski, eds., Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002); Lara Campbell, Respectable Citizens: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in Ontario's Great Depression (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).
illicit vice activities, arguing that they provide unique insight into the fracturing social lines developing in the postwar North American cities.

**Borders and Borderlands in the North American Context**

When newspapers in Windsor proclaimed that rampant vice operations threatened to make the city a “border brothel” for Detroit, they were articulating local fears that the Canadian city was particularly vulnerable to corrupting influences because of its position along the national line.\(^8\) Situated on the Detroit River, which connected the region to the broader Great Lakes basin, the cities of Detroit and Windsor had long been shaped by debates over the meaning of the national border, a line that served the contradictory role of both connecting and dividing local residents. This tension began well before the twentieth century, and historians have demonstrated the complex processes that helped to create what was, by the mid-twentieth century, a relatively rigid national line separating two nation-states.\(^9\) Postwar vice economies reinvigorated these debates by once again placing the spotlight on the contested nature of the

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\(^8\) “Code Section,” *Windsor Daily Star* (July 26, 1946), p. 3.

\(^9\) The Great Lakes region was in fact contested territory long before there was a United States, Canada, or even New France. Yet it was the imperial conflicts and the fighting for resources in the form of pelts that led to the creation of a “borderland.” Historian Richard White's characterizes some of the earliest interactions between French and Native groups in the Great Lakes region as a “middle ground” where a form of cultural hybridity took place, enabling disparate cultures to live together in mutually beneficial ways. Even after the establishment of the boundary line between Upper Canada and the newly formed American nation in 1783, regular interactions between communities split by the new dividing line continued to take place. Several historical examinations of this process demonstrate that in many ways the implementation of the border actually signaled an artificial line dividing an organic community that continued to be connected despite the imposition of a national boundary. White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Historian Alan Taylor demonstrates that even the process of agreeing on a set boundary was incredibly complicated and involved negotiations between multiple parties who had inhabited the middle ground. Taylor, “The Divided Ground: Upper Canada, New York, and the Iroquois Six Nations, 1783-1815,” *Journal of the Early Republic* Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring, 2002), pp. 55-75. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron argue that warfare and the competition over resources during the Seven Years' War, the American Revolution, and the War of 1812 all played a key role in turning the borderlands that existed between Native communities and European settlers into a boundary between emerging Nation-States. Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History, *The American Historical Review* vol. 104, no. 3 (June 1999), p. 818.
national border that connected the two cities. This dissertation examines the border as a line simultaneously material and symbolic that separated Canada and the United States, and as a space in which state intentions and the desires of local community members collided in important ways. From this perspective, the national border was more than simply a line on a map; it also created spaces where competing cultural, political, economic, and security interests overlapped.

Borders work as regulatory tools that enact a wide array of state objectives, and are meant to produce or reinforce the power of the nation-state and the disciplinary role of its government. They are likewise key sites where questions of national security and nation-building come together. From an anthropological perspective, Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson conceptualize borders as “sites and symbols of power” that may be reinforced or neglected by states depending on the circumstances. For example, borders are meant to facilitate legal trade in immigration while filtering out unwanted flows of goods and people. The inability of states to fully and successfully undertake this regulatory process, though, can undermine the power of the state to fully dictate the actual functioning of the national line. Questions of illegal immigration, human trafficking, smuggling, and so on raise concerns over national security, sovereignty, and the state's ability to function with a cohesive state agenda.

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10 Van Houtum, Kramsch, and Zierhofer, in their study B/ordering Space argue that the field of border studies should necessarily embrace an interdisciplinary approach, viewing the “creative ‘mediations’ between material and metaphorical narration of borders [as] an opportunity to expand the imaginative scope of what has until now constituted a rather empirically-orientated domain.” Henk Van Houtman, Olivier Kramsch, and Wolfgang Zierhofer. B/ordering Space (New York: Ashgate, 2005), p. 11.


In response to the imposition of state control and regulation, informal social and economic networks, or “borderlands,” are created by men and women who live in the local communities. These borderlands consist of the multiple processes and relationships that work outside of, in opposition to, or in addition to overarching border mechanisms. Borderlanders tailor their engagement with the national border in order to fit their social needs, desires, and personal perceptions of the local community. For example, engaging in alternative cross-border interactions is one way borderlanders challenge the ability of the state to dictate the terms of the border relationships. Lying to border guards, hiding goods in order to evade customs duties, staying longer than allowed, and forging documents are some examples of the ways that men and women engage with state powers on a regular basis. The interplay between state-sanctioned movement and these informal networks produced the contested and often times contradictory nature of the Detroit-Windsor borderland.

This dissertation begins by exploring the changing regulatory role of the border in the first half of the twentieth century. It traces the interactions between official state policies and individuals living in the border region, demonstrating that borderlanders responded in multiple and sometimes unpredictable ways when official policies worked against local networks and community ties. The building of the Ambassador Bridge, which linked the cities of Windsor and Detroit in 1929, became an important symbol of the connections between Americans and Canadians and of the modern forms of industry that both literally and metaphorically bridged the communities. Yet the process of submitting to immigration authorities, which was built into the

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13 This conception of ‘borderland’ builds on Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly’s argument that borderlands are the result of the interplay between structural factors and the actions of humans (or agency). It is the complex relationship that develops when humans engage with broader state powers as well as political and economic systems. Brunet-Jailly, “Special Section: Borders, Borderlands, and Theory,” *Geopolitics* 16, no. 6 (2011), p. 3.
bridge itself through mechanisms like expansive inspection booths, could also complicate borderlanders' experiences of crossing. Many local men and women became increasingly frustrated by the new crossing requirements and long line-ups that sometimes occurred at the border. What was once a seemingly easy and quick process became increasingly bureaucratic, confusing, and potentially risky. In this way, for many borderlanders the bridge came to symbolize something other than a modern form of infrastructure designed to facilitate convenient crossing between countries; it also came to represent the barriers fostered by intensified state regulation on a daily basis.

Borderlanders were not only frustrated by the bureaucratic confusion border policies caused, they also sometimes openly violated those policies in order to capitalize on illegal forms of money-making and leisure. Within this context illicit economies became a clear expression of the inefficiencies of border management. Cross-border prostitution and heroin economies relied on the failures of regulation and demonstrate the state's inability to fully contain desire, flows, experiences, and relationships. In the Detroit-Windsor region, this began on a large scale during the American Prohibition years when local residents capitalized on laws that allowed Ontarians to produce and export liquor despite the federal US ban on alcohol. By the postwar period, local residents had established a long tradition of violating legal codes aimed at controlling their behavior. The skirting of local and federal laws through illicit cross-border interactions in fact made the cracks in the state legal apparatus more visible. The push and pull between state intentions and local desires were enacted through illicit vice economies, and the borderlands
provided key “spaces of engagement” where men and women struggled to define their place in the local political economy.¹⁴

Employing the dual frameworks of 'vice' and 'borderland' provides two additional insights into our understandings of borders and the spaces that surround them. First, an attention to illicit economies demonstrates that borderlands extend far beyond borders themselves, as goods and people cross expansive distances and are connected economically and socially by their engagement in these larger processes.¹⁵ As Victor Konrad and Heather Nicol argue, the Canada-US border “has multiple layers, or spaces of connection and disconnection, some with defined edges situated at the formal boundary, and others that extend almost seamlessly across the national boundary to create transnational spaces.”¹⁶ The illicit economies of the Detroit-Windsor borderland relied on the urban spaces along the actual border, but they were also linked to broader networks and informal markets that connected goods and people in a larger transnational and trans-regional exchange. For example, some heroin syndicates based their businesses in Detroit and Windsor because it enabled them to tap into the dual markets in the United States and Canada. Ontario and Michigan residents would likewise cross the border in order to purchase

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¹⁴ Willem van Schendel conceptualized the interplay between illicit flows of goods and people and territorial organizations such as states as “spaces of engagement.” These spaces become particularly acute in the borderland, which provides a fruitful site to study “the intermingling and overlapping of various legal and illegal flows.” Author's emphasis. Van Schendel, “Spaces of Engagement: How Borderlands, Illegal Flows, and Territorial States Interlock,” in van Schendel and Itty Abraham, Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 60.

¹⁵ In their work on the Great Lakes border region, John Bukowczyk et al argue that the Great Lakes region is an economic region that, unlike most definitions of “borderland,” are built on a certain cohesiveness despite the borders that divide it. Their study demonstrates the expansive networks of capital and people that helped to create a transnational region, rather than simply a borderland economy. In this way, the Great Lakes region became important well-beyond the border itself, and was integrated into larger flows of goods, capital, and people between Canada and the United States. Bukowczyk, Nora Faires, David R. Smith, and Randy William Widdis, The Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650-1990 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), p. 3.

drugs, and users would move through established networks according to the price and availability of the commodity. Those who were able to successfully evade customs enforcement were thus able to use the border as a gateway connecting them to larger regional and transnational markets. In this way, though cross-border interactions intensified near the actual border, they also extended well beyond it. While this study is grounded in the borderland spaces surrounding Windsor and Detroit, it argues that these cities were important in part because of the role they played in facilitating the expansion of larger illicit markets and cross-border flows of people and commodities.

Second, just as borderlands extend beyond actual geographical spaces, cities in close proximity to the border are not always first and foremost shaped by their position along the national line. Building on the influential work of Gloria Anzaldúa, borderlands scholarship often celebrates forms of ‘cultural hybridity’ and “contact zones” wherein multiple cultures collide, overlap, and become interwoven within particular borderlands space. In this framework, borderlands become sites of constant contestation that serve as fruitful sites of resistance against totalizing national projects. This literature subsequently tends to privilege the borderland relationship as the primary factor shaping men’s and women’s experiences within these regions. An attention to vice in the Detroit-Windsor borderland makes clear that although these

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17 Using her personal experiences of living in-between multiple borders and social locations, Anzaldúa invoked the concept of the "new mestiza," arguing for the need to embrace multiple identities in order to break down Western binaries. She thus saw multiple “borderlands” as sites of resistance and as spaces that enable people to embrace these multiple, and often conflicting, identities. Alfred Arteaga likewise invokes the concept of “border cultures” as “the production of cultural meanings at the crossing of cultures, where cultures meet and get transformed and continuously reconstituted.” “Border crossings” is used as a material referent to social, cultural, and geographic space constantly being formed by multiple interactions. Gunter H. Lenz, “Transnational American Studies,” in Klaus J. Milich and Jeffrey M. Peck, eds., *Multiculturalism in Transit: A German-American Exchange* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), pp. 48-149. Building on the concept of the border as a site of cultural mingling and contestation, Mary Louise Pratt employs the term “contact zone” to define “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and
were border cities, they also shared features common to many North American industrial cities in the postwar period. The experiences of Detroit and Windsor residents were often shaped by national and regional issues as much as border issues. For example, selling sex and drugs functioned as a form of illicit labor in the working-class neighborhoods of Detroit and Windsor. The experience of men and women working in these industries was similar in both cities, and their positions within illicit economies—including gender and class stratification common within them—suggests that their experiences were shaped more by shared economic conditions than by the national border that separated them.

In weaving together the analytic frameworks of 'borderland' and 'vice,' this study is careful to allow the evidence to determine when and how each of these frameworks matters. National borders clearly shaped the cities of Windsor and Detroit, but they were not always the key defining feature shaping life in these cities. This dissertation argues that borderlands studies need to be attentive to the complexity of when and how the border matters, and be willing to let other issues come to the foreground when necessary. At times, the lines defining the national border were clearly demarcated, like at the established crossing points; in other cases, the border blended into the wider social geography of the urban spaces it helped to define. Thus, the ways in which the border shaped vice economies in Windsor and Detroit at particular moments in time, and in response to specific circumstances, provides insight into the multiple meanings of the national line that divides them and the way this line became embedded in larger social processes affecting the region.

From Borderland Economies to Vice Economies

If the lines demarcating the borderland were not always clear and often highly contested, lines defining 'licit' and 'illicit' interactions were likewise blurred in the urban borderland. The meaning of 'vice' has a long genealogy in North American history, and has most often been associated with the underbelly of society—with the polluting and corrupting influences that nonetheless seem to attract a large number of participants. While vice has often been used as a code word for prostitution, it is also a blanket term that covers a wide range of illicit activities such as gambling, drinking, and drug use. This dissertation employs ‘vice’ in this broader sense and uses it to identify the multiple and interrelated activities that violated normative moral codes while often—though not necessarily—breaking the law. As Itty Abraham and van Schendel argue, the notions of 'licit' and 'illicit' at the heart of vice denote meanings beyond the actual letter of the law. They are instead ways of defining the social perception of activities that become defined as criminal.\footnote{Willem Van Schendel and Itty Abraham, Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization (Bloomington: Indiana, 2005), p. 18.} In this way, this study is less concerned with the legal status of vice than with the multiple and contested social meanings it came to signify.

Despite the close connections between the wide range of activities covered by ‘vice,’ this project focuses on prostitution and heroin economies for several interrelated reasons. First, the regulation of these practices followed similar trajectories in North American history, with the first burst of sustained and intense political attention towards both prostitution and drug use taking place in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.\footnote{Elizabeth Bernstein, Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 8.} Progressive reformers waged large-scale campaigns against these activities, and viewed prostitution and drug use as the literal
manifestations of the most dangerous elements of modernity. Their close association during the Progressive Era continued over the following decades, and by the mid-twentieth century, commercial sex and recreational drug use were perceived and stigmatized in similar ways. Prostitution and heroin alike invited “a slew of gender and racial fascinations, notions of the domesticated and the alien, of good/bad substances, and elaborate fantasies about human loss of control—or inversely, fantasies about the state’s possible ‘control’” over them. In the Detroit-Windsor context, the intense fears sex and drug economies often invoked made their existence all the more sensational in the postwar period, and the image of the drug-addicted prostitute came to epitomize the ultimate consequences of illicit vice activities.

Studies of vice industries in the Progressive Era have dominated North American historiography, in part because of the widespread power and influence of anti-vice activities during that period. This literature provides key insight into struggles to define illicit activities, attempts at regulating it, and how racial and class lines determined the way these activities were perceived by various interest groups. The development of vice industries in the period between

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1945 and 1960, though, has been woefully under-explored despite important developments that took place in postwar urban centers. As many scholars have shown, the end of the war began a period of economic decline in many industrial centers, particularly in the Northeast, Midwest, and Ontario’s Golden Horseshoe. The influx of African American migrants from the rural South reshaped race relations in northern American cities, and informal and institutionalized racism transformed urban landscape into contested spaces marked by segregation, inequality, and at times, interracial violence. Likewise, residents across Canada and the United States witnessed the deterioration of many older, once vibrant, working-class communities. Suburban growth took place around both Canadian and American cities and marked a new shift in spatial patterns wherein the older industrial city centers began to decline as many middle-class residents moved

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25 The large-scale shifts of residential populations in postwar American cities also brought with them an overhaul of neighborhood institutions. “As white residents fled Rustbelt cities, leaving African Americans concentrated in urban areas, the places that drew people together and supplied their needs—recreational centers, corner stores, savings and loans, churches, and synagogues—also experienced racial and class turnover.” Jordan Stanger-Ross, “Neither Fight Nor Flight: Urban Synagogues in Postwar Philadelphia,” *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 6 (Sept. 2006) p.791.
farther and farther from downtown cores. Detroit and Windsor were prime examples of these transformations, and the expansion of vice economies therein was in many ways a result of these major social and economic transformations taking place in the region. Illegal enterprises like selling sex and drugs took increasingly visible roles in many of the downtown neighborhoods left behind in the shifting postwar economy. Within this context, men and women came to rely on illicit activities as a source of entertainment and income in increasingly depressed urban centers.

While much of the postwar literature focuses on flight and movement out of these neighborhoods, illicit economies provide one way to explore the lives of those who continued to live in urban centers. Towards this end, vice activities functioned as an important form of urban leisure in Windsor and Detroit, bringing men and women together across multiple geographic and social lines. As a distinctly urban phenomenon, illicit economies were fueled in part by the large number of outsiders who traveled to the cities for illicit adventure. The draw of the urban border space in particular played an important role in the local commercial sex industry, and Americans and Canadians alike crossed the national line in order to participate. On both sides of the border, prostitution and heroin economies were linked to wider vice economies, and relied on the unofficial networks of individuals—including cab drivers, bellhops, bartenders, and other

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figures—who helped the out-of-time clientele find what they were looking for. Visitors from neighboring cities, states, and provinces brought the necessary capital into downtown neighborhoods in Detroit and Windsor, suggesting that we need to understand the flows of men and women into these industrial neighborhoods in addition to those who moved out due to deteriorating conditions or white flight.

If the study of vice industries is in part the study of those made their homes in working-class neighborhoods in downtown Detroit and Windsor, it is also about how their actions shaped the communities in which they lived. Towards this end, this dissertation demonstrates that prostitution and drug selling in fact played a central role in the lives of working-class men and women, often providing much-needed income. A focus on illicit forms of work provides an important counter to popular narratives of postwar employment, which tend to focus on the ascendancy of labor and many men's and women's transition from working- to middle-class status in the postwar years. Many African American and working-class residents were excluded from this form of social mobility, and instead their experience in irregular and part-time work often encouraged them to take up alternative means of money-making. Within this context, illicit

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economies provided alternative work environments where men and women sometimes expressed a sense of independence, mobility, and sociability lacking in formal employment positions. In this way, illicit economies were in fact deeply embedded in working-class communities and reflected some men and women's attempts to address their social and economic marginalization within urban centers.

While vice economies functioned as alternative forms of labor and leisure in industrial and working-class neighborhoods of Detroit and Windsor, they also came to reflect many of the social divides present in the larger formal economy of the postwar years. Consequently, though illicit interactions offered moments of transgression—such as the ability to engage in non-normative sexual activity or interracial sexual exchanges—these possibilities were often limited by the larger structural make-up of illicit economies. For example, though selling heroin provided some local residents with the additional income needed to pay for their basic living expenses and their drug habits, the heroin market also functioned with an internal logic of inequality that relegated African American and white working-class sellers to the lowest, least profitable levels of the trade. In contrast to white ethnic men who tended to dominate the lucrative business of large-scale importation, local pushers—the ones most likely to be arrested for their activities—also made the least amount of money. Thus, the racial stratification present

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30 This dissertation draws sociological studies of illicit economies, which tend to emphasize the multiple meanings these industries had in the lives of men and women. Studies of drug economies have emphasized the fact that drug-selling represented an alternative form of work and argue that we need to view these activities as part of the daily work life of many urban residents. Feminist studies on sex work have also argued that we need to take sex work seriously as work, and to understand this 'immaterial' care work as another form of feminized labor. See: Denise Brennan, “Selling Sex for Visas: Sex Tourism as a Stepping-Stone to International Migration,” in Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002); Amalia Cabezas, “Between Love and Money: Sex, Tourism, and Citizenship in Cuba and the Dominican Republic,” Signs: Journal of Women and Culture Vol. 29, no. 4 (2004); Edward A. Preble and John J. Casey, Jr., “Taking Care of Business--- The Heroin User's Life on the Street,” International Journal of the Addictions, 4 (March, 1969): 1-24; Paul Draus, Juliette Roddy, and Mark Greenwald, “‘I Always Kept a Job': Income Generation, Heroin Use, and Economic Uncertainty in 21st Century Detroit,” Journal of Drug Issues 40, no. 4 (Oct. 2010), pp. 859-862.
in many formal economic sectors also became entrenched in vice industries. While it is easy to slip into a celebratory narrative that views men's and women's work in illicit economies as transgressive attempts to counter their social and economic marginalization, a closer look demonstrates that participation in illicit economies often failed to solve their problems and could instead sometimes compound them. While we need to take into account people's decisions to participate in these economies, the social and physical dangers of commercial sex work and heroin use reminds us that they were often temporary solutions that were unable to address the broader structural changes taking place in the urban environment.

**Building a Border, Building a Nation**

The structural inequalities animating the illicit economy were in part the result of strict attempts at regulating and suppressing them. Indeed, the illicit and illegal status of commercial sex and heroin use sparked complex processes of regulation that reached far beyond law enforcement officials enacting anti-vice laws. Countless local residents also engaged in forms of moral regulation in an attempt to ensure that their neighborhoods would be safe and free from the corrupting influences of vice. An attention to the regulation of vice along the national border provides unique insight into its broader meaning in the postwar environment. In the border cities of Detroit and Windsor, anti-vice activities became a distinct form of nation-building aimed at defining who did or did not belong in North American society. In this way, efforts to eliminate the corrupting influences of cross-border vice at both federal and local levels helped define notions of proper citizenship in the Canadian and American nations.
Securing the border became particularly important in the postwar North America, as concerns over the global spread of communism sparked a growing belief that outsiders could threaten the safety and future of the nation. These fears caused federal officials to work to regulate the national line more effectively, and both American and Canadian officials attempted to address the perceived problems of porous borders at the federal level. For example, in 1955, in response to growing fears over the spread of drug addiction and the smuggling of illegal drugs through an illicit global market, the US and Canadian senates established special committees to investigate the problem of illegal drug use. The committees’ recommendations demonstrate that the US and Canadian authorities were united by a prohibitionist approach to enforcement, one that relied on strict regulation at the border that divided them. In this way, their respective national agendas overlapped in important ways and customs authorities and enforcement officials attempted to work together along the national line in order to thwart illegal smuggling attempts.

Yet this process of regulation was extremely difficult and the large number of users in cities closest to the national border suggests that enforcement policies were not nearly as successful as officials had hoped. The senate investigations demonstrate that federal regulations were often out of touch with the way enforcement took place on the ground, and local conditions often led to diplomatic ruptures between Canadian and American officials. United in their belief that they needed to stamp out these immoral industries, both sides struggled with how to do so without also alienating the neighboring nation they saw as key to their smuggling problem. The process of nation-building could be incredibly tricky at the formal national line, which brought together the disparate perspectives and interests of the nations sharing the border.
If the national border signified the state’s attempt to define and protect the nation, anti-vice activism enabled the average citizen to participate in informal and unofficial forms of nation-building. In the postwar years, many seemingly disparate groups came together in order to fight what they saw as the crumbling of the central moral pillars propping up the postwar nation. For Americans and Canadians alike, their fears were realized in the development of vice districts and all of the associated outcomes, such as the spread of venereal disease, addiction, and transience, and the breakdown of traditional family patterns. Anti-vice struggles were based on binaries of good and evil, insiders and outsiders, and healthy and diseased, which worked to reinforce the notion that there were desirable and undesirable types of citizens. If not carefully controlled, the latter could have a detrimental impact on the lives of decent, law-abiding citizens.

Anti-vice activism and debates over proper citizenship took a distinctly national character in the border cities, and debates over the origins and structure of illicit economies often emphasized the fact that they were imports from across the national line. Windsor residents and city officials blamed their crime problem on the large influx of Americans who crossed the river for illicit purposes. The notion that American cities were more dangerous and corrupt than their Canadian counterparts animated debates over vice economies, as exemplified by the aftermath of the Windsor Police corruption scandal. Americans, too, believed that vice was in many ways a problem from the outside and often blamed the resilience of urban vice districts on international syndicates who exploited the conditions of poverty in order to make money. Smugglers, crime bosses, and other criminal elements were seen as a direct threat to the health of the nation, and national debates about vice economies often centered on the perception that they were run by powerful transnational criminals. In this way, residents of the border cities were particularly
perceptive to the transnational implications of vice, and their tendency to blame outsiders for their own vice problems reflected the increasingly nationalistic nature of postwar anti-vice discourse.

Blaming vice on “outsiders” was certainly not unique to the postwar period, but the Cold War context shaped how this took place in important ways. Postwar anti-vice efforts reflected the notion that ordinary citizens had an important role to play in the nation-building project. The state could only do so much—it was up to the individual to defend the moral foundations of his or her community. Anti-vice activities on both sides of the border were united by four key themes, including urban decline, transience, moral and physical health, and the breakdown of well-ordered nuclear families. These themes were central tenets of the nation-building projects, and these loosely aligned ideologies in turn helped to define the role of proper and productive citizenship. These problems in fact worked hand-in-hand, as the influx of outsiders (both from outside the nations and from other regions within them, such as the rural South and Quebec) led to declining urban conditions, the spread of disease, and the breakdown of families and community order. Within this context, the importation of Chinese heroin was viewed as a deliberate plot by Communist China to weaken the morale of North Americans; commercial sex was perceived as a direct violation of safe, state-sanctioned sexual intimacy; and transnational vice syndicates perverted Capitalism by creating markets that supposedly functioned completely outside of formal economies and proper flows of capital. Anti-vice activities thus enlisted individuals in this expansive “war against organized crime” and vice, believing that the average
citizen was also a soldier of sorts who had an important role in the fight against moral decay that was taking on global proportions.31

In the Detroit-Windsor border region, anti-vice activism also became a distinctly racialized nation-building project and developed as a response to the major social and demographic changes taking place in the postwar years. As the Second Great Migration that fueled the industrial boom of World War II brought thousands of African Americans to the city of Detroit, debates over the place of non-white citizens intensified in local communities.32 White Detroiters and Windsorites alike expressed fears that African Americans brought lawlessness, vice, and crime into communities, and debates over licit and illicit forms of leisure often emphasized the problem of race-mixing that took place in these contexts. Official and unofficial segregation policies in public places and leisure establishments occurred on both sides of the border, and segregation became a process that united white Detroit and Windsor residents. Thus, despite the common perception that the race problem was distinctly American, Windsor residents often worked to ensure that local social institutions, community groups, and public establishments were just as segregated as many of the white communities across the national line.

Illicit leisure and vice likewise were shaped by unofficial forms of segregation, and the stigmatized status of commercial sex and illegal drug use heightened racialized debates over who did or did not belong in the border cities. For example, contemporary anti-vice advocates were particularly concerned with the growth of African American prostitution in Detroit and the fact

that it was largely white male customers who kept the industry afloat. These fears were expressed by both black and white reformers, the former primarily concerned with the deterioration of black neighborhoods and the latter worried that black vice districts would spill over into white communities. Windsor often functioned as a segregated city where white Detroiters—intimidated by the racial antagonism that characterized many neighborhoods in the city's core—could escape for a weekend of illicit fun and pleasure. In fact, Windsor's sex industry catered almost exclusively to white clients despite the fact that Detroit's African American population more than tripled in the postwar period, from 9.2 percent of the total population in 1940 to 28.9 percent in 1960. In this way, the sex trade in Windsor operated as a form of white flight, where white Detroiters could choose to partake in illicit activities while avoiding the racial tension found in many public spaces in the city of Detroit. Racial boundaries were therefore sometimes compounded by the national line and served to unite white Detroit and Windsor residents at the expense of black Americans and Canadians living in the border region. In this way, the nation-building project was explicitly racialized, and the battle over who was welcome in the border cities was also waged through the local illicit economies.

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On the surface, the 1950s Windsor Police scandal seems to be a common story about authorities turning a blind eye to tacitly accepted vice activities. Upon closer examination it becomes clear that this brief incident embodied some of the key cultural and economic struggles developing in the postwar borderland. “Ambassadors of Pleasure” provides a social and cultural history of vice in the Detroit-Windsor borderland, tracing both the material and symbolic lines that shaped these

33 Sugrue, The Origins of the Urban Crisis, 23.
postwar urban centers. It follows Gootenberg’s insight that the study of illicit flows and activities requires both a “‘structural’ and 'discursive' approach, one that understands the cool hidden realities of flows along with their overtly heated representations.” The chapters that follow analyze both the structural realities of the vice economies in the Detroit-Windsor region and the symbolic meaning they came to represent in the broader social context.

Chapter One begins by tracing the material and metaphorical meaning of the border connecting Detroit and Windsor as they developed over the first half of the twentieth century. It examines licit and illicit forms of cross-border travel, and how the push and pull between state intentions and borderlanders' understandings of their community were enacted through cross-border vice and tourism. Chapters Two and Three subsequently examine the expansion of these illicit cross-border interactions in the postwar period. Sex and drug economies functioned as forms of both labor and leisure, and these chapters trace the way the social lines of class, race, and gender shaped the daily experiences of those most closely involved. In some cases, illicit activities challenged normative social boundaries, as in one's decision to participate in an illicit heroin subculture. Yet illicit economies also operated within the larger political economy of the border region. These chapters thus explore when and how vice was transgressive, and when it worked to reinforce larger structural inequalities shaping life in the border region.

The final two chapters place the illicit economies within local and national debates about the nature of postwar society and how to best eliminate its unwanted elements. They explore the process of nation-building at the local and national level, arguing that citizenship was enforced through official as well as unofficial means. Chapter Four examines the 1955 senate committees

in close detail in order to understand when Canadian and American policies created a united front against drug smuggling, and when the complicated nature of the national line made a united approach untenable. Chapter Five examines the way local and informal anti-vice efforts worked to reinforce state objectives at enact exclusionary definitions of citizenship in the postwar years. It traces the ideological connections that link anti-vice efforts across the national line, arguing that they served to reinforce particular white, middle-class ideals at the expense of working-class and poor communities in the cities of Detroit and Windsor. In this way, the struggle to define and control illicit activities was a broader struggle for the future of postwar North America, and the Detroit-Windsor border region became a microcosm of larger social debates over the future of the North American city and the meaning of citizenship in the Canadian and American nations.
Chapter One
The ‘Border Spirit’: The Roots of Labor, Leisure, and Sin in the Detroit-Windsor Borderland

On November 11, 1929 hundreds of thousands of Detroit and Windsor residents came together to celebrate the opening of the Ambassador Bridge that connected the two cities over the Detroit River. Planned so as to coincide with Armistice Day celebrations, thousands of onlookers from both sides of the river stormed to the center of the 7,500-foot bridge to watch the ribbon-cutting ceremony. According to the New York Times, “The throngs sensed the spirit of this gesture of friendliness, and burst into tremendous cheering. Canadian bands were on the American terminal playing 'America' the anthem while American bands were at the Sandwich end playing 'Oh, Canada.' Outstanding citizens of both communities looked on with bared heads. The miracle that was dreamed of fifty-five years ago had come to pass.” As part of the celebration, Michigan Governor Fred Green gave a speech in a radio broadcast explaining that this was “a physical connection between the highways of our own State and those of a friendly people who live across a national boundary from us. It is a spiritual bond of steel between the territories of two nations, each striving to achieve the best purposes of their own citizens and for the citizenship of the world.” Similarly, Charles McRae, Minister of Mines of Ontario, spoke for the Dominion: “The Ambassador Bridge opens today as another link in the friendship chain of the peoples of the United States and Canada.”

There was no shortage of flowery language in the news reports that covered the event in papers across North America.\(^2\) In fact, the opening of the bridge became an important symbolic moment representing the increasingly close relationship between Americans and Canadians and the modern methods of building and production that allowed this dream “of fifty-five years” to come to fruition. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the Detroit-Windsor border region developed into the central crossing point between the two countries, with millions of tourists, commuters, and immigrants traveling across it. Between 1900 and 1960, people came to the region from across North America and the world, hoping to take part in booming economic conditions and the cross-border fluidity that allowed men and women to travel between the two countries with relative ease.\(^3\) They participated in industries, travel, and trade that crossed the national line and subsequently emboldened the transnational nature of the region. The opening of the Ambassador Bridge was both the result of this increased traffic as well as a symbol of the


\(^3\) Travel across what would become the Detroit-Windsor border of course predated the formation of the border itself. Historian Richard White's characterizes some of the earliest interactions between French and Native groups in the Great Lakes region as a “middle ground” where a form of cultural hybridity took place, enabling disparate cultures to live together in mutually beneficial ways. Even after the establishment of the boundary line between Upper Canada and the newly formed American nation in 1783, regular interactions between communities split by the new dividing line continued to take place. Several historical examinations of this process demonstrate that in many ways the implementation of the border actually signaled an artificial line dividing an organic community that continued to be connected despite the imposition of a national boundary. White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Historian Alan Taylor demonstrates that even the process of agreeing on a set boundary was incredibly complicated and involved negotiations between multiple parties who had inhabited the middle ground. Taylor, “The Divided Ground: Upper Canada, New York, and the Iroquois Six Nations, 1783-1815,” Journal of the Early Republic Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring, 2002), pp. 55-75. For further background on some of the early migration across the Canada-US boundary, see: Bruno Ramirez, *Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States, 1900-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), Chapter One, “Societies in Motion in Nineteenth Century North America”; John J. Bukowczyk, Nora Faires, David R. Smith, and Randy Widdis, *Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650-1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005).
hopes of future prosperity, freedom of movement, and cross-border community building between Michigan and Ontario residents.

While city boosters, public officials, and the media seemed sure of the close relationship between Detroit and Windsor residents, their powerful language raises questions of what exactly a ‘friendly border’ was and what it meant to live in a community that straddled the national line. Over the last fifty years, borderlands studies have taken up these questions in many different contexts, seeking to understand the role that national borders play in shaping the lives of those who live within the adjacent region. Central to much of this literature is the notion that a borderland is much more than a geographical location; it is also the locale in which the meeting of multiple territories, jurisdictions, and/or nations facilitates the mingling and reconfiguring of multiple cultures. Borders function as “line[s] of mediation, and in this regard, the border and its adjacent spaces become places for sharing” that open up the potential for community integration.4

Yet borderland scholars have demonstrated that these cross-border interactions often spark conflicts, even amongst the friendliest of neighbors.5 In his study of the Canada-US border, Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly argues that there is in fact a “tug of war” between culture, local political

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5 The study of contestation and conflict at borderlands has had an important impact on the development of the field. Julian Minghi argues that the history of borderlands has been based upon a conflict model that privileges borders subjected to contestation. Regions subject to war and its aftermath and hostile relations between neighbors are by far the most represented within border studies. This study contends that conflict occurs on many different scales, and that even seemingly minor disputes in the Detroit-Windsor region had a profound impact on the meaning of the borderland in the region. Minghi, “From Conflict to Harmony in Border Landscapes,” in Dennis Rumley and Julian V. Minghi, eds., The Geography of Border Landscapes (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 17.
clout, market forces, and the multiple activities of government that shape a border region. Inherent in these competing forces is a tension between the notion of the border as a connecting point between cultures and the border as a regulatory line separating distinct communities. These competing powers are likewise shaped by what Ad Knotter identifies as the “border paradox.” For Knotter, rather than being united by their similarities, transborder difference is in fact what encourages the movement and mobility of people across the border. In this sense, the “border acts as a bridge, precisely because it is a barrier. People living in the borderlands cross this bridge because they want to profit–economically, socially or culturally–from the transborder differences.” In this way the border paradox is at the center of the concept of borderland since “the boundary creates its own distinctive region, making an element of division also the vehicle for regional definition.”

The notion of the ‘friendly border’—with all its inherent contradictions—directly shaped the relationship between Detroit and Windsor residents in the first half of the twentieth century. As industrial boomtowns, the cities shared similar economic roots and attracted a broad array of people who came to take advantage of their rapidly expanding industrial and urban development. These migration patterns, though, also corresponded with widespread concerns over undesirable immigrants and the porousness of the national border. Consequently, increasingly rigid immigration policies were implemented at the very time when movement across the Detroit-Windsor border had reached new heights. The Ambassador Bridge, with its 'modern'

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7 Brunet-Jailly, Borderlands, p. 6.
infrastructure designed for efficient customs inspections, came to symbolize this tension between fostering an industrial borderlands community and enforcing strict regulations over the movement of people and goods across the national line.

The opening of the Ambassador Bridge facilitated cross-border travel, but it also had unintended consequences. While Canadians and Americans crossed the national line for legal forms of labor, leisure, and adventure, they also took advantage of the cross-border networks of prostitution, gambling, drinking, and narcotics use. Prohibition in particular helped to shape the relationship between Detroit and Windsor residents, raising political and moral questions about the meaning of their close relationship. Illegal liquor sales and the intricate vice trades that developed as a result came to be key forms through which Canadian and American residents discussed their relationship. By the 1920s, the cities had become “wide open towns,” sparking intrigue and excitement in some, and concern and fears in others. When illegal enterprises like liquor smuggling brought Americans and Canadians into contact with one another across the “Detroit-Windsor Funnel,” it likewise challenged the very notion that their interactions were best characterized as harmonious and peaceful exchanges undertaken by law-abiding citizens on each side of the border.

Issues of citizenship and cross-border mobility became particularly important in the postwar years, and debates over the national line came to embody larger struggles to define freedom and belonging within a Cold War framework. Economic and demographic growth encouraged the development of cross-border tourism, leisure, and travel following the war. With Prohibition safely behind them, city officials once again touted the freedom of movement

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9 A key part of these discussions involved blaming the other city for the problems faced in one's own community. Later chapters will show that this is a pattern that continues into the postwar period, with Americans and Canadians viewing the influx of crime and vice as outgrowths of their close proximity to the national border.
enabled by the travel across the border region. This freedom, however, was often limited along the lines of race, class, and gender. Windsorites in particular struggled with the uneven relationship that developed between the two cities. They often lived under the economic shadow of their American neighbor, and the border sparked conflicting desires on the part of Windsor residents. They were torn between enjoying the economic and social privileges offered by their location on the border and reinforcing a distinctive Canadian national identity.\(^\text{10}\) This chapter reformulates Knotter's notion of “border paradox” by demonstrating that in the Detroit-Windsor region this paradox relied not only on the fact that the border acted as a barrier, but also on the fact that this barrier created an asymmetrical relationship between people on both sides of the border. This uneven power dynamic was facilitated by the national divide but also by divisions of race, class, gender, and geography that shaped the cities on both sides. The asymmetrical nature of the Detroit-Windsor region, then, was as much about internal processes of identity formation and place-making as it was about national lines, and this constant push and pull between sameness and difference was one of the key factors shaping the borderland relationship between Detroit and Windsor by the post-World War II period.

Boomtowns, Borders, and the Development of Customs Enforcement in the Early Twentieth Century

The cities of Detroit and Windsor came into their own in the first decades of the twentieth century, and the region quickly became the manufacturing hub of the automobile industry. Historians have paid much attention to the industrial nature of the border region for good reason: from the turn of the twentieth century on, the growth of the cities was a direct result of the industrial development that took place therein. Detroit has been a focal point of this literature since it both materially and symbolically represented the massive change that took place in urban centers over the first half of the twentieth century. As the quickly-emerging automotive capital, Detroit came to symbolize ideals of hope, prosperity, and consumption in the national imagination. While it did not invent the automobile, its contribution was in the organization of methods of production and distribution, “thereby transforming what had been little more than a toy, to a universal and indispensable mass product whose impact upon cities has been equaled only by that of the steam engine and electricity.” By the 1940s, automotive and related industries made up over sixty percent of the manufacturing in the region. The remaining forty percent of industrial labor was performed in multiple enterprises such as furniture building,


12 City of Detroit, “Master Plan Reports: Economic Base of Detroit,” (Detroit: City Plan Commission, 1944), p. 4
brewing, stove making, oil refineries, salt mines, steel miles, food processing plants, and so on.\textsuperscript{13} Local industries built on businesses that had developed in the nineteenth century and transformed them over the first decades of the twentieth century into massive productions plants structured by the principals of Taylorism.

Likewise, Windsor's growth as an industrial center was due to several related factors that came together in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1904, the Ford Motor Company, in order to gain Imperial trade benefits, moved their Detroit-based operations across the river and into the surrounding Canadian Border Cities of Windsor, East Windsor (later Ford City), Walkerville, and Sandwich. With the onset of industrialization sparked by World War I, Ford became the predominant industry in the region, and by the 1930s the Border Cities merged politically into a single community with a population of over 100,000.\textsuperscript{14} Very quickly, Windsor's economy came to depend on automotive and related industries, which were extensions of parent companies located in Michigan. The extensive rise of branch plants in Windsor meant that its growth was increasingly intertwined with American corporate and economic interests. In the first half of the twentieth century, Windsor housed the Ford Motor Company, plant No. 7 of the Studebaker Corporation Limited, the Chrysler Corporation, the Graham-Paige Motors Limited, the Hupp Motor Car Company, the Packard Motor Car Company, and the Godfredson Corporation. These various car producers required plants that would manufacture automobile parts and accessories, and by 1935, there were thirty such plants located in the city.\textsuperscript{15} By 1939,

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\textsuperscript{14} Joan Poole, “The Evolution of Social Services in the Border Cities During the Great Depression” (PhD Dissertation, University of Windsor, 1990), p. 20.
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sixty-five percent of those employed in the newly amalgamated city worked in the thriving auto industry.\footnote{Mary Hill, “A City Looks At Itself,” \textit{Canadian Business}, Vol. 25 (April 1952), p. 28.}

The rapid industrialization that occurred during World War I brought the first major economic boom to the region, and the cities of Detroit and Windsor subsequently experienced a large influx of workers who moved to take advantage of the prosperous industries. Workers came to Detroit from across the nation and the world, contributing to its development into a cosmopolitan city. By 1910, the foreign-born made up 156,000 of the total population of 465,000, the majority coming from Canada, Russia, Austria, England, Hungary, Poland, Italy, Ireland, Scotland, and Belgium.\footnote{Sidney Glazer, \textit{Detroit: A Study in Urban Development} (New York: Bookman Associates, Inc., 1965), pp. 107-8.} Americans were also drawn to Detroit from across the country. In particular, African Americans from the US South began to have a large presence in the city.\footnote{The Great Migration shaped cities across the east coast and the Midwest, and James Gregory’s work has demonstrated that their migration had a profound impact on both the cities they moved to and also the cities, towns, and rural communities they left behind. Gregory, \textit{The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).} The majority of Southern black migrants who came to work in the booming industrial plants settled in Paradise Valley, a densely populated, sixty-square-block neighborhood in Detroit’s lower east side.\footnote{Sugrue, \textit{The Origins of the Urban Crisis}, p. 24.} In 1910, the population of Detroit was 466,000; by 1930, that number had increased to 1,720,000.\footnote{Steve Babson, \textit{Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town} (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986), p. 27.}

Windsor also experienced a large influx of workers in the early decades of the twentieth century. Smooth connections between steamships, Great Lakes steamers, and rail roads attracted thousands upon thousands of immigrants through Quebec, Montreal, Chicago, Buffalo, and
Detroit/Windsor. The first major influx of migrants occurred in the 1910s and was mainly comprised of members of the so-called ‘New Migration.’ Among the newcomers were Ukrainians, Poles, Russians, Yugoslavians, Hungarians, Germans, Finns, Scandinavians, Italians, Greeks, and Syrians. As a result, the population of Windsor increased dramatically during these years, from 15,198 in 1901, to 23,433 and 55,935 in 1911 and 1921, respectively. Though this remarkable increase was not limited to Windsor, the city’s position as a border city attracted a particularly transient population. Between 1911 and 1929, there was a large movement of unattached male workers into the city, including European immigrants without families, single men from Canadian farms, and Chinese railway workers in search of new employment.

Part of the asymmetry of the border region developed out of the disparate positions held by Detroit and Windsor, the former attracting workers, travelers, and tourists across the border and the latter functioning as the gateway through which those men and women traveled. As a consequence of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1917, which was designed to reduce the number of undesirable immigrants, especially from Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe, many came to Windsor with the hopes of eventually crossing the border. Similarly, Anglo and French Canadians in the first decades of the twentieth century, drawn to the industrial cities of Michigan, used Windsor as their departure point. Between 1900 and 1930, four out of five Anglo Canadian

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migrants who passed through Windsor settled in the city of Detroit.²⁷ Many Ontario residents also worked in Detroit, and the population of Canadian commuters expanded exponentially by the end of the 1920s. In 1927, for example, 15,000 of 25,334 employed residents of the Border Cities were commuters who worked in Detroit, a situation unparalleled in any other large Canadian community.²⁸ With so many immigrants focused on migrating out of Windsor into Detroit, and the large number of Canadian workers who were employed in industries across the river, Detroit functioned as the central metropolis of the region.

Though the demographic developments and cross-border fluidity of the Detroit-Windsor region occurred in localized ways, it was also part of a broader context of growing concern over particular immigrants and the need to more closely regulate the influx of men and women into Canada and the United States. Historians of immigration, race, and ethnicity have long noted the significant impact these national debates had on port cities and major industrial centers across North America. As early as the 1850s, the need for cheap immigrant labor was tempered with fears over job competition, racial degeneration, and labor radicalism supposedly caused by immigrant groups. This tension sparked heated debates over who to let into the countries and how to regulate their migration and settlement.²⁹ In both Canada and the United States, anti-

immigration laws were put in place to curb the influx of so-called undesirable immigrants, including those from Asia, and Southern and Eastern Europe. These acts, including the Page Act of 1875, the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885, the 1917 Immigration Act, and the 1924 National Origins Act (Johnson-Reed Act), ultimately had the effect of cutting off immigration from the targeted countries. Immigrants could be detained for months at inspection stations like Angel and Ellis Islands and were often ultimately turned away if determined to be inadmissible according to ever-shifting immigration policies. Historian, Mae Ngai argues that, “immigration restriction produced an illegal alien as a new legal and political subject.” These immigration policies remapped the nation by establishing a, “racial and national hierarchy that favored some immigrants over others.” These restrictive policies worked to delineate the line between proper citizens and outsiders along racial, ethnic, and national lines, and significantly changed the experience of immigration and cross-border movement between Canada and the United States.

Central to this racialized exclusion process was a focus on the need to build effective border controls. Since the establishment of an official boundary line separating US and British territories in the Great Lakes region at the end of the eighteenth century, government and imperial officials had attempted, to varying degrees, to regulate the cross-border movement of

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both goods and people within the Great Lakes border region. Improvements to transportation that occurred in the nineteenth century increased cross-border flows of labor, goods, and capital, further intensifying debates over how to facilitate a “protective yet permeable border.” By the late-nineteenth century, the American and Canadian governments began to implement strict policies that changed the relatively fluid nature of the national line. In 1893, the two nations entered into the Canadian Agreement, which held Canadian transportation companies to US immigration laws and allowed US Customs Inspectors to be stationed at Canadian ports of entry. Over the following decades, this agreement was expanded to include streetcar companies, bus lines, the Detroit and Windsor Tunnel, and eventually airlines. By 1908, the US Immigration Service had implemented enough stations to consider its regulation of the northern border complete and comprehensive. The Immigration Act of 1917 gave US authorities further power to inspect all aliens, including Canadians, and required them to prove, “clearly and beyond a doubt” that they were entitled to enter the country. In 1924, the same year that Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Act, they also established the US Border Patrol, which was tasked with

32 John Bukowczyk argues that the boundary line separating British and American territories in the Great Lakes region can be characterized as the Long War, a period in which “two neo-mercantilist republic-in-the-making vied over territories...” The Long War, “also repeatedly remade the Great Lakes region, superimposing a permanent international boundary that partitioned it as well as several more fluid internal dividing lines.” Bukowczyk in Bukowczyk, Nora Faires, David R. Smith, and Randy William Widdis, eds., Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Region as Transnational Basin (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), pp. 24-25.
34 Ramirez, Crossing the 49th Parallel, p. 39. These changes also took place along the US-Mexico border. George Sanchez argues that in the early twentieth century, the process of crossing from Mexico into the US was changed from a “casual and easy task...to a tense and formal ritual of suspicion.” Sanchez, Becoming Mexican American (Smith, “The Immigration and Naturalization Service,” pp. 129-130.
monitoring the movement of people at and between border crossing points. In this way the
desire to keep unwanted immigrants from entering the country was intimately linked to the
perceived need to verify the legitimacy of all people who crossed the national line—including
American and Canadian residents of the border cities.

Throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, the Canadian and American federal
governments continued to work closely with one another in order to set up a system of customs
screening at major checkpoints. Much to the chagrin of Canadian commuters who worked in
Detroit, US customs instituted the Border Crossing Card (BCC), which was designed for aliens
and citizens living within ten miles of the national line. While in some cases this card could
make crossing easier for regular commuters, historian Marian Smith also identifies it as the,
“first major episode in the long history of Canadian commuter complaints.” Attempts to stem
unwanted movement across the border ultimately had the effect of placing local border residents
under stricter regulation and changed the daily experience of crossing between the borderland
cities.

Ironically, while immigration to the United States via the Canadian border was becoming
more difficult in the early decades of the twentieth century, tourism and short-term travel was
rapidly increasing in both directions. In part, this was due to the expansion of automobile
ownership in the region. By 1920, Windsor held the highest concentration of automobiles
registrations in Ontario and quickly surpassed Welland County (despite its two bridges at Fort
Erie and Niagara Falls) as the most popular entry point for Americans wanting to visit Canada. In

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38 Smith, “The Immigration and Naturalization Service”, p. 133.
fact, the 1920s saw a 201 percent growth in the number of Americans entering Essex County. Increasingly long and frustrating traffic jams on long weekends and other holidays during that decade—caused in part by detailed immigration and customs inspections recently set in place—made it clear that a new type of infrastructure was needed to solve the problem. As early as 1922, traffic at the Detroit ferry docks encouraged the author of a *Border Cities Star* article to declare that, “Never before was the need for more adequate ferry service or better still, an international traffic bridge, more in evidence.” Similarly, on the Fourth of July holiday in 1927, cars were lined up at the Windsor ferry docks for ten miles, and local police were busy directing Americans through the docks into the early hours of the morning.

For many local residents the announcement of a proposed international bridge project in the mid-1920s was welcomed news, but the cross-border nature of such a project meant that it was subject to many debates, disagreements, and set-backs. Initial discussions about how to fund the bridge sparked some of the earliest controversies. At stake was the question of who the real beneficiaries of the bridge project were. The major players behind the bridge company, Treasurer James Austin and Vice President Joseph A. Bower, of the New York Trust Company, put forth a proposal for a private international bridge to be funded by $1 million from company funds, $6 million by public bonds, and $5 million through bonds guaranteed by Essex County. When Bower asked for support by the Essex County public, he argued that in fact it was fitting that the Canadian public and government cover the cost of the project, since they had much more to gain from the bridge than Detroit residents. He predicted that it would increase tax revenues and

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42 Stamp, *Bridging the Border*, p. 97.
property values, produce a rise in local tourism, boost real estate development in Essex County, and bring American dollars into the border region.\textsuperscript{43} Such a bridge would also, Bowers declared, divert the tourist traffic at Port Huron and encourage Americans to cross at the Windsor border.\textsuperscript{44} It appears that local Windsor residents agreed with this logic, because by January 1925 elections were complete, and the bridge plebiscite won by a majority of votes—13,874 in favor and 8,794 against.\textsuperscript{45}

The debate in Detroit took a different form, given that the current Mayor, John Smith, was against the building of a private bridge involving a toll structure. Though he initially vetoed a city council’s approval of the project, Smith and Bowers were able to come up with a compromise: the bridge company would pay for a city-wide election wherein Detroiters could vote for or against the project. Several parties initially came out against the bridge plan, including labor leaders who feared the tunnel would open up the floodgates for Canadian workers to take Detroit jobs and real estate moguls who argued the bridge would ruin the waterfront environment central to the city. However Bowers and several large-name supporters like Henry Ford eventually won city residents over. On June 28, the bridge plan passed with a margin of 8 to 1, and a record 75,557 voters made their voices heard.\textsuperscript{46} It appears that despite several recessions in the 1920s, few Detroit residents viewed Canadians as threats to their jobs and instead welcomed the opportunities for trade and tourism that would be opened up through bridging of the two communities. Detroit and Windsor residents alike seemed to believe that the

\textsuperscript{43} Stamp, \textit{Bridging the Border}, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{44} “Bower Tells Bridge Plan,” \textit{Border Cities Star} (July 9, 1925), p. 5.
\textsuperscript{45} Stamp, \textit{Bridging the Border}, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{46} Stamp, \textit{Bridging the Border}, p. 98.
bridge would, as one contemporary publication put it, build a “closer bond of commercial and social utility” between residents of the border communities.\(^\text{47}\)

With the vocal support of both the American and Canadian publics the bridge project was underway. The McClintic-Marshall Company assumed the primary role of designing and building the massive structure. Records of the company indicate that they promoted this project as both a modern engineering feat and a step forward in the diplomatic relations between Americans and Canadians. According to a publication produced by McClintic-Marshall, “‘Ambassador’ is the name appropriately given to the vehicular bridge opened on November 15, 1929, spanning the Detroit River and connecting the City of Detroit with the ‘Border Cities’ grouped about Windsor, Ontario. Long inadequately served by ferries at this important point of interchange,” the company claimed, “the two great countries will henceforth be impressively linked by this new servant of the two friendly peoples.”\(^\text{48}\) The bridge, which was “carefully designed in striking, modernistic form,” was intended to facilitate quick and efficient crossing for travelers. On each side of the bridge, the customs terminals would (at least theoretically) allow customs officers to inspect border crossers with minimal delay, at a rate of as many as 4,000 cars per hour.\(^\text{49}\) Covering a fully city block on each side, they were imposing and impressive structures that clearly signaled one was entering a new country. Prospective crossers who arrived at these new terminals would choose between one of twenty-six lines where they were expected to patiently wait for the impending interrogation by customs officials. The massive size of the new


\(^{49}\) “Ambassador Bridge, William C. Weber Papers, p. 10.
infrastructure, combined with the large staff of Customs and Immigration officials needed to run it, created an increasingly formal process for men and women looking to cross into the neighboring city.

The goals of the McClintic-Marshall Company were similar to those expressed by Joseph Bower and local residents who voted in large numbers to approve the project. The idea that the bridge was attractive, impressive, and efficient spoke to the modernist tone of the times. Far from destroying the waterfront, as some real estate developers had warned, the promoters of the bridge emphasized the fact that it was a modern, almost artistic, solution to the problems of contemporary commuters and automobile owners. More importantly, though, is the fact that the inspection and regulation of border crossers had become ingrained in the infrastructure itself. At the turn of the century, there was little in the way of formal inspections beyond customs and duty regulations. By the time the bridge was built, McClintic-Marshall recognized the need to incorporate federal immigration policies into the bridge structure. In this way, the Ambassador Bridge both literally and symbolically demonstrated the conflation of new technologies, modern forms of travel, and the strict regulation of national boundaries in North America. Auto license cards, Border Crossing Cards, and immigration inspections had become commonplace for Americans and Canadians who regularly crossed the border for both work and leisure. The bridge came to symbolize both the ease with which North Americans were able to travel by the 1930s, but also the tightening of regulations that governed this travel when it crossed the national line.
Border Spirits: Prohibition, Vice, and the Roots of an Illicit Border Culture

While the Ambassador Bridge and Detroit-Windsor Tunnel were supposed to facilitate the regulation of the cross-border movement of people and goods, they also had the unintended effect of enabling illegal cross-border flows. Bootleggers and other criminals, who were profiting off of the disparate liquor laws in Michigan and Ontario, were likewise aided by the building of what came to be known as the “Detroit-Windsor Funnel.” 50 While an in-depth analysis of Prohibition is beyond the scope of this project, a short exploration of its impact on the cities of Windsor and Detroit is crucial to understanding the roots of the postwar vice economy and how it developed into a large-scale industry after World War II. By the end of the 1920s, Windsor and Detroit had gained reputations as not only boomtowns but also ‘vice towns,’ and early networks of crime syndicates set the stages for its emergence as a haven for international criminals and working boys looking to have a good time in the postwar period.

Local vice economies began as early as the seventeenth century, when the French established a military post along the Detroit River. Silas Farmer, in his 1890 historical analysis of Detroit in its early years, argued that it was the fluid nature of male populations, cross-cultural trade between the French and the Natives, and the “semi-military character” of that settlement that lent itself to the development of vice activities. According to Farmer, “There were men continually hovering about, occasionally for a length of time, whose presence made impossible the prevention of disorder. The coureurs de bois were guilty of every excess and they made a business of corrupting the savages, and it was well nigh impossible to control their actions.” 51

50 Craig Heron, Booze: A Distilled History (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003), p. 248.

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While the racial and ethnic characterizations of French and Native moral failings clearly shapes the way Farmer interprets the early interactions along the Detroit River, his analysis does highlight the existence of some of the traits historians have linked to frontier settlements in North America. The high number of single, unattached males and the complex networks of trade that developed around illicit goods and services, such as alcohol and commercial sex, were similar to that found in many frontier settlements, and later, mining and other work camps.\(^52\) The dynamics in the region changed with the imposition of colonial, and later national, jurisdictions and jurisprudence, and the vice economy also shifted to reflect the needs and desires of the community. As the towns and cities grew along what would become the border region, the vice industries began to exhibit characteristics more closely aligned with those found in urban settings, such as organized brothels. Though these establishments came under periodic attack by moral reformers and other residents throughout the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, vice continued to operate relatively unhampered until the establishment of the first metropolitan police department in Detroit in 1865.\(^53\)

Vice economies rapidly expanded alongside industrial growth in the 1860s and 1870s, in part an outgrowth of the male-dominated and fluctuating labor market. Though some

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manufacturing did develop along the periphery of Detroit, the majority of the city’s jobs developed in the downtown core, adjacent to the Detroit River, which continued to be the place through which most people entered and left the city. Cheap hotels, boarding rooms, lodging houses, and saloons all developed around the industrial center, facilitating the growth of a bachelor and transient subculture in the downtown core. Vice districts also developed on the Lower East side between the river and Gratiot Street, as legitimate businesses expanded northward, leaving dilapidated structures in which illegal enterprises could flourish. This became known as the Potomac Quarter, “where one could allegedly find ‘the worst species of outlaws,’” or where “the vilest thieves, pimps, and cutthroats” operated. The vice districts in Detroit were explicitly racialized by the late-nineteenth century, with the development of “Niggertown” around Fort and Beaubien Streets on the East Side. The concentration of these illicit economies in working-class, African American, and slum neighborhoods in the downtown core laid the foundations for the expansion of segregated vice districts over the first half of the twentieth century.

Progressive Era crackdowns on vice and illicit activities occurred in cities across North America including Detroit and Windsor, and their development reflects an increasing belief in the need to regulate the social mores of society through a combined effort of government agencies, medical and legal experts, community groups, and the greater public. Consequently,

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54 Schneider, *Detroit and the Problem of Order*, pp. 93-94.
55 The *Post* and *Detroit Evening News* quoted in Schneider, *Detroit and the Problem of Order*, p. 95.
vice came to dominate North American discussions of order and modernity in the first decades of the twentieth century, and activities like prostitution, drug use, gambling and other moral behaviors came to symbolize the problems of the modern city. Ray S. Dixon’s early sociological examination of the Social Hygiene Movement in Detroit identifies four distinct periods of change that shaped the anti-vice movements in Detroit, and that corresponded to national trends in the regulation of immorality in urban centers. First, between 1870 and 1900, the local movement was centered on public debates over the role of the Board of Health in such campaigns and how to rid the city of specific vice districts like those located on Russell Street in Detroit. During the second phase, 1900 to 1912, the control of communicable diseases like tuberculosis and venereal disease became explicitly linked to anti-vice movements, and the long struggle to establish a contagious diseases hospital resulted in the building of the first unit of the Herman Kiefer Hospital. The third period, 1912 to 1920, saw the establishment of what came to be known as the Detroit Social Hygiene Division of the Detroit Department of Health, and police, health officers, and the public were brought together to combat the expansion of vice in the city. Finally, the period between 1920 and 1935 saw the increasing medicalization of the movement and what Dixon characterizes as “a well-rounded program” between the law, medicine, sociology, and education to stop the spread of communicable diseases and other

consequences of vice.\textsuperscript{57} As a result of these rapidly changing approaches, women working in the commercial sex trade in Detroit were increasingly placed under the watchful eye of legal, medical, and sociological experts, who by the 1930s had come together to combat the expansion of the trade in the city. While the movement was by no means able to eliminate commercial sex from the region, it did create increasingly bureaucratic and complex regulatory networks for women working in the trade.

At the same time that local and national reformers worked to eliminate commercial sex and other forms of immorality, Detroit and Windsor became key targets of one of the signature campaigns of the Progressive Era: outlawing the sale and consumption of alcohol. Both Ontario and Michigan passed prohibition laws (the former 1916 and the latter in 1918) at the state and provincial level, yet it was the passing of the federal Volstead Act in 1918 that ultimately led to the region’s reputation as rough and wide-open.\textsuperscript{58} With the official enactment of national Prohibition in the U.S. on January 1, 1919, the border region became a major player in large-scale vice operations in the US and Canada. Since Ontario could still legally produce alcohol for export sales, shipping liquor out of the city of Windsor was protected by Ontario law. Ships bound for “Cuba” would regularly end up docking on the American side of the Detroit River, where bootleggers would unload the illegal commodity. Due to its proximity to the large concentration of distilleries in Southern Ontario and the large population of Midwestern cities like Detroit and Chicago, the Detroit-Windsor region became a primary site of smuggling between Canada and the United States. Some estimates suggest that four-fifths of the illegal


\textsuperscript{58} Gerald A. Hallowell argues that in fact many Canadians were increasingly put off by the violence developing in American cities as a result of Prohibition, and this played a major role in its repeal in Ontario. Hallowell, \textit{Prohibition in Ontario, 1919-1923} (Ottawa: Ontario Historical Society, 1972), p. 162.
liquor trade was conducted across the “Detroit-Windsor Funnel.”\textsuperscript{59} By 1929, smuggling, manufacturing and distributing liquor had become a major industry in Detroit, second only to the automobile industry. The trade in illegal booze employed at least 50,000 people and grossed over $300 million a year.\textsuperscript{60} The number of blind pigs (illegal drinking establishments) increased rapidly throughout the mid-1920s, from about 7,000 in 1923 to about 15,000 in 1925. By 1928, that number stood at about 25,000.\textsuperscript{61}

As a result of the booming illegal liquor trade, the Detroit-Windsor region gained a reputation as wide-open, where people could travel to grab a drink, place a bet, and pay for sexual services. Publications across North America repeatedly explained how disparate economic and political interests on each side of the border helped to facilitate this process. For example, a 1928 \textit{New York Times} exposé on the cross-border liquor traffic explained that the extremely lucrative liquor trade could not be ignored by Windsor residents just because of a pesky constitutional amendment in the neighboring country. To be sure, this was to a large degree a question of economics. The article explained that “Each Canadian town near Detroit is in the boom and boost stage and cannot afford to be reticent about an important industry merely out of respect” for the neighbor’s laws. With “Ferries running between Detroit and Windsor carry[ing] 20,000,000 passengers a year and approximately 1,000,000 motor cars,” a “great deal” of which was American citizens from Detroit and elsewhere, who traveled to Windsor to attend to their own bootlegging, there was little economic incentive among local Canadians to curb such a

\textsuperscript{59} Craig Heron, \textit{Booze: A Distilled History} (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003), p. 248.
\textsuperscript{61} Rockaway, “The Notorious Purple Gang,” p. 117.
lucrative trade. Yet according to the article, “The geographical and political factors are as favorable to the liquor smugglers as are the economic.” The author explained that, “When the joint boundary Commissioners, after the War of 1812, determined the line between Canada and the United States in this region, they drew their line down the middle of the Detroit River, swerving, however, first one way then the other to avoid small islands in the river. So instead of both countries having joint ownership of mid-stream islands, these islands were distributed alternately—the first one going to Canada, the next to the United States, and so on all the way downstream.” The liquor trade that developed between Detroit and Windsor was one concrete example of the effects of the seemingly haphazard legal divide that separated the two communities.

While there were many contemporary reports that pointed to the local benefits of the trade and the problems inherent in trying to police communities so socially and geographically intertwined, they also often stressed the problems that illegal smuggling brought for the border region. Many Canadians blamed crime in Canada on their American neighbors, while Americans often fingered the Border Cities as the chief cause of their enforcement problem. As a Montreal Gazette article explained, “Because of its geographical position, Windsor is a difficult city to keep clear of offenders against the law, especially as regards gambling and illicit liquor-selling. Its nearest American neighbor, Detroit, is also having trouble with criminals, there having been a hundred murders there within a comparatively short time. When the police there make war on thugs,” the article explained, “some of the latter go over the border to Windsor in the hopes of making a living there by crime, so the authorities in the Ontario city have to contend with the

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outsiders as well as any Canadians there may be of the same brand.”⁶³ Windsor's reputation as a source of illicit leisure for Americans had contradictory implications. On the one hand it brought a wildly profitable industry to the growing Border Cities, while on the other it attracted large numbers of Americans, including the criminal and rough elements, to the Canadian side of the border. Windsor residents had to balance the desire for American business and capital with the desire to keep their Canadian communities free of crime and vice, something they increasingly associated with their American neighbors.

Americans concerned with the massive flow of liquor into the United States via Canada likewise viewed Windsor as a main threat to the Prohibition project because it was both the source of large amounts of the illegal commodity and seemed to tempt thirsty Americans on a regular basis. For example, images produced by Percy Cromwell, a Detroit cartoonist, exemplify Windsor’s growing reputation as the boozy devil on Detroit’s shoulder. One drawing, entitled “Will he ‘Follow the Swallow?,’” shows a man labeled “The Thirsty One,” standing on the dock in Detroit, looking longingly at the Canadian city across the river. Standing on the side labeled “Windsor” is a man chugging a bottle labeled “Beer 4.4.” Similarly, another Cromwell cartoon entitled “Here’s Lookin’ Atcha,” shows another image of the “The Thirsty One” standing on the Detroit side of the river trying to refuse the larger-than-life beer being offered to him by his Canadian neighbor in Windsor.⁶⁴ In these images, the smaller Canadian city looms large in the imagination and desires of Detroiter and the “thirsty” American men are tempted by their Canadian neighbors so close across the river. They further demonstrate that the cross-border connections enabled by Prohibition were driven by not only economic and political factors, but

⁶⁴ Unpublished versions of these cartoons are available in the Percy W. Cromwell Collection, Box 2, Folder 24, The Bentley Historical Library.
also the desire to enjoy illegal goods—activities made all the more exciting and alluring because of their illicit and cross-border nature.

By the late-1920s anti-vice movements were no match for the power and influence of the illegal enterprises enabled by Prohibition, particularly in the border cities. Commercial sex, narcotics, gambling, and other illegal enterprises became central money-makers for large-scale syndicates like the notorious Purple Gang, and also many individuals living in the region during that period. Thirsty Americans created a wide range of home-made devices that were designed to help them smuggle their own bottles of liquor under their clothing when they crossed the bridge or tunnel back from Windsor. 65 On the Detroit side vice districts operated on a large scale, and neighborhoods across the downtown core were home to many forms of illicit activities. Speakeasies, often accompanied by gambling and prostitution, existed throughout the city of Detroit, in the basements of residences, in garages, in alleys, in commercial buildings, and in the back rooms of party stores and ice cream parlors. The businesses built around blind pigs ranged from small-scale family affairs to profitable ventures run by organized criminal gangs. Independent operators needed a connection to the gangs that smuggled the booze across the national border, and these operators were often protected by local police who had been paid off by the criminal gangs. 66

African American neighborhoods in particular became associated with illegal vice economies, and informal networks shaped the experience of many black Detroiters on a daily basis. In his autobiography, Coleman Young, future Mayor of Detroit, characterized Detroit’s Prohibition era as a time of “enthusiastic debauchery in which nothing on the street was what it

seemed." He grew up in the Black Bottom neighborhood of the city, which changed from a neighborhood of predominately European immigrants to one of black migrants from the South by the end of the decade. He recalled that “With all of the little [informal] enterprises we had going on, our family was never indigent. We did particularly well during Prohibition, which can be said for all of the Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. I never saw such prosperity in the black community—hell, in the city—as there was then. The money was practically jumping from pocket to pocket in those days,” Young explained. “If you weren’t making any, you either weren’t trying or were inhibited by an unusual code of lawfulness.”

Young’s recollection of the centrality of Prohibition-related vice trades to the black community of Detroit highlights the racial character of illicit economies in Detroit during this period. Vice had a visible presence on city streets, and particularly the black communities that often depended on supplementary income in the stratified labor markets of the period. Young remembers it as a time of booming industry, though the illegal industries had a more direct impact on his life than the positions available in Ford and Chrysler plants. For Young, it was a time of easy money and fast-pace living, where even members of the poorest communities in Detroit could participate in the illicit economies opened up by the national border. His recollections further reinforce Wolcott’s argument that there was a dual nature to the city of Detroit in the 1920s—it was a thriving industrial city and a wide open town of hustlers, gamblers, and prostitutes—images that were intimately linked because drinking, gambling, and hiring prostitutes were common leisure pursuits of male workers.

This dual image was geographically embedded on the city’s East

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Side, since zooming laws and selective policing worked to promote the development of vice districts in African American working class communities.\textsuperscript{70}

Yet the experience of African American women in the illicit economy of the 1920s challenges Young’s assessment of the Prohibition era as a booming one for black Detroiter. In part, the gendered nature of the illicit economy made it more difficult for women to capitalize on illegal trades. African American women made up an increasingly high percentage of prostitutes in the city of Detroit throughout the Prohibition years, and racial stratification within the trade reflected the level to which illicit economies had become embedded in many black neighborhoods. In his sociological study of prostitution in Detroit during the 1920s and early 1930s, Glen Seymour Taylor noted that there was a dramatic change in dispersion of prostitutes by color between 1924 and 1932. He found that over the eight-year period, the area of heaviest concentration of white prostitutes (south of Gratiot Street) was “invaded by Negro prostitutes and converted into an area of predominately colored prostitution. So predominant is the Negro element that the area is commonly referred to as Black Bottom.” He further asserted that “The area in which Negro prostitution now finds itself is one of marked deterioration—old-time frame buildings, low rentals, high land values, dirt, and over-crowding.” In contrast, the white prostitutes largely exist in an area made up of “substantially built brick flats, rooming houses, and duplexes interspersed with small modern apartments.”\textsuperscript{71} Taylor’s study demonstrates that the concentration of vice in black neighborhoods, while to some degree drawing income and informal labor into the area, also had the dual effect of facilitating the transition of these

\textsuperscript{70} Wolcott, \textit{Remaking Respectability}, 94.
\textsuperscript{71} Taylor, “Prostitution in Detroit,” pp. 36-7.
neighborhoods into racialized slum areas. African American women in particular had to navigate the geographic and gendered divide in the illicit economy during the 1920s and 1930s since they relied on the financial support of male customers and were subject to prosecution under local prostitution laws. In this way, the stratification found in the illicit industries in the first half of the twentieth century meant that booming illegal economies were not experienced evenly, but instead one’s ability to capitalize on the fruits of illegal enterprises depended to a large degree on his or her place in the social hierarchy of the city. Illicit economies may have generated wealth in the border region, but it did so unevenly and reflected some of the key social divides developing in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Prohibition along the Detroit-Windsor corridor was extremely complex and shaped the border region in many important ways. For the purposes of this study, the significance of the cross-border liquor trade lies in its role in facilitating illicit cross-border interactions, ones that often served to undermine the many attempts at vice regulation during the period. The expansion of illegal enterprises across the border in the 1920s highlights the complex and often contradictory nature of the borderland. Some were more than happy to use it as a way to evade undesirable Prohibition laws, and took advantage of the bureaucratic inefficiencies of early customs enforcement policies. Others, worried that these cross-border excursions were leading to the growth of crime and vice across the border, saw the development of this trade as a considerable diplomatic and political problem between otherwise close and friendly neighbors. The debates over the meaning of the border raised by Prohibition would be renewed in the postwar period, as questions about economic gain versus moral and national regulation were likewise brought to the forefront.
The Border Spirit, Tourism, and the Limits of Freedom
In the Postwar Period

With the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, and the increasing economic impact of the Great Depression on the border cities, cross-border traffic slowed. This was, however, a temporary aberration. Cross-border migration and booming industries were reinvigorated during World War II and the decade that followed. By the postwar period, the bridge and tunnel structures were central pieces of infrastructure in the border region and became important symbolic connections between the once-again booming industrial cities of Windsor and Detroit. By the close of the war, residents were well-accustomed to crossing the national line on a regular basis and Windsor continued to be the chief port for American tourists entering Canada. In 1949, for example, 5,523,425 people entered Canada via Windsor, bringing 1,553,930 automobiles with them. In fact, the ever-expanding tourist economy helped to foster a stronger sense of cross-border community in the region, and the relationship came to signify the possibilities of open and relaxed borders amidst a global atmosphere of Cold War-induced iron curtains. The modern nature of the bridge promoted in the post-World War I period was expanded after the Second World War to include notions of democracy, freedom, and movement, central ideological underpinnings of the Cold War era.

These concepts, however, were problematic and experienced unevenly according to race, class, and geography. Windsor's economy depended to a large degree on attracting American business and tourists into the city. Many Windsor residents found themselves caught between their efforts at courting their metropolitan neighbor and their desires to maintain a distinctive

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Canadian identity. Much as Prohibition had raised questions about the political and economic relationship between the two cities, postwar tourism also highlighted some of the ruptures between the two nations. Further, the increasingly rigid enforcement of customs along the border, and the bureaucratic operation of the border itself, often angered local residents and made their daily experiences of movement across the border increasingly frustrating. This was particularly true for African American and African Canadian travelers, who due to racial discrimination in travel and leisure activities were subject to additional level of racialized regulation in the border region. In this way, postwar rhetoric about freedom, movement, and friendship were often ideals and fantasies as much as they were lived realities for an increasingly diverse population in the border region.

Postwar city boosters, public officials, and local media often emphasized the close relationship between Detroit and Windsor residents, promoting the border as the friendliest in the world. A 1950 *MacLean’s* article, entitled “Windsor: Border—Not Barrier,” attempted to explain the unique relationship between the two cities to its readers. The authors Ewing Laverty and Melwyn Breen asserted that Windsor had “that identifiable something called the ‘border spirit,’ which cannot be understood unless experienced. And this is why Detroit’s influence is so operative. An international boundary cannot separate the 120,000 Windsorites from 2,000,000 Detroiters.” Simply describing cross-border travel was not sufficient enough to explain the cross-border community; instead, the borderland was something one not only lived but also embodied. It was in many ways an affective response one had to perceived commonalities across the national line. Laverty and Breen also describe the many activities residents engaged in that helped to foster this sense of “border spirit,” and key among them were leisure activities. This

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was not a one-way relationship they assured readers. While Canadians crossed into Detroit to watch the various American sports teams and to get “better stage shows, better musicals,” and nightclubs, including interracial bars called “black and tans,” Americans also came to the many night clubs and “dine and dance places” that catered to Detroiter.

74 The postwar period likewise saw the development of several festivals and annual activities designed to capitalize on this desire for cross-border leisure, entertainment, and tourism, such as the International Freedom Festival and the Emancipation Day Festival. These types of civic celebrations encouraged residents to cross the border and spend time with their neighboring community members, as a way of bolstering both the local economy and the border spirit.

Postwar rhetoric about the close relationship between Detroiter and Windsorites was centered on shared notions that residents should support the local, cross-border economy in a world that was increasingly putting up walls and challenging capitalist principals. In 1959, the cities instituted the International Freedom Festival, an event that took place over the Dominion Day (later Canada Day) and Fourth of July holidays. The five-day-long festival was filled with a wide range of activities, culminating in the infamous J.L. Hudson fireworks show over the Detroit River. The festival had multiple goals and was designed to build international cooperation, boost local business, and celebrate the history shared by the border cities. The Freedom Festival souvenir programs provide important insight into the way civic duty, economic growth, and cross-border community were promoted by local corporate and civic powers. For example, an advertisement for the Michigan Consolidated Gas Company printed in the 1959 program demonstrates the confluence of several key postwar ideals. The headline of the ad reads “Gateway to another land—where the citizen’s only passport is his auto registration.” It features

a photo of cars driving across the clearly labeled Ambassador Bridge. Underneath this large image the advertisement reads, “Strangers of the Detroit-Windsor area…are sometimes just a little surprised at how freely we pass between nations. The barrier at the tunnel or bridge looks like a toll-gate and the greeting is a friendly question about one’s birthplace. The passage is more dramatic because it is so serene,” the ad reads. “Such confidence between nations is uncommon, but then, ours is an uncommon friendship, built on the common principles of freedom-loving people. Each of us is proud of that friendship, proud to join in the joint observance of the International Freedom Festival.”

The advertisement is careful to describe the process of crossing the border as a simple one; there is no mention of Border Crossing Cards or residency restrictions, all factors that complicated this seemingly easy process. It was the fact that they were both “freedom-loving” people that made this simplicity possible—all one needed was an auto license and they were free to experience the excitement of traveling across the serene border landscape.

The Freedom Festival souvenir programs were designed to reassure readers that never before had there been such a friendly and open border between two peoples. It adopted Cold War rhetoric about iron curtains and arms races in order to contrast the peace and prosperity found along the Canada-US border with communist nations abroad. For example, an advertisement by the Chrysler Corporation featured a sketch of the cities of Detroit and Windsor tied together by the Ambassador Bridge. Larger-than-life sized businessmen in suits stand on each side of the river, embracing in a friendly handshake across the border. Below the caption reads, “How to

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Bridge a Border: A lesson to the Whole World.” The 1961 booklet featured the same drawing, with the caption reading, “Our Only Show of Arms.” The booklets are filled with similar slogans, such as “The Spirit of Freedom knows no boundaries,” “Hands across the border bring better business to both sides,” “A Bridge, Not a Curtain,” and “May their borders be ever guarded by Peace, Freedom, and Harmony.”

The various advertisements promoted in the Freedom Festival souvenir contain important ideological themes that crossed the national border. Within a Cold War context, these advertisements draw stark contrasts between the ‘freedom loving peoples’ in Detroit and Windsor and people living in countries where borders had recently been redrawn as a result of World War II. Over and over the advertisements praise the close friendship between Canadians and Americans, brought about by a belief in democratic principles, capitalist industries, and a well-ordered border. They also promote the notion that mobility provided freedom and the automobile provided the ultimate form of modern transportation—perhaps not surprising in a region where the majority of industrial manufacturing depended on the auto industry. The advertisements similarly downplay the regulatory role of the border itself, characterizing the inspection process as merely a “friendly” question of one’s birthplace. City boosters and corporate interests on both sides reinforced the notion that the bridging of the two communities was both easy and beneficial, since it brought like-minded citizens together to promote freedom of movement, harmony, and economic development.

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The 'freedom' promoted in these advertisements was in many ways based on a white, masculine, and middle-class conception of citizenship and belonging. The booklets feature many photographs of white businessmen in suits praising the role their companies played in fostering the border spirit. The focus is on the major corporations in the region and the citizens who bought their products rather than on the workers who actually produced them. In contrast to public literature and art of the 1930s, which often celebrated the image of the working man and woman, the ideal reinforced in the Freedom Festival programs was of the white, middle-class consumer and corporate leader.\textsuperscript{80} The picture of the gentlemen standing over the cities, shaking hands with their hats removed, literally and metaphorically places the businessman above all other citizens—he is the ambassador of goodwill based on shared social characteristics and capitalist enterprise. The type of freedom and entrepreneurship celebrated in the souvenir programs was one limited to white men of relative privilege and was not representative of the diverse community that actually lived in the cities of Detroit and Windsor. The images and messages put forward in the advertisements suggest that the cross-border friendship had limits, and productive citizenship was defined in narrow class, race, and gender terms.

Despite official rhetoric that aimed to promote the easy and beneficial relationship between the two cities, the tourist industry also contributed to the asymmetrical relationship that shaped the borderland. In part, this reflected the difference in size between Detroit and Windsor. Due to a sheer population disparity, American tourists visiting Windsor were more visible than the Canadians visiting Detroit. While Detroit certainly depended on visitors to bolster the local economy and to promote the city’s global standing, its image was defined by the auto industry

not the tourist industry. Canadians regularly visited the city of Detroit, but they often blended into the large numbers of migrants and travelers who came to the Motor City from other cities, states, provinces, and nations.

In contrast, Detroit’s status as the metropolitan center of the region meant that Windsor residents and businesses openly courted American tourist dollars, sometimes creating a precarious and uneven power dynamic between the world’s two “friendliest” border cities. American tourism was central to Windsor’s local economy and identity, and city boosters, local publications, and local businesses regularly expressed the importance of attracting and maintaining a cross-border tourist market. For example, a full-page *Windsor Star* advertisement, published on behalf of the Essex County Tourist Association, and funded by thirty-five local businesses, explained the importance of maintaining a strong tourist network for local residents. Since “courtesy to tourists pays big dividends” for local residents, everyone had a responsibility

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81 Reynolds Farley, Sheldon Danziger, and Harry J. Holzer, argue that since Detroit developed a much more specialized economy than other large cities in North America, it never became a dominant center for trade, higher education, financial services, entertainment, or government. As such, economically and socially tourism and service economies remained far behind industrial labor in terms of its influence on the city's development. Interestingly, though, in an attempt to revamp the city in the post-industrial era, redevelopment projects of the 1990s have turned to leisure and entertainment as a way to bring visitors back into the city. The building of casinos, sports stadiums, and other attractions have taken the place of industrial development, and Detroit finds itself attempting to develop the tourism infrastructure that remained on the back-burner in the first half of the twentieth century. Farley, Danziger, and Holzer, *Detroit Divided* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000), pp. 6-13.

82 The centrality of tourism to the Windsor region is evident as early as the 1920s, when the Border Chamber of Commerce began sending “Annual Good Will Tour[s]” into the United States. These tours passed through many states each year, going all the way from Windsor to cities like Brownsville, Texas and Miami, Florida, stopping in cities along the way. The purpose was “to become acquainted with the members of similar organizations and to establish friendliness which in turn will contribute to the permanent and mutually beneficial relationships between the English speaking peoples of North America.” The tours were self-supporting, and the Border Chamber had “nothing to sell more tangible than personal friendship and international good-will.” In crossing many states and meeting members of similar organizations, the Border Chamber hoped to shore up visitors for the Windsor region. A 1930 publication promoting tourism in the region boasted that the Border Cities offered “many attractions for the visitor, the tourists, the delegate—historic interest, scenic beauty, huge industrial plants, the largest automobile factory in the British Empire, modern schools, churches, homes, parks, golf and country clubs, boating, bathing, new, up-to-date hotels.” As a result, the pamphlet promised, “your days will be happy, your nights comfortable” in the Canadian border city so close to its large American neighbor.
to ensure that American visitors had a pleasant experience in the city. The ad explained that the
farmer, laborer, and everyday taxpayer benefited from the boom in the local economy brought by
tourism, and they should act accordingly: “Our community is known for its courtesy and co-
operation, and anything that can be done to make a visitor feel and know true Canadian
hospitality becomes at once a duty for each and every one of us.”83 It encourages residents to use
their friendly Canadian nature to ensure that Americans would feel welcomed in their city, and
would return on a regular basis. Contemporary documents and newspaper publications regularly
emphasized the close relationship between Americans and Canadians and the need for Windsor
residents to promote an open, friendly, and enticing atmosphere for American tourists.84

The social and geographical closeness of Detroit and Windsor, though part of the impetus
behind the strong tourist economy, could also stifle the tourist trade along the border by muting
the social differences that appealed to many travelers. In effect, attempts at emphasizing the
sameness between Americans and Canadians sometimes worked to undermine the centrality of
difference inherent in the border paradox. For example, a 1951 Windsor Star article warned local
residents against trying to act too “American” in an attempt to attract tourists across the border.
Instead, the author argues, Americans were attracted to the distinctiveness of Canada rather than
its similarities. According to the article, the Resources Minister R. H. Winters appealed to
Canadians to “resist the temptation of becoming ‘mere carbon copies’ of Americans and to build
up a greater tourist trade by a more distinctive Canadian culture.” He complained that an over-

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84 As a border city, Windsor was particularly interested in drawing American tourists. However, this also reflected a
more general desire across Canada to draw American tourist dollars into the country. See, for example, a 1948
Maclean’s Magazine article about the tourist industry in Canada, warning that more needs to be done to foster a
comfortable experience for Americans crossing the national line for leisure: James H. Gray, “A Tourist Talks
Back,” Maclean’s Magazine (June 1, 1948), pp. 9-54.
display of American flags, too much American news, and bad attempts at reproducing ‘American’ food in local restaurants actually made Americans less likely to visit their northern neighbors, since they wanted to “feel away from home” rather than “at home.” In this way, Windsor residents, with their close relationship and connections to the local Detroit community, operated on a fine line between emphasizing their distinctiveness and offering all the comforts of home for American tourists. As a tourist town at the edge of a large American metropolis, Windsor residence were literally caught in the middle of building a cross-border community and reinforcing their relationship to the larger Canadian nation.

Local travelers' experiences of the regulation of the border itself also challenge the notion that this was an open and friendly border for all to enjoy. Though many residents took advantage of the expanded transportation routes across the border, there is much evidence to suggest that they also often felt harassed, violated, and angry as a result of the increasingly rigid enforcement of the national line. Historian Thomas Klug has uncovered many complaints written to customs officials over the first half of the twentieth century, and argues that the new border regulations created a zone of unpredictability for those who chose to cross it. The alien traveler had the burden to prove to the satisfaction of the government that he or she was not inadmissible, and the border zone created a space where what seemed to be reasonable questions by immigration inspectors often appeared intrusive, rude, and nonsensical to travelers. The very fact that angry Canadian and American travelers wrote complaint letters to the Custom Department demonstrates the that they felt these were unwelcome changes from an earlier period of easier access and mobility. Further, reports that the number of border crossings greatly decreased after

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new border requirements were put in place demonstrate the uncertainty and anxiety border crossers often felt at the prospect of undergoing inspection. For example, on July 1, 1940, US authorities implemented restricted re-entry policies for US residents who crossed into Canada. Fears that these policies would make it impossible for residents to return to the US prompted a radical decrease in border crossings over the following month—some weeks the number of crossers decreased by as much as fifty percent. According to one *Windsor Daily Star* report, Windsor’s secretary-manager of the Chamber of Commerce received many letters from concerned citizens across the US who worried that the new policy changes would mean they would be unable to return after a trip to Canada. Despite customs authorities’ attempts to dispel rumors, the radical drop in border crossings demonstrates that many acted on their fears by choosing to avoid a potentially disruptive and unpleasant experience.\(^87\) By the postwar period, Detroit and Windsor residents felt increasingly frustrated that they had to prove their legitimacy and citizenship just to cross to neighboring cities—a practice that had been central to the lives of local residents for at least several decades.

Local residents were also increasingly frustrated with the bureaucratic and sometimes seemingly nonsensical administration of customs regulations in their local community, which often made it more difficult to enjoy day-trips and tourism across the national line. For example, during World War II, Canadian residents regularly traveled to Detroit to take the ferry across to Bob-Lo Island, an amusement park technically on Canadian soil but serviced primarily by American ferry boats.\(^88\) Customs officials raised concerns that this violated the wartime ban on

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\(^88\) The exception to this was on “Canadian days,” during which Canadians could board ferries on the Windsor side of the river. This service was only available on particular days because they did not have enough regular
“pleasure travel in the States,” and tried to prevent the large numbers of Canadians from crossing into the US for the purpose of taking the ferries. But the inability of officials to implement a suitable and timely solution to the problem led Canadians to continue to defy this ban, and to use the Detroit port to travel to the American-owned park in Canada. In this way, increasingly frustrated local residents used the bureaucratic inefficiencies of the customs department to their advantage, and undertook cross-border travel that blurred the lines of legal and illegal movement. Such were the lived realities of the border community, a place where one’s knowledge of local customs and practices could sometimes allow them to circumvent the actual legal regulations that were supposed to govern their movement across the supposedly free and friendly border.

Racial discrimination and unofficial forms of community regulation also prevented many local residents from exercising the freedom to cross the border. Early characterizations of the connection between Detroit and Windsor residents were often formed around notions of shared whiteness and racial exclusion, and the narrowly defined conceptions of cross-border community helped to determine who was considered a proper and desirable resident of the border community. For example, one city booster publication, entitled Canada’s Southern Gateway, described the Windsor region as “the oldest continuous white settlement in North America.” Similarly, a publication produced by the Border Chamber of Commerce in Windsor explained that “Geographical proximity, racial understanding, and language are only a few of the factors”

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90 Border Chamber of Commerce, Canada’s Southern Gateway: the Gate Stands Always Open for our Southern Friends (Windsor: Border Chamber of Commerce, c. 1928), p. 3.
making the city a desirable economic market for American business. Though early descriptions of the ‘whiteness’ of Windsor were made within a larger imperial discourse that explicitly contrasted Natives and European settlers, describing the region as white had important implications in late-1920s and early 1930s, a period when Detroit’s African American population was rapidly expanding.

The historical construction of the Detroit-Windsor region as a white community continued in the postwar period and was linked to concepts of modernity, progress, and industry. The inaccuracy of colonial notions of whiteness became even more glaring in postwar discourses since, by the 1950s, Detroit's African American population represented almost a third of the total population. The notion that modernity and progress were exclusively white projects continued to shape the way white residents understood the history of the region. On July 31, 1954, N. F. Morrison Ph.D. conducted a radio broadcast to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Ambassador Bridge. His description of the meaning of the bridge for the community highlighted the impressive engineering accomplishments that made the project possible and its role in making the region a positive symbol of the achievements of the twentieth century. In his broadcast, Morrison declared that the Ambassador Bridge was “a far cry from the days when the birch bark canoes of the painted, fur-clad Indians plied the lonely Detroit River on their expeditions of primitive warfare, or of bartering furs with the white traders.” He invited the listeners to imagine “the river before the days of white settlement,” where lonely traders canoed in silence and the icebound river “knew no voice nor footsteps.” Compare this to “the scene of

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today: the picture of an immense towering bridge against a line of skyscrapers by the day the hum of motors, supplemented at night by the flash of headlights, as motor vehicles in vast numbers cross from shore to shore…On a crowded holiday in our time more people cross over the Ambassador Bridge in one day than would have traveled the Detroit River in many years of Indian occupation.”92 Morrison erases the history of pre-European settlements in the region, characterizing it as a history of silence, lack, and emptiness. In contrast, the white production of local space into modern skyscrapers, transportation systems, and humming industry is presented as a resourceful and desirable achievement of modern times. This recounting of the local history blatantly ignores the central role that non-white workers played in building the Detroit-Windsor community and in bridging the divide between residents on both sides of the border. These historically inaccurate reminiscences of Detroit and Windsor as exclusively white settlements reinforced the idea that non-white travelers were at best guests, and at worst outsiders crossing between otherwise peaceful white communities.

The language used to describe the history of the Detroit-Windsor region had particular political implications in the postwar period, as residents of the border cities grappled with the issues of discrimination, segregation, and an increasingly racialized urban/suburban divide. These issues had a direct impact on the borderland relationship between Detroit and Windsor, which was formed according to conceptions of belonging and inter-community relations. Despite Canadian notions that the 'race problem' was an explicitly American phenomenon, racial discrimination was as prevalent in postwar Windsor as it was in Detroit, providing little incentive

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for African Americans to cross the border on a regular basis. In fact, black Detroiter crossed into Canada at a disproportionately lower rate than whites during that period. According to a Detroit Urban League study, even among middle income earners, who likely had enough money and time to enable them to travel for leisure purposes, white Detroiter visited Canada almost twice as much as black residents. In 1967, for example, while 9.8% of white respondents had traveled to Canada, only 5% of black families had visited the country that same year. In part, this reflects the fact that the process of traveling across the border was sometimes hindered by racial discrimination and segregation. For example, though Jim Crow did not formally exist on Bob-Lo Island, the company that ran the steamships across from Detroit excluded “all negroes and disorderly persons.” As a result, black residents were barred from visiting the Canadian island and also from participating in drinking, dancing, and listening to music on the “moonlight voyages” run by the company. Similarly, Victoria Wolcott's research uncovered an incidence of interracial fighting on a ferry between Buffalo, New York and Crystal Beach, Ontario that led to the closing of the ferry service, effectively cutting off cross-border travel for many black Buffalo

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93 While there are significantly fewer studies of 'race' in Canada, several historians have argued that the notion of Canada as 'colorblind' is a national myth rather than an historical reality. See: Constance Backhouse, Colour Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); W. Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Towards Orientals in British Columbia (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Elizabeth Abbott Gibbs, Racism or Responsible Government: the French Canadian Dilemma of the 1840s (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1967); Barrington Walker, The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2008); Lorraine Le Camp, “Racial Considerations of Minstrel Shows and Related Images in Canada” (University of Toronto: Ph.D. Thesis, 2005); Carianne K. Y. Leung, “Usable Pasts, Staged Belongings: A Critique of a Heritage of Multiculturalism Discourse” (University of Toronto, Ph.D. Thesis, 2007).

94 In part this divide reflects the fact that many African Americans traveled to visit family in the Southern US. Detroit Urban League, “A Comparative Study of Life Styles and Social Attitudes of Middle Income Status Whites and Negros in Detroit,” (Detroit, 1968), p. 16.

teenagers who previously had traveled to the Canadian amusement park. The example of segregation and discrimination among cross-border ferry excursions provide clear examples of how racial restrictions could affect both cross-border movement and one's access to leisure activities that crossed the national line.

The problem of discrimination and segregation within the border cities also shaped the way that black residents crossed the national line. The flow of black travelers across the border tended to be from Windsor into Detroit, suggesting that Detroit's growing status as a black metropolis made crossing into the city appealing for members of Windsor's black community. As a comparatively small portion of the population (about 1%), Windsor's black residents were subject to unofficial forms of segregation and discrimination in employment, housing, and various public spaces. In 1964, Dr. Rudolph Helling of the University of Windsor published a sociological study focused on the experiences of minority groups in the city. He found that African Canadians in particular had a difficult time attaining employment and often moved to the cities of Detroit and Toronto in order to pursue better opportunities. According to the study, many moved to those cities because they felt they could “do better” and because it would reduce the “feeling of apprehension about moving into any neighborhood or going to a nightclub.” In Detroit, they could patronize black-owned establishments and participate in leisure activities without the humiliation of being denied service. At the same time, many African American tourists may have felt that the travel across the border was not worth the hassle. Subject to

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unofficial segregation policies in bars, restaurants, and other sites of entertainment in Windsor, black Detroiter had little incentive to cross the national line for entertainment purposes. African American travelers, barred from some forms of transportation and subject to similar discriminatory practices on the Canadian side of the border, hardly experienced the all-inclusive freedom of movement supposedly enabled by the crossing of the Canada-US border.

**Conclusion**

The opening of the Ambassador Bridge in 1929 was the symbolic culmination of a cross-border history that had been unfolding for at least two centuries, as well as a signal of what local residents, city boosters, and government officials hoped would become of this borderland community. For many local residents, the cities of Detroit and Windsor shared a long history of amicability and friendship, making them unique in a global atmosphere of world wars, violence, and competing imperial powers. In this context, the bridge was more than simply a structure made of iron and steel. It was a powerful symbol that two nations could live together in harmony, and benefit economically, socially, and politically from the geographical spaces that linked them together.

The borderland relationship that developed in the Detroit-Windsor region in the first half of the twentieth century was forged through a combination of material, geographic, economic, political, and social forces. Detroit and Windsor emerged as industrial boomtowns and drew

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98 Helling's study documents several examples of discrimination in public establishments. Helling, “The Position of Negroes, Chinese, and Italians,” pp. 15-18. Records kept by the LCBO similarly indicate that there was discrimination in licensed establishments across Windsor. For example, patrons of the Blue Water Hotel wrote complaint letters to the LCBO after they were told that the establishment did not serve African American customers. See: Liquor Control Board of Ontario, Establishment Files, #4837, “Blue Water Hotel, Archives of Ontario.
thousands of migrants who hoped to take advantage of the prosperous local economy. In the first
decades of the twentieth century, people moved to the region from across North America and the
world and subsequently reshaped the demographic nature of the region. They traveled across the
border in larger numbers, making the Detroit-Windsor gateway the most popular crossing point
between the two countries. By the 1920s, residents of the border cities had become increasingly
intertwined through the economic and social developments brought about by industrialization
and migration. This cross-border fluidity subsequently increased in the post-World War II period,
as Americans and Canadians continued to travel across the national line for both leisure and
labor. Tourism, bolstered by the widespread ownership of automobiles, became an important
economic and social link tying the two cities together, and fostered a stronger 'border spirit'
between local residents. Crossing the national line subsequently came to represent the freedom,
mobility, and prosperity promoted across Cold War North America—these were two like-minded
peoples coming together to share common values.

Yet the contradictory nature of borderlands, which operate at once as barriers and
connecting points, meant that the lived reality of the border was often more complicated than
official rhetoric let on. While city officials, boosters, and the business community often promoted
the freedom of movement supposedly enabled through capitalist principals, official and
unofficial forms of community regulation stunted local residents' abilities to cross unhindered.
Borderlands in many ways are defined around notions of 'insiders' and 'outsiders,' concepts that
were increasingly defined along race, ethnic, and class lines in the Detroit-Windsor region.
Though the opening of the Ambassador Bridge enabled an unprecedented number of people to
cross the border, stricter regulations meant that this crossing was also increasingly difficult for
many local residents. These regulations grew directly out of desires to curb unwanted immigration, meaning the regulation of the national line was explicitly undertaken as a racial project designed to protect the white character of North American citizenship. Further, unofficial forms of regulating the border, such as Jim Crow policies on ferry lines, stunted local residents' abilities to travel unhindered. In this way, crossing the border became more difficult for many local residents, and their experiences challenge the notion that crossing the Detroit-Windsor border was a clear expression of democracy, freedom of movement, and friendship.

The multiple lines and barriers shaping the Detroit-Windsor region also led to the development of an asymmetrical relationship between the border cities. Detroit—as the metropolitan center of the region—in many ways defined the relationship between the two cities. American industries spread from Detroit into Windsor in the first decades of the twentieth century, and workers traveled from Canada into the United States to take up positions in the booming factories. Windsor residents often found themselves courting the American giant to their north, all the while struggling to maintain a distinctive Canadian national identity. Consequently, debates over economic gain and regional identity had particular resonance on the Canadian side of the border during the first half of the twentieth century. While relations between Canadians and Americans were often quite amicable, then, there were important fissures that challenged their ability to create an equal and mutually-beneficial cross-border community in the first half of the twentieth century.

Finally, despite official rhetoric aimed at muting the asymmetry that developed in the border region, the borderland relationship was in many ways defined along lines of 'difference.' This was particularly true for illegal enterprises, which capitalized on the excitement and allure
of traveling across the border for illicit adventure. Canadians and Americans alike grappled with
the implications of their borderland geography, particularly when illicit activities brought
Americans and Canadians together in morally precarious ways. The centrality of illicit industries
to the local economy is a reminder that moral lines could often be trumped by desires for wealth,
excitement, and adventure. Countless Americans and Canadians took part in the illegal trade that
crossed the border, sparking debate over the porousness of the national line and influence of the
neighboring country on one's own community. In this way, the illicit economy forced open
debates about the proper way to regulate the border and how free people actually were when
crossing it—debates that would take on particular resonance in the decades after World War II.
Chapter Two

*The Pursuit of Pleasure: Illicit Consumption in the Detroit-Windsor Borderland*

In 1952, *Canadian Business* magazine printed an article about the city of Windsor and its relationship with its larger neighbor, Detroit. The author, O. Mary Hill, described the border city as a booming metropolis that provided all of the conveniences and amenities of a modern postwar city. With a high employment rate, and relatively high wages for industrial workers, residents were increasingly able to enjoy 'the good life.' “The average Windsor worker,” it explained, “setting out each morning for one of its 467 industrial plants, brings home one of the fattest weekly pay envelopes in Canada. He lives in a city that is enviably tolerant and democratic. He reaps the benefits of going next door to the fifth largest city in the United States, but is not over-awed by his bigger neighbor.” The high rate of car ownership, combined with the high earning power of local residents, meant that they were able to travel frequently to the United States and to purchase consumer goods as desired. Americans were likewise drawn across the border to patronize the leisure establishments and to buy duty-free items. This “two-way” trade and travel brought Canadians and Americans together to enjoy the comforts of the upwardly mobile, middle-class lifestyle enabled by the postwar economic boom. Hill predicted that Windsor had a bright future and would be able to maintain its status as a prosperous middle-class community for years to come. “And it's a future in which bootleggers, smugglers, labor hot-heads, and other publicity-getters have [a] small place.”

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In this overwhelmingly positive and hopeful description, Hill directly links the social and economic developments in the Detroit-Windsor region to growing consumer power and the increase in leisure time that accompanied the expanding middle class in the two decades after the war. These trends were in fact national in scope and came to be defining features of postwar North America. Scholars such as Lizabeth Cohen, Elaine Tyler May, Karen Dubinsky, and Joy Parr have examined the ways in which the consumer culture shaped social and economic relationships during that period in history.\(^2\) As May argues, “consumerism in the postwar years went far beyond the mere purchase of goods and services. It included important cultural values, demonstrated success and social mobility, and defined lifestyles.”\(^3\) Dubinsky further connects the consumer culture with the tourist industry, noting that the commodification of space, places, and people was central to the rise of cross-border tourism after the war.\(^4\) The expansion of consumer goods, models homes, and automobile ownership worked hand in hand to create a culture where prosperity was determined in many ways by the specific goods one owned, and where social mobility was linked to one's ability to enjoy the everyday comforts of consumer life.

In many ways, though, Hill's description of Windsor reflected ideals rather than realities. In fact, many forms of leisure, travel, and entertainment developed outside of these norms, signaling a wide range of cultural and subculture values that developed alongside images of middle-class, suburban living. When men and women left the factories with their “fat” weekly paychecks, they also purchased illicit goods and services and engaged in consumption patterns


that deviated from middle-class norms. In this way, illicit activities like prostitution and illegal drug use were also key forms through which Americans and Canadians reformulated their definitions of consumption and leisure. The men and women who engaged in illicit activities in the border region blurred the lines between acceptable and unacceptable pleasure, creating a market for illicit forms of entertainment centered, not on middle-class suburban living, but instead within the postwar urban environment.

In the cities of Detroit and Windsor, illicit economies functioned in paradoxical ways, at once challenging some cultural norms while also remaining deeply embedded in larger gender, class, and racial hierarchies shaping the region. This push and pull between transgressing and reinforcing normative social boundaries had a direct impact on the men and women who engaged in these activities on a daily basis. As a form of service work, whose products were a blend of fantasy and physical experiences, prostitution operated across the supposedly rigid lines separating normal and deviant forms of sexual desire.\(^5\) The sex trade enabled men and women to engage in lascivious activities that were not based on legally sanctioned marriage, but instead on the commodification of deviant sexual behavior. Likewise, heroin users formulated alternative communities based on the literal consumption of an illegal and pleasurable substance. Indeed, illicit drug economies often grew out of the modern consumerist logic, one that cultural theorist

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\(^5\) This chapter draws on the theories of feminist scholars who argue that sex work is in fact a form of service work, in many ways attuned to other forms of labor in the formal economy. Wendy Chapkis draws on the notion of emotional labor in order to articulate the particular form of service provided through commercial sexual exchanges. She argues against Radical feminists, who view prostitution as the commodification of the self; instead, she argues that there is nothing inherently alienating about the service performed through sex work. Noah Zatz similarly draws on sex workers' articulations of their practice as a form of service work structured as a sex act, a performance in which the client's experience of the sex act is an illusion of a sex actress. For the purposes of this chapter, the importance lies in the premises that first, sex work is a service akin to other forms of work, and second, that exploitation and alienation are not necessarily inherent in these services. Instead, sex work must be understood within both the specific context in which it takes place, and the broader cultural environment that gives these interactions meaning. Chapkis, *Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Zatz, “Sex Work/Sex Act: Law, Labor, and Desire in the Construction of Prostitution,” *Signs* (1997), p. 284.
Kane Race argues is based in part on “expressive, experiential, and erotic” indulgences. The search for bodily pleasures and alternative forms of belonging were central to the draw of both sex and drug economies and participants were united through their engagement with alternative modes of community-building. Driven by the desire to do bad in the postwar city, participants used their expendable income on non-normative forms of consumption that often challenged middle class perceptions of decorum, respectability, and productive citizenship.

At the same time, though illicit economies provided city residents and tourists with alternative ways of experiencing corporeal pleasures and sensual entertainment, they likewise remained embedded in larger social processes shaping the region. Sex workers were highly segregated along class and race lines, and a woman’s position in the local industry was directly related to her ability to mimic middle-class manners and comportment. Likewise, while the possibility of engaging in interracial sex was open to white men, prostitution between black men and white women was much less common in the region. In this way, the sex trade continued to assure white men access to women of all colors, and white tourists and travelers used black neighborhoods as spaces where they could go to fulfill deviant sexual desires. Heroin use also became embedded in run-down, working-class neighborhoods, and—in the case of Detroit—African American communities, suggesting that illicit economies functioned through a spatial logic of inequality. By the end of the early-1950s, heroin addiction seemed to be on the rise in these neighborhoods, making many residents' lives extremely difficult. Pleasure, then, came at a

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6 Race defines “consumer culture” as “the dense material culture to which the expansion of commodity production in the last century has given rise.” Central to this development was a “shift away from a puritan ethic of hard work, accumulation, and restraint, and toward a provisional articulation around expressive, erotic and experiential pleasures.” Within this context, drug use in particular is “constructed as a sign or instance of excessive conformity to contemporary consumer culture—their use deemed at once normatively intelligible according to the terms of contemporary consumer culture, yet routinely cited as a[n]...example of excessive adherence to its terms.” Kane Race, “Recreational states: Drugs and the sovereignty of consumption,” Culture Machine 7 (2005) [online]. http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/viewArticle/28/35
price for many poor communities, who were targeted by anti-vice movements and intensified policing practices. In this way, the illicit consumption of substances and the commodification of sexual pleasure took on geo-social meaning and developed according to competing value systems in the urban borderland.

**Locating Prostitution in The Border Region**

Among the bustling city streets, the scores of tourists and commuters crossing the border, and the glittering skyline of one of North America’s major metropolitan regions, illicit forms of leisure and entertainment flourished. Sometimes hidden within broken buildings and abandoned factories, and sometime out in the open for all to see, the sale of illicit sex drew contemporaries who wanted to discover the underbelly of the border cities. Prostitution became a central part of the informal leisure economy in the Detroit-Windsor borderland and developed into a booming business that brought Americans and Canadians from various geographical and social locations together. It was built around the border, but also around the urban centers of Detroit and Windsor. As such, it relied on workers and customers who traveled across city, state, provincial, and national lines in order to participate. These men were greeted by a range of individuals and businesses who enabled the illegal exchanges between customers and local women. As such, the sex industries was firmly embedded in larger vice economies in downtown neighborhoods and developed into a large-scale illicit market.

Though it is impossible to determine the exact number of participants in illegal and illicit activities, the policing of these industries provides some insight into the scope of vice trades in the cities. As a booming urban center, Detroit’s sex industry operated on a much larger scale than
that of Windsor. For example, in 1946, the Detroit police arrested 1,287 individuals for prostitution-related offenses, 632 of whom were women. The same year, Windsor police arrested 281 individuals for prostitution related charges, of whom at least 84 were women.\footnote{Windsor Police Department, Annual Report (1946), p. 30.} Arrest records are problematic, as they often tell us more about policing than they do about actual crimes; this is particularly true in relations to vice crimes, as laws are often enforced sporadically, or policing may be more intense in particular neighborhoods. However, these numbers do accurately reflect the population gap between the two cities. Detroit still held its status as a major metropolitan center, while Windsor—a large city by Canadian standards—was far from a booming metropolis. As a result, it is not surprising that the number of sex workers and their customers was considerably lower than those in Detroit.

The relatively low population of Windsor, though, meant that prostitution was particularly visible in the city and took the form of a cross-border industry dominated by Americans. While World War II led to a temporary suppression of prostitution in the region, beginning in 1943 the number of Americans visiting Windsor for illicit sex began to increase considerably, coinciding with the rising number of cross-border travelers in the region.\footnote{During World War II, prostitution was target by government officials as major contributor to the decline in health and moral among soldiers. The US and Canadian governments both undertook campaigns to reduce the level of prostitution, particularly among enlisted soldiers. Travel restrictions between Canada and the US also contributed to the decline in the local sex trade during the war. See: John Parascandola, “Quarantining Women: Venereal Disease Rapid Treatment Centers in World War II America,” \textit{Bulletin of the History of Medicine} Vol. 83, Iss. 3 (2009), pp. 431-459; Nancy K. Bristol, “Victory Girls, Khaki-Whakis, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II,” \textit{The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth} Vol. 4, Iss. 2 (2011), pp. 349-351; Kara Dixon Vuic, “I have Worn Out Another Pair of Shoes for My Country: Gender Sexuality and World War II,” \textit{Reviews in American History} Vol. 38, Iss. 1 (2010), pp. 127-132; Jeffrey A. Keshen, \textit{Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).} By the mid-1950s, the number of vehicles entering Windsor at the tunnel and bridge for any given year exceeded two and a half
million, making it the busiest crossing point between the two countries.\(^9\) While not everyone crossed into Windsor for sex, a portion of these travelers did come to enjoy the “wide open” border town. By the late-1940s, Americans began to comprise the majority of customers patronizing bawdy houses in the city.\(^10\) In 1940, for example, everyone listed as a “found in” of a brothel was a resident of Windsor.\(^11\) However, by 1946, more than 50 percent of the men arrested in raids on bawdy houses were American residents.\(^12\) That same year, the *Windsor Star* reported that there were approximately forty brothels in Windsor, and about 95 percent of the male clients were American.\(^13\) Americans would continue to comprise the majority of arrests as “found ins” throughout the mid-1950s.

The spatial geography of Windsor’s sex trade reflected the fact that its primary clientele came from across the border. Though Windsor did not have an official red light district, bawdy houses operated openly throughout the downtown core. Sex workers were adept at utilizing both public and private spaces across the city in order to attract customers, especially Americans who crossed the border for a weekend of fun. Street-walking was uncommon; instead, men would meet sex workers at brothels, bars, or through other individuals with a stake in the business. For example, sex workers often patronized hangouts like the Oriental Café, where they would meet men and direct them to nearby brothels.\(^14\) The *Windsor Star* regularly published the addresses of the brothels, which were most often located on streets such as Aylmer, Drouillard, Brandt,

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\(^9\) According to the *Annual Reports* of the Windsor Police Department, the number of vehicles entering Windsor each year were as follows: 2,543,924 in 1954; 2,789,369 in 1955; 2,637,790 in 1956. Unfortunately, these are the only years in which the annual reports recorded the number of border crossings during the postwar period.


\(^11\) “Found in a Bawdy House” was the charge listed for customers found in the brothels, usually during a late-night raid.

\(^12\) That compares to a mere 23% who were residents of Windsor. Windsor P.D. 1946.


Mercer, Pitt, Chatham, and Tecumseh. One Star article even reported on a brothel on Goyeau Street, within half a block of the police station.\textsuperscript{15} Significantly, these streets were not only in the downtown center, but they were also in close proximity to either the bridge or the tunnel connecting Windsor and Detroit.

American tourists would not have to travel far once they passed through the 5,160-foot tunnel that separated the two cities. Once they were on the Canadian side of the border, men were often met by individuals waiting near the bridge or tunnel, handing out business cards, and directing them to particular bawdy houses. In 1948, for example, two Detroit men arrested in a brothel claimed that they were approached in Windsor by a man on a motorcycle when they were on their way back to the tunnel and were directed to a bawdy house on Brandt Street.\textsuperscript{16} In an interview with Patrick Brode, Jim Ure, a retired Windsor police detective, recalled that one infamous madam ran her business out of a home at 359 Brandt Street. She had business cards and maps printed for customers, and there were long line ups at the brothel on weekends; men would go, pay their money, and wait on the street with a chit until their number was called.\textsuperscript{17} Contemporary news reports similarly claimed that American men were regularly met on the Windsor side of the bridge or tunnel by a “tout” who would direct them to places where they could meet a prostitute.\textsuperscript{18} As such, participants in the sex trade openly courted Americans, making it easy and convenient for them to locate and purchase sexual services in the downtown core.

The rapid rise in American tourists, when combined with the concentration of cooperative businesses in the downtown core, meant that the sex industry became increasingly visible to

\textsuperscript{15} Windsor Daily Star 1950a, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{17} Patrick Brode, Interview with Jim Ure, January 20, 2006.
locals and tourists alike. As may be expected, the majority of men came from Michigan—specifically, from Detroit and its surrounding suburbs. More surprising, perhaps, are the distances other men traveled to come to the city. Visitors from states such as New York, Wisconsin, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Texas, and California were among those arrested.\(^{19}\) Although it is difficult to determine if these men traveled to Windsor for the primary purpose of visiting the brothels, what is evident is that at the very least many American men made sure to indulge in the city’s “services” while they were in the area. By 1946, the rising visibility of cross-border prostitution prompted Windsor Magistrate Arthur Hanrahan to assert that the city was destined to become a “border brothel for Detroit.”\(^{20}\)

Detroit, though, had its own booming commercial sex industry—one that also relied on the influx of men and women in and out of the city. Given the large population of Detroit, Canadian visitors made up a comparatively small percentage of customers of the city’s sex trade, yet they still had a noticeable presence. In 1945, 66 people arrested in Detroit on prostitution charges were from Canada, a number which remained fairly consistent throughout the period.\(^{21}\) Significantly, this was by far the largest number of non-US offenders arrested on prostitution charges. The fact that this number reflects those arrested and booked rather than the number of people actually engaging in prostitution-related activities suggests that although they were far from the majority of customers, Canadians were visible participants in the sex trade in Detroit.

\(^{19}\) Windsor Police Department Annual Reports, 1945-1960.

\(^{20}\) Windsor Police Department Annual Reports, 1945-1960.

\(^{21}\) Windsor Police Department Annual Reports, 1945-1960.
Despite the fact that Detroit’s sex industry depended more on its status as a major metropolitan center than its position as a border city, customers who came from outside of the city were likewise central to the illicit trade. Like Windsor, though Detroit lacked an official red-light district, the sex industry was particularly visible in certain neighborhoods. Many prostitutes worked in the areas bordering Woodward Avenue, which ran through the middle of the city. This included both the flashy neighborhoods where out-of-towners would go to enjoy the excitement of the city, but also the slums that developed on the edge of these areas. Prostitution was also common along the city limits that separated Detroit from surrounding suburbs such as Royal Oak, Highland Park, Ecorse, and Hamtramck. For example, police records indicate that arrests were regularly made at homes and businesses off of streets such as Glenlodge, Wyoming, Woodside, Reimanville, and Halcott Lane, located along West Eight Mile road and the city limits.22 These spaces reflect both the urban nature of the trade, but also the fact that many of their customers crossed into Detroit from the neighboring suburbs, cities, and states. One local organization, the Citizens Committee for Equal Opportunity, argued that the concentration and visibility of prostitution in these neighborhoods was central to its ability to attract out-of-town customers. In a 1965 report, it noted an, “appalling number of prostitute-seekers, many of whom can be observed driving autos with out-of-state license plates, who prowl the inner city streets [of Detroit] on weekends.” The committee blamed much of the crime in Detroit, including prostitution, on outsiders who traveled to the city for illicit fun on the weekends.23 Just as Americas crossed the national border into Windsor for illicit leisure, so too did Canadians and other Americans “prowl” the streets of Detroit in search of pleasure and urban adventure.

As in Windsor, Detroit's sex trade relied on a range of people and businesses that helped out-of-town customers solicit sexual services in the city, subsequently blurring the lines between licit and illicit interactions. For example, in 1948 a reporter from the Chicago Tribune traveled to Detroit in order to explore the openness of illicit entertainment in the city. After an evening of gambling at bars off of Woodward Avenue (within close proximity to the police station, he noted), the reporter ended up at a mixed-race, "Black and Tan" bar. There he listened to the 5-piece band and inquired of one of the patrons, "Where is there to go for the romantically inclined at such an hour?" He was taken to a building where for an hour he watched taxicabs drop customers off and pick them up a short while later. Apparently he was unable to get in because the brothel was “only taking its old list” of regular customers that night. His unofficial tour guide then drove him to a hotel where he was told he could get a room for $2.50 a night and the bellhop would set him up with a girl. If it was not after-hours, the man explained, they could have hit up the taxi dance halls, where he would have “no trouble” finding the services he desired. This type of open solicitation made it easy for men from outside of the city to locate places where they could purchase illicit sexual pleasure. In the city's core, prostitution, gambling, and drinking went hand in hand, enabling visitors to participate in multiple forms of entertainment simultaneously.

**Doing Bad: Prostitution and the Commodification of Desire**

It is clear that men traveled from a range of locations to participate in the illicit economy of the border region. This raises the questions, though, of why exactly men traveled to the region for sex and how notions of 'pleasure' were negotiated within these exchanges. In contrast to

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normative forms of sexual exchange, which were defined as heterosexual relations between a husband and wife, commercial sex offered an alternative way to experience sexual gratification where pleasure-seeking became an end within itself. It relied on the commodification of desires, reflecting a push towards physical and sexual pleasure linked to urban adventure. On the most basic level, it offered a form of sex outside of the bonds of marriage; it commodified what was supposed to happen within a legally sanctioned relationship, and in doing so challenged the premise that sex was supposed to be confined to realm of husband and wife. It also offered moments of subversion, where men—and to a lesser extent women—could act out sexual desires that did not fit into this narrow category of acceptable sexual expression. Yet contemporary discourse about prostitution and vice was profoundly heteronormative, and discussions about the sex industry in the border region often reinforced the fact that, though illicit, heterosexual prostitution stemmed from men’s natural drive to seek out women for sexual pleasure. Further, racial and ethnic divisions among prostitutes in the region served to reinforce the idea that African American, French Canadian, and lower-class women were more susceptible to—and in some ways fit for—these illicit sexual relationships. The sex industry in the border region, then, worked in paradoxical ways. At times it challenged normative definitions of acceptable forms of sexuality; but these challenges were limited and could in fact reinforce narrow definitions of sexual desire.

Part of the draw of commercial prostitution was the fact that it enabled participants to traverse social, moral, and geographic lines. The mobile nature of the industry suggests that there was something appealing about traveling to another location to fulfill one’s sexual desires. Crossing the national boundary or city limit enabled people to take liberties they may not have
otherwise taken at home. The promise of illicit physical pleasure was heightened by the fact that individuals were crossing multiple lines simultaneously, and the notion that customers were welcomed visitors was central to promoting these illicit interactions in downtown neighborhoods. For example, a *Windsor Star* article on the sex industry in Windsor described the city as a space that offered excitement for visitors, characterizing it as place where, “anything in the way of diversions for the ‘tired businessman’” was available. The author explained that a visitor need simply ask any cab driver where they could “have a good time,” and he would take them to one of the fifty brothels in the city. Once there, the man would have his pick of women who “were typed like brands of whiskey. Some good, some bad. You get what you pay for.”25 In this formulation, one was free to purchase sexual pleasure and adventure, and the level of excitement depended on how much he was willing or able to spend.

Men’s ability to purchase sexual pleasure was in direct violation of moral codes that placed the heterosexual, monogamous marriage at the heart of North American society. Historians of the postwar period have demonstrated that the closing of World War II ushered in two decades of renewed focus on the home, family life, and traditional gender roles. After several years of disruption, North Americans began to place their energies on reinforcing the institution of heterosexual marriage, which was viewed as a central pillar of a well-ordered society.26 The notion of the ‘compassionate marriage’ stressed the importance of erotic pleasure in

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26 During the postwar period, there was a renewed call for adherence to the heterosexual monogamous marriage, and increasingly rigid lines drawn between ‘deviant’ and ‘healthy’ sexual outlets. Scholars such as Mary Louise Adams, Mona Gleason, Franca Iacovetta, and Mariana Valverde have been instrumental in identifying aspects of Cold War Canadian and American culture that were particularly hostile to people who deviated from social ‘norms’ defined around the white, middle-class, nuclear family. Sexuality was of particular interest in the postwar period, and became a marker signifying ‘normality’ or ‘abnormality.’ Within this context, sex tourism was a blatant affront to these attitudes through its emphasis on pleasure-seeking sexual relations, and the fact that it opened up the possibility for acting upon otherwise illicit, or ‘deviant,’ desires. Sex tourism explicitly linked
the marital relationship while simultaneously defining non-marital sexual relations as deviations from healthy, mature sexuality. The “revival of domesticity” in the postwar period meant that sexual pleasure between man and wife was seen as one route to family harmony and domestic stability. The increasing influence of psychoanalytic theories also meant that heterosexuality was more than simply a way to structure relations between men and women; it was increasingly viewed as the key determinant of one's ability to be read as normal.27

Commercial sex was even more subversive due to the type of sexual pleasure it promised. It provided a space where deviant sexual acts were commodified, and facilitated the growth of a market wherein a wide range of sexual perversions could be bought or sold. The renewed emphasis on marital sex and family life meant that non-marital sexual expressions, which had gained a degree of acceptance between the 1920s and the 1940s, once again came under attack by reformers intent on asserting a Cold War moral order. “Deviance,” a term linked to the concept of sexual perversion, took on renewed prominence in the postwar years and became explicitly linked to conceptions of normative and non-normative forms of sexual activity. The influence of psychoanalytic theory further posited that the line between normal and deviant was in fact less distinct than previously thought, and therefore potentially more threatening. The wide range of negative responses to Alfred Kinsey's studies of male and female sexuality demonstrates the salience of the idea that sexuality existed on a continuum. Even seemingly normal

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individuals were susceptible to sexual perversions. No longer were people born healthy or deviant; an otherwise normal person could be corrupted if exposed to perversions at an early age. In many ways, “deviance” and “perversion” became synonymous with homosexuality, which became the ultimate expression of non-normative sexuality in the postwar years. Though medical, moral, and legal conceptions of deviance were complex and often contradictory, they nonetheless reinforced heteronormative definitions of acceptable sexual interactions and the importance of legally-sanctioned sexual interactions.

The notion that men could pay for particular types of illicit pleasure was important in attracting customers into the border region, and local studies of prostitution acknowledged the central role that performing deviant sexual activities had in attracting clients. As early as the 1920s, researchers working for the Social Hygiene Association in Detroit noted that prostitution provided an outlet for what they considered to be 'deviant' sexual practices. One investigation of prostitution in the city found that “perversion” was “extremely prevalent” in the local sex trade. In fact, the investigators decided that there were far more perversions in the Detroit sex industry than in any other US city. For an additional fee of fifty cents to two dollars, women would perform these sexual acts, which apparently nine times out of ten meant “French” (i.e. oral


29 Adams, The Trouble with Normal, p. 85.

sex). Taylor’s 1933 interviews with local prostitutes similarly identified oral sex as the most common form of “perversion.” In the survey he conducted with 85 sex workers, Taylor found that 80% of women stated that they performed just “straight sex.” He doubted the sincerity of this claim, though, due to both the emphatic denials of the women in their interviews and the fact that when he solicited women on the street, they frequently agreed to perform “‘French’ at the price of a ‘straight trick.’”

These early studies linking sexual perversion to commercial sex have a number of important implications. On one level, Taylor’s belief that the women were lying when they said that they were only performing “straight sex” demonstrates the uneven power dynamic between the researcher and his subjects. The women, who were quite open about their work and personal lives in their interviews, clearly felt there were particular parts of their profession better left unsaid. Only acknowledging “straight sex” had a way of reinforcing barriers between the official researcher and themselves; some practices, perhaps, were better left between workers and their clients. Yet the likelihood that oral sex was indeed commonly performed demonstrates a clear gap between medical and moral definitions of proper forms of sex and the actual practices of men and women in their daily lives—an observation that would later be reaffirmed by Kinsey's studies. Further, though the women’s voices are mediated through the questions posed by the researcher, their responses also indicate a direct relationship between the definition of deviance and the money one could make performing a particular act. The fact that women could charge an additional fee for non-normative forms of sex shows both that there was a market for these types

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31 The study and conclusions of the Social Hygiene Association are summarized in: Glen Seymour Taylor, “Prostitution in Detroit,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan (1933), p. 29.
33 Alfred Kinsey et al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1948); Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1953);
of activities and that the appeal of commercial sex was in part due to the possibility of experiencing sexual pleasure that might be hard to attain in other more acceptable contexts. Commercial sex offered something that a wife or a girlfriend might not; it offered men the ability to negotiate for deviant physical pleasures attainable at a relatively modest price.

The notion that men could pay women to perform deviant sexual acts continued to attract customers into the border cities well into the postwar years. In her autobiography of her thirty years as a madam in Detroit, Helen “Rocking Chair” McGowan recalls performing a wide range of sexual services and regularly shaping her sessions around the desires of the client, no matter how strange she found them. She recounts catering to men’s desires in the form of voyeurism, woman-on-woman sex, rape fantasies, role-playing, and group sex.\(^\text{34}\) McGowan describes these encounters with amusement and intrigue rather than disgust or disapproval, meaning her personal recollections read considerably different than the studies conducted in the 1920s and 1930s. She in fact uses the existence of these desires as a justification for the legalization of prostitution, since in her view prostitutes provide a necessary service in society. She writes, “I am convinced that most of these deviants would be a menace to society if they were baulked in their perversions. My house offered a comparatively harmless outlet to their abnormal desires. A few were as normal-appearing as your bank teller. Remove all prostitution and the streets of Detroit, or any other city, would be more fearful after dark.”\(^\text{35}\) Though McGowan’s assessment is couched in contemporary language that reinforced notions of normal and abnormal sexuality, she also demonstrates that prostitution provided an avenue through which one could explore otherwise stigmatized desires. Rather than shaming her customers into embarrassment or self-


loathing, McGowan saw prostitution as a useful avenue for men to explore their needs and desires. And for the right price, McGowan and her employees were willing to oblige.

In fact, the drive to explore deviant forms of sex worked in tandem with the heightened excitement one felt when crossing into a new urban space, particularly when it required crossing a national border. In 1946, for example, an editorial published in the Windsor Daily Star argued that Windsor attracted so many “sex perverts” due to its location next to Detroit. The author asserted that, “Windsor is a bad spot for sex perverts, because in addition to the local rash of perverts there are the ones who cross the river from Detroit seeking greener pastures.”\(^{36}\) Again, the article expresses the notion that men traveled to explore non-normative sexual interactions, and the appeal of crossing into urban borderland spaces heightened this desires. Other contemporary explanations for the growth in prostitution after the war cited ‘green pastures’ as a reason for the boom in the industry. Women and men moved into the region to in order to benefit from the cross-border mingling that took place in the border cities.\(^{37}\) Sex workers were able to capitalize on the appeal of non-normative sexual practices, and urban spaces enabled them to market their skills to outsiders who otherwise might not partake in the illicit interactions.

While the sex trade sometimes allowed participants to violate moral and legal codes that defined normative sexual interactions, paradoxically the illicit economy also had a tendency to reinforce race, sexual, and gender lines through the commodification of particular forms of female sexuality. Notions of difference were central to the business of commercial sex in Detroit and Windsor, and the illicit economy reinforced a hierarchy of beauty that determined the literal dollar value of ‘working girls.’ The postwar industry drew on divisions made in earlier decades,

\(^{36}\) “Attracted to Windsor,” Windsor Daily Star (May 24, 1943), p. 3.
\(^{37}\) See, for example, W.L. Clark, “As We See It,” Windsor Daily Star (October 2, 1946), p. 2.
when hierarchies along the lines of race and class divided women working in the trade. In Taylor’s study of prostitution in the 1930s, the researchers interviewed 85 women and wrote narrative descriptions of their personal histories and experiences. The language used to describe the women suggests that the researchers placed different values on the women according to their physical appearance and demeanor, values the researchers felt reflected the women’s positions in the industry. The language they utilized in the case studies demonstrates how particular physical features and personal comportment shaped the male researchers readings of the women, and by extension, the way johns may also have perceived them. Women were placed into six categories, ranging from “Intelligent and Attractive and Hence Successful” to “Old, Fifty Cent Hag.”

Allie, one woman considered at the low end of the scale, was described as, “a disillusioned and dejected colored lady who looks much older than her thirty-eight years.” Similarly, Taylor characterized Millie, who described herself as, “just a nigger whore,” as, “by no means an attractive girl. She has two front teeth missing and her kinky hair sticks out uncontrollably in every direction. To compensate she goes for ten cent store jewelry—ear rings, pins, necklaces, colored rings, etc. Her rouge is thick and unblended.” These women, according to the description, were far past their physical prime; by their mid-30s they were unable to attract many clients. Further, Millie’s attempts to mask her physical appearance with thick, poorly drawn makeup and cheap jewelry marked her as lower class—she failed to demonstrate personal upkeep associated with higher-status women working in the industry. In contrast, Taylor described the more successful prostitutes as younger, attractive, and intelligent: “Francis is one of the most intelligent, attractive, sophisticated, and personable girls

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38 These categories include: “At Bare Subsistence Level”; “Intelligent and Attractive and Hence Successful”; Unintelligent, but Attractive, and Hence Never the Less Successful”; “Old Experienced Entrepreneur”; “Occasional”; and “Old, Fifty Cent Hag.” Taylor, “Prostitution in Detroit,” p. 124.
with whom we came into contact. She dresses very well in excellent taste, is an able conversationalist and might easily be mistaken for a popular co-ed.” When Taylor described a successful African American woman, he focuses more on her physical features and youth: “Doris is a thoroughly reliable girl of twenty-three, well built, full breasted, attractive, and very black and unsophisticated for one so well versed in the ways of prostitution.” Focusing on her large breasts and youthful appearance take precedent over her intelligence and maturity—as a young black woman possessing particular physical features could be enough to attract a large clientele. Both of these women, though, were successful because they were good-mannered, dressed well, and were young and attractive. In other words, they were more closely aligned with middle-class conceptions of style and manners. Significantly, women who were both intelligent and attractive were considered the most successful in the trade, though women who were considered attractive and unintelligent could still attain a high status in the industry. In this sense, notions of female beauty were linked explicitly to racialized and classist perceptions; they had to be young, attractive, and demonstrate middle-class manners in order to be considered ‘high-end’ prostitutes.

In the postwar years, women were similarly subject to hierarchies that determined their value and ability to attract male clients. The Star article that describes women as brands of whiskey, with the “good” prostitutes costing more than the “bad” ones, clearly indicates the monetary value placed on women’s physical appearance. In the postwar years, this beauty was again explicitly linked to age, and it became increasingly difficult for women in their 30s or older to attract male clients. For example, according to Virginia Sobotka’s analysis of women arrested

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40 Taylor, “Prostitution in Detroit,” p. 133.
for prostitution in Detroit during the 1950s, the majority of women were between the ages of 17 and 24. This was a change from the 1930s, when women’s ages were more evenly distributed across generations.\(^\text{42}\) The high cultural value placed on youthfulness in the postwar period appears to have had a direct impact on women’s ability to sell sexual services.\(^\text{43}\) Their early retirement from sex work suggests that they may have found it more difficult to attain customers as they began to show the physical signs of aging.

When Helen McGowan first moved to Chicago as a teenager in search of employment, she too quickly learned the value of being able to market her physical attributes. When she and a friend were approached by a cab driver, they explained that they were in search of employment in the big city. He laughed and assured them that, “You two dolls shouldn't have any trouble getting work. You're both pretty and well stacked.” He also warned them, though, that they had to be careful about how they marketed themselves. “Play it smart, you dolls. Don't give away a million dollars worth before you wake up with all the facts. Your bodies can be worth a lot of dough to you.”\(^\text{44}\) The cabbie's advice resonated with McGowan, who over the course of her career watched many women become involved in abusive relationships with pimps or become addicted to drugs and alcohol, which took a negative toll on their physical and mental states. McGowan seems to have held on to his advice. When she became a madam, she insisted on


\(^{43}\) Patrick Jamieson's and Daniel Romer's edited volume explicitly links the postwar consumer culture to a shifting cultural emphasis on youth by demonstrating how specific products, movies, magazines, and so forth were increasingly glorified youthfulness as a marketable commodity. The Changing Portrayal of Adolescents in the Media Since 1950 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); For additional analyses of shifting conceptions of youth in the postwar years, see, for example: Thomas Doherty, Teenagers and Teenpics: the Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988); Julian Tanner, Teenage Troubles: Youth and Deviance in Canada (Scarborough, Ont.: Nelson Thomson Learning, 2001).

\(^{44}\) McGowan, Motor City Madam, p. 19.
hiring women that were either very physically attractive or who had a strong sexual energy that compensated for their average looks. McGowan also preferred to employ women from the South, as she found their Southern style could be used as a way to attract Northern men. As she recalls, “Some were beautiful. Many of them were morons. But they made good whores and they learned to please men much quicker than Northern girls.”

McGowan’s description of the women as beautiful but unintelligent is similar to the higher-class women interviewed by Taylor. She was able to capitalize on their physical attributes and to market their Southern backgrounds as unique, intriguing, and sexy. Heroin addicts, “winos,” and women working for pimps were lowest on her list of employable women.

Racial and ethnic differences also played a central role in defining the market value of women, though they could also function in multiple and contradictory ways. On the one hand, racial and ethnic differences functioned to draw customers into the cities for illicit sexual adventure. In Windsor, French Canadians were over represented within the Police Registers. In fact, they accounted for as much as one-third to one-half of those arrested between 1944 and 1955. The large presence of French Canadian prostitutes in Windsor was, in part, the result of a crackdown on vice in the city of Montreal. Given Windsor’s booming vice economy, and its large pool of potential American customers, many women and men looking to get out of “the

45 McGowan, Motor City Madam, p. 49.
46 Windsor Police Department, Annual Registers, 1940-1960.
heat” were drawn to the border city.\textsuperscript{48} The fact that many of the prostitutes were not only Canadian, but French Canadian, added to the allure of the city, and served as a clear marker of difference between the “tourists” and the “locals.” Detroiters’ common request for “French” sex further suggests that French-Canadian women may have been able to capitalize on their ethnic difference in order to attract clients. Windsor was in a unique position—it was different enough to elicit interest from neighboring Detroiter, but geographically close enough to make it a convenient destination for a night of fun.

Yet Windsor’s sex industry was not open to all Americans. With the exception of three women, everyone arrested on prostitution charges between 1945 and 1960 was listed in the registers as ‘white.’\textsuperscript{49} This is significant given that Detroit’s African American population more than tripled during this period, from 9.2 percent of the total population in 1940 to 28.9 percent in 1960.\textsuperscript{50} The racially homogeneous character of Windsor’s sex industry raises the questions of what borders were being crossed in the local sex industry and who could cross them. Clearly, though crossing the national border enabled white men to traverse sexual, moral, and legal boundaries, it did not offer men of color the same possibility. Interestingly, though the connection is tentative, it is important to note that the number of American tourists in Windsor began to increase in 1943, correlating with the riots that took place in downtown Detroit. In one sense, it appears that the Windsor sex trade was a form of white flight, wherein white Detroiter could enjoy the comforts of white, male privilege without the overt challenges to this position

\textsuperscript{48} A Star article explained that, “The fact that the majority [of prostitutes in Windsor]…hail from Montreal is said to be due to the fact that ‘the heat’ is on the latter Metropolis, although Montreal has always been the out-of-town vice market’s chief source of supply. R.M. Harrison, “Now,” Windsor Daily Star (July 5, 1943), p. 7.

\textsuperscript{49} Windsor Police Annual Reports, 1945-1960.

that took place in the racially-charged city of Detroit. American customers necessarily re-asserted the white nature of American citizenship by freely crossing the Detroit-Windsor border and engaging in socially stigmatized, yet tacitly accepted, leisure activities.

Likewise, the racial make-up of Detroit also played an important role in shaping that city’s sex industry and in reinforcing white men’s access to women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Following the first Great Migration, African American women began to make up a large percentage of sex workers in the city of Detroit. This was shaped in large part by, as one study put it, the lack of “legitimate opportunities open to Negro girls.”\(^51\) By the early 1930s, a strong interracial sex trade had developed where white men regularly frequented black prostitutes. As Taylor's study indicates, the color line was seldom, “drawn in the practice of prostitution. Many of the more attractive Negro women find no difficulty in getting a white ‘John.’ Indeed, many of them take white ‘tricks’ exclusively.”\(^52\) While the study indicates that white men frequently crossed the color line through prostitution, it failed to recognize the long history of white men’s access to black women’s bodies that was reinforced through the sex industry in Detroit. In fact, the color line did exist, and the sex industry helped to solidify white men’s racial and sexual privilege within the racially-segregated city.

The sexualization of racial difference in the highly segregated region was also noted by the Detroit Citizen’s Committee, who placed the blame of widespread prostitution on white customers from outside the city. In its 1965 investigation into the lack of effective law enforcement in Detroit, the committee concluded that the ineffectiveness of vocal campaigns to eliminate prostitution raised questions about who actually wanted anti-vice laws enforced. The

\(^{51}\) Taylor, “Prostitution in Detroit,” p. 85.
\(^{52}\) Taylor, “Prostitution in Detroit,” p. 85.
committee rejected the “myth” that white communities actually demanded strict law enforcement while black communities demonstrated high degrees of lawlessness and immorality. It argued that one need only look at the, “overwhelmingly white clientele which supports Negro prostitutes,” to see that the problem was not an inner city issue but one caused by white clients patronizing black prostitutes in downtown neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{53} Though the black community bore the brunt of criticism for vice in the city, it was in fact white customers that kept these industries operating on such a large scale. Men from various suburban cities and white communities across the region were drawn into the downtown neighborhoods because they could participate in these illicit interracial exchanges, thus capitalizing on both racial and geographical difference. This was an uneven exchange that had a direct impact on people living in black neighborhoods. The white clients could come and go as they pleased, but members of the local communities had to deal with haphazard policing policies and the reputation they attained as a result of the visibility of prostitution on city streets.

The racial, gender, and class lines reinforced through constructions of beauty and desire were also profoundly heteronormative in nature, and reinforced a sexual order where the only natural sexual interactions were those between a man and a woman. Though heterosexual prostitution was considered to be a deviant behavior, discussions of prostitution were also informed by the assumption that heterosexual desire, particularly for men, was a natural and healthy inclination. The fact that contemporary studies, news reports, and moral campaigns referred to prostitution as a explicitly heterosexual institution indicates the expansive role of heternormativity in the postwar period. The absence of discussions of male prostitution is particularly puzzling given the scale of moral panics over male homosexuality that occurred in

\textsuperscript{53} Citizens Committee, \textit{The Police}, p. 10.

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the Cold War environment. Further, though contemporary sources like news reports explicitly framed prostitution as a vice and an urban problem, they also often provide an underlying assumption that the 'world's oldest profession' was in many ways a reaction to market demands for commercial sexual encounters. According to this narrative, the “tired businessman” who traveled to Windsor or Detroit in order to find relaxation in the form of sexual entertainment, while violating moral and legal codes, also acted so as to satisfy his natural drive for heterosexual outlets.

McGowan likewise reaffirmed and defended the naturalness of heterosexual prostitution. In describing one of her more successful employees, McGowan explained that she was successful because she filled an important need for thousands of men: she “made life brighter for a thousand men. She gave new confidence to the rejected and the lonely. She made a man feel like a man.” McGowan also attributed some women's success to their supposedly 'innate' ability to please men: “I have said that some women seem born to please men. Ann was one of them...She was what we call a pro. She was the best.” By, “making a man feel like a man,” McGowan emphasized that proper gender roles were reaffirmed through the sexual exchanges between women and their male clients.

McGowan's belief that prostitution was a relatively safe and healthy outlet for men's sexual desires was tempered by the notion that same-sex sexual interactions signaled one's inability to deal with social, economic, and psychological issues. At times, McGowan seemed

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somewhat sympathetic to women who were in same-sex relationships. Commenting on what she characterized as the “strange” prevalence of homosexuality among prostitutes that had developed over the course of the 1950s, McGowan attributed its development to loneliness and the ruthlessness of male pimps. This left women with only one place to turn, “and that was to her own kind.” Yet since she did not “quite understand” why women would partner with other women, she was very harsh in her condemnation of friends and employees who lived this lifestyle. After having a falling out with Shirley, one of her former employees and close friends, McGowan ran into her in a bar on Detroit's Fourth Street. She was horrified to discover that her hair was, “cut like a boy's and her fine body was covered with mannish tweeds.” McGowan's only response was, “My God, Shirley, don't tell me you've turned homo.” Shirley was joined by, “her new friend, [who was] tagged out like a fag...,” and later in the evening she died of an apparent alcohol poisoning. A woman who was once a young, fun, and attractive sex worker, had fallen into a downward spiral of alcoholism, homosexuality, and depression. McGowan believed that it was in fact these social and psychological causes that pushed her into homosexuality. Her once beautiful body, now covered with manly attire, made her gender and sexual transgressions visible for all to see, and for McGowan, signaled that Shirley had hit rock-bottom. Ironically, her description of the downward spiral into addiction and homosexuality mirrored contemporary descriptions of prostitution, wherein a young troubled woman fell in with the wrong crowd, started to use addictive substances, and began consorting with all sorts of troubled men. In this

56 Though several scholars have noted the connection between lesbians and prostitutes in specific context, this connection remains largely unexplored. One major exception is Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis's study of lesbian communities in Buffalo, New York. The authors similarly noted a significant number of queer-identified women who also worked as prostitutes during the 1950s. See: Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: the History of a Lesbian Community (New York: Penguin Books, 1994). Also, see: Joan Nestle, “Lesbians and Prostitutes: An Historical Sisterhood, in Restricted Country (Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1987), pp. 157-177.
way, despite the fact that she herself lived a deviant lifestyle, McGowan also reaffirmed the hetero/homo binary that defined homosexuality as one of the most damaging sexual and psychological perversion.

A close examination of commercial sex in the border cities demonstrates the complex relationship between normative and deviant sexual behaviors, as illicit sexual interactions could be at once both transgressive and reaffirming of the postwar social order. Though men could pay for deviant sexual acts—thus challenging the primacy of monogamous marriage—the sex trade also served to reinforce normative definitions of race, class, and gender. Differences of race and class in particular coded prostitutes as either 'good' or 'bad,' and consequently affected how much money they could make within the sex industry. Further, though considered problematic on several levels, descriptions of prostitution often reinforced the natural status of heterosexual interactions that were defined along an explicit hetero/homo divide. In this way, vice economies had contradictory impacts on these border cities, serving to both challenge and reinforce a range of normative values in urban spaces.

**Locating Drugs in Detroit and Windsor**

The urban environment that facilitated the growth of the commercial sex trade also enabled an illicit heroin market to develop in the downtown neighborhoods of the border cities. Like sex work, the illicit drug economy depended on urban spaces and the flow of people and drugs across them. The illicit drug economy likewise united notions of consumption, pleasure, and mobility, bringing goods and people together across national, social, and geographic lines. The heroin economy became entrenched in poor, working-class, and African American
communities, and illegal drug use took on particular connotations. Its illicit status often served to attract outsiders who were intrigued by the cool and hip users in downtown neighborhoods. Subsequently, drug importers also moved to the region in order to capitalize on the cross-border market and the mingling of Americans and Canadians that took place as a result. Heroin use, then, came to reflect larger national patterns of drug use across North America, but also developed into a cross-border trade due to the shared social and spatial geography of the border region.

World War II greatly disrupted drug patterns, leading to a temporary suppression of illegal narcotics in both Canada and the United States. Within a few years of the close of the war, however, drug use emerged in full force on both sides of the border. Given the size of the using community within the city of Detroit, its position along the national border meant that it functioned as a central hub in the heroin economy of the Great Lakes region. As a bustling American city, Detroit’s user population became the fourth largest among North American cities, behind only New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Law enforcement officials estimated that there were anywhere from about 2,000 to 5,000 “addicts” in the city in the mid-1950s. In

57 The use of illegal drugs for recreational purposes, of course, pre-dates the postwar period, and throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Americans and Canadians engaged in the use of a wide range of psychotropic substances. By the late-nineteenth century opiate drugs in particular were liberally prescribed, readily attainable without a prescription, and widely used. Though opiates came under increasing control by federal authorities on both sides of the border during the Progressive Era, they continued to be taken for recreational purposes, and by the 1920s were among the most widely used illegal narcotics. Though the closing of international trade routes during World War II greatly disrupted drug markets across North America, and led to a temporary suppression of heroin, within a few years of the close of the war illicit drug cultures re-emerged in full force in both Canada and the United States. Clayton Mosher, “The Legal Response to Narcotic Drugs in Five Ontario Cities, 1908-1961,” PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1992, p. 34.


59 According to Joseph Bell, the District Supervisor for the Federal Bureau of Narcotics for the states of Michigan and Ohio, there were around 5,000 drug users in the city of Detroit alone in 1951. Minutes, Legislative Committee to Study the Narcotic Problem in Michigan, (Aug. 22, 1951), p. 6. In 1955, Russell J. McCarty, Detective-Inspector, Commanding Narcotics Bureau in the Detroit Police Department put this number at about 2,000, based on arrest records. US Senate Committee on the Illicit Narcotics Traffic, 84th Congress, 1st Session,
contrast, in 1955, G.B. McClellan, Assistant Commissioner of the RCMP in Toronto, estimated that the “addict” population in Southern Ontario was between 400 and 450, with Toronto making up about ninety percent of users in the region, and Windsor and Hamilton comprising the remaining ten percent. Though the size of the using community on the Windsor side of the border was substantially smaller than that of Detroit, as a border community that had long facilitated illicit vice economies—including illegal liquor smuggling during American Prohibition—it had a long history of operating as a space that connected American travelers and tourists to broader networks of illicit communities in Canada. Windsor’s position between Detroit and Toronto further enabled its central position in the trade of illegal heroin during the period, and it played a key role in facilitating a cultural and economic link between the using communities of the two largest metropolitan areas in the region.

There were in fact many similarities between the drug cultures in Michigan and Ontario. Prior to World War II, American and Canadian users consumed a wide variety of drugs including cocaine, opium, morphine, codeine, and heroin. This changed in the late-1940s, as heroin became the primary drug of choice on both sides of the border. In 1955, Edward Piggin, the Commissioner of Police in Detroit, testified before the 1955 Senate Committee on Illicit Narcotics Traffic that heroin made up 90 percent of the “drug problem” in Detroit. Similarly,

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Part 10 (November 23, 1955), p. 4486. This paper opts to use the more neutral term ‘user’ rather than ‘addict,’ since definitions of what constitute an addict differ across time and place. However, when sources explicitly identify users as ‘addicts,’ I have left his language.


62 Carstairs, Jailed for Possession, p. 67.

the Annual Reports of the National Health and Welfare Department in Canada consistently reported that heroin comprised over ninety percent of illegal drug use in the country.\textsuperscript{64} Though drugs like cocaine and marijuana were also available, particularly in American cities, heroin consistently dominated the illicit North American market throughout the 1950s.

Injecting heroin directly into the vein, or ‘mainlining’, became the most popular method of use and allowed for maximum effectiveness.\textsuperscript{65} In the US, ‘outfits’ (consisting of an eyedropper, a hypodermic needle, thin or absorbent paper, and a spoon) could be rented through an illicit market; in Canada, all these items were legal and available in drug stores. It was common practice to share outfits, though most users usually shot themselves up.\textsuperscript{66} Heroin was also available in powder and pill form, but these forms were often less potent. For example, one former heroin addict testified before the US Senate Committee in Detroit that at the height of her addiction she consumed between sixty and seventy pills of heroin a day.\textsuperscript{67} The weaker the drug, the more pills one would have to consume. Further those who sniffed heroin would have to “use a lot more” of it in order to get the same “kick” as mainlining.\textsuperscript{68}

The geographical location of heroin use in the cities of Windsor and Detroit reflects broader national patterns identified by scholars such as Catherine Carstairs, Eric Schmidt, and David Courtwright: on both sides of the border, users tended to be concentrated in working-class and poor neighborhoods in downtown cores.\textsuperscript{69} According to the 1953 Mayor’s Committee for the

\textsuperscript{64} Canada, Department of National Health and Welfare, \textit{Annual Report} (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1959), p. 94.
\textsuperscript{66} Carstairs, \textit{Jailed for Possession}, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{67} US, \textit{Senate Committee on Illicit Narcotics Traffic}, Part 10, p. 4518
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Legislative Committee to Study the Narcotic Problem in Michigan} (Aug. 22, 1951), p. 3.
\textsuperscript{69} In New York, an epidemiological study concluded that fifteen percent of the census tracts in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, home to just thirty percent of the city’s sixteen- to twenty-year-old males, contributed
Rehabilitation of Narcotics Addicts, which interviewed 76 heroin users in Detroit, over 90% of participants came from the first and thirteenth police precinct. The districts were bounded by the Detroit Terminal Railroad tracks, the Detroit River, Hamilton Avenue, and Russell Street, covering a three and one-half square mile radius. The Council of Social Agencies placed that area in the lowest quintile rank in the city with respect to public assistance, old-age assistance, aid to dependent children, violations of the juvenile code, truancy, official court cases, tuberculosis deaths, and total deaths. As the study put it, “Generally speaking, this is an area of economic and social deprivation.” These were also predominately African American neighborhoods, and heroin use became increasingly associated with poor, black neighborhoods in the city center. As such, the problem of heroin addiction was regularly framed as an outgrowth of poverty, crime, and vice, particularly within black communities.

Canadian users were also concentrated in poor, urban centers, and likewise came to be associated with the urban problem. In his interview before the 1955 Senate Committee, Commissioner Nicholson, head of Royal Canadian Mounted Police, asserted that drug use was concentrated in low-income areas within Canada’s major urban centers. He stated that they users, “had their own little group[s],” which, “have some sort of hangout[s] or place[s] where they can live at a minimum cost. Further, they have to support their habit by crime, and they favor the place where they think they have the better chance of stealing; or, in the case of women, if they tend toward prostitution, they go to the centers where they can capitalize on it.” Arrest records similarly indicate that heroin users in Windsor were usually from working class or poor

over eighty percent of the male adolescent heroin users. Thus, the economic marginality that characterized drug users in Detroit and Windsor also reflected broader trends seen in cities across North America (Schneider, Smack, p. 42).

70 Mayor’s Committee for the Rehabilitation of Narcotics Addicts (1953), p. 38.
71 1955 Senate Committee Canada, p. 33.
backgrounds, and often lived in the poorest areas in the city.\textsuperscript{72} In this way, officials noted that vice economies overlapped, and therefore associated these activities with crime, poverty, and other urban issues. Particular low-income neighborhoods became coded as sites where one could make connections with dealers, purchase illegal drugs, and consume the substances.

The fact that drug users tended to be concentrated in particular neighborhoods meant these spaces often elicited a degree of intrigue and excitement from those outside of the city looking to have a good time. Just as prostitution attracted men from neighboring towns, cities, and provinces, illicit drugs drew men and women into the border region for illicit forms of pleasure. Indeed, the dividing lines between downtown neighborhoods and the suburbs also served the dual purpose of shielding many white suburban youths from the growing heroin culture. Suburban teens looking to engage in the illicit using community often had to make an effort to seek out them out.\textsuperscript{73} A young woman from small-town Ontario recounted that when she first used heroin at sixteen, she, “thought it was wonderful.” She testified before the 1955 Senate Committee On Narcotic Drugs in Canada that she often went to the nearest urban center, Toronto, to play “hookey.” She recalled that there was only one place to go when skipping school, “and that is to the worst part of the city. There you run into people. I was fascinated by

\textsuperscript{72} Clayton Mosher’s study of drug arrests in Toronto, Windsor, Hamilton, London, and Ottawa found that about sixty-six percent of users and seller were from “working” class backgrounds, with roughly an additional fifteen percent listed as “unemployed.” Though Windsor had the fourth largest population, it was the third largest percentage of arrests in his study (just under 5\%). He attributed this discrepancy to the fact that Windsor is a border city, and therefore close to the drug market in the US, and subject to increased policing by enforcement officials. See Mosher, \textit{The Legal Response}, p. 114; p. 123. Similarly, national trends across the two countries also suggest that there was a direct correlation between urban spaces, economic marginality, and drugs use. For example, a study of drug users at Oakalla Prison Farm in British Colombia during the 1950s found that almost a quarter of drug users lived in homes that needed welfare assistance at some point in time, and only about one third came from homes there were considered economically sound by the creators of the study (Carstairs, \textit{Jailed for Possession}, p. 71).

\textsuperscript{73} Schneider, \textit{Smack}, p. 99.
them.”\textsuperscript{74} Detroit similarly drew suburbanites into the city for excitement. For example, Betty, on her sixteenth birthday, decided to go downtown to celebrate. She, “went to a beer garden in the north-west section of the city, and, while there, her curiosity got the best of her and started her first shot of narcotics.” She particularly enjoyed the experience because she found, “it helped her listen to the band, sort of give a boost to the music.”\textsuperscript{75} Whether to drink, dance, listen to music, or take drugs, people from suburban and smaller cities were drawn to urban centers in search of fun and adventure, enjoying a combination of licit and illicit leisure pursuits in exciting and alluring downtown neighborhoods.

Though the concentration of heroin use in the border region mirrored national trends on many fronts, the cities of Windsor and Detroit were unique due to their location along the national border. Just as prostitution brought Americans and Canadians together within the border cities, the heroin economy likewise facilitated the mingling of men and women along the national line. In fact, men and women who used and sold the drug in various Great Lakes cities regularly came into contact with one another through their efforts to attain drugs, and the shared characteristics of using communities across the Michigan and Ontario meant that users were able to navigate between communities in each city with relative ease. The postwar glorification of leisure, travel, and consumption were embraced to a degree within the drug market, as users moved according to the availability of drugs and commodities flowed through established cross-border drug networks. As the head of the South-western Ontario division of the RCMP explained: “We have got a floating population. If there is a panic, let us say, in Hamilton—and by “panic” I mean in short supply—we will have them up from Hamilton, until the supply eases

\textsuperscript{74} Canada, \textit{Special Senate Committee}, p. 362-3. Emphasis added.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Michigan Legislative Committee}, p. 39.
there. There have been times in the past where there has been a panic here, and they headed to
Hamilton or Windsor, or wherever they can get it.\textsuperscript{76} One Star article explained that the number
of known “addicts” in Windsor was actually quite small, but the population frequently increased
due to the number of users who traveled through Windsor in search of heroin. As the article
explained, “this figure is a minimum one, as the addict population here is much higher from time
to time as addicts from across the country travel through Windsor.”\textsuperscript{77} Similarly, drug users
interviewed by the 1955 US Senate Committee on Illegal Drug Use indicated that they traveled
to various cities in the Great Lakes region in search of drugs, including Detroit, Chicago,
Cleveland, Windsor, and Toronto.\textsuperscript{78} The search for illegal commodity goods brought users
together for similar purposes, and facilitated the development of a market that reached beyond
both individual cities and the national border.

The drug markets that operated across American and Canadian cities were about more
than simply the flow of goods—the users and sellers that transported the commodity between
cities were central to the development of cross-border drug networks. Users met in a variety of
places, including on the streets and in bars, jazz clubs, and house parties. In Windsor in
particular, officials became extremely weary of Americans crossing into their city to pursue illicit
leisure activities. Bars and clubs with jazz and big bands regularly came to the attention of police
and Liquor License Board of Ontario officials for inappropriate behavior, including drug use and
prostitution. They were particularly concerned that Americans were patronizing Windsor

\textsuperscript{76} Canada, Senate, Proceedings and Report of Canada Parliament Senate Special-Committee on the Traffic in
\textsuperscript{77} Border ‘Dope King’ Suspect, Devlin, Held on $25,000 Bail,” \textit{Windsor Daily Star} (March 27, 1956), p. 5.
4602-4603.
establishments for the purposes of vice activities, facilitated by American-style jazz bands.\textsuperscript{79} Similarly, according to a speech given by Corporeal Kelly La Brash of the Toronto RCMP, the use of heroin and marijuana was increasing among, “jazz groups, beatniks, and musicians” in communities that bordered the United States. He explained that cities within close proximity to the US were drawing users across, since apparently the heroin in Ontario was much stronger than that sold in the US. “We have [Americans] coming over here for stronger kicks,” he lamented.\textsuperscript{80} Similarly, a woman interviewed by the 1955 US Senate Committee on Narcotics explained that she crossed into Windsor from Detroit in order to buy heroin. She recalled bringing heroin back across the border in her pocket, and that the heroin in Windsor was stronger than what she usually bought in Detroit.\textsuperscript{81} Just as the formal economy drew tourists, shoppers, and commuters across the border, the search for illegal goods and illicit entertainment likewise drew men and women into border cities.

\textsuperscript{79} There are many records in the LCBO Licensed Establishment Files of concerns over American-style music being played in Windsor bars, which attracted both Americans and undesirable Canadian patrons, frustrating LCBO officials, bar owners, and nearby residents. For example, The Arlington Public House was an establishment that attracted the attention of both residents and LCBO officials throughout the early postwar period. On July 29, 1960, liquor inspectors reported on a “three piece band doing a Hill Billie number with audience participation, [which was] very loud and noisy.” Apparently “none of the many apartment house dwellers in the neighborhood were enjoying this [American-style] racket.” On May 4, 1959, inspectors reported that a “group of five or six top jazz musicians have been playing in several night clubs in Windsor and I believe Detroit,” and were also playing in the Arlington Public House. The bar owner responded to these allegations by explaining that he had recently hired a new piano player, who “brought a following of local and Detroit jazz musicians that play all the taverns and roadhouses in the border cities.” According to the owner, as a result of these musicians, they were having problems with youths patronizing the bar in large numbers, and neighbors were complaining that “the music was too loud.” RG 36-8, File: “Arlington Public House, 893 Erie Street East, Windsor, B134022,” Archives of Ontario.


\textsuperscript{81} US, Illicit \textit{Narcotics Traffic}, Part 10, p. 4519.
Drug Use and the Pleasure of Consumption

Canadian and American users were united by more than simply socio-economic similarities and their geographical proximity; they also participated in similar using communities that provided alternative forms of pleasure and entertainment. While prostitution facilitated the commodification of bodies and sexual desires, heroin use relied on the commodification and consumption of a particular substance, one that also provided highly sensual experiences. In addition to the physical effects of the drug, participation in illicit consumption also enabled some users to feel that they were part of a broader community that was integrated into urban life. Barred from participating in broader cultural definitions of consumption, travel, and leisure, some working-class and poor residents turned to illicit drugs as an important social outlet. This could also sometimes take on important political meaning, serving as an explicit rejection of normative definitions of consumption, belonging, and citizenship for users. What emerged by the late 1940s, then, were complex drug cultures that reformulated postwar conceptions of consumption in order to fit with their social and political marginalization in urban communities.

Though introduced to heroin in many different environments and circumstances, one common thread that united men's and women's decisions to begin using was the desire to attain a heightened state of physical pleasure. Many people who hung around bars and clubs where users congregated were intrigued by the “obvious enjoyment” users experienced, and curiosity was often enough to encourage them to try their first shot. The pleasure enabled through heroin,

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82 Carstairs's analysis of drug users in Toronto and Vancouver during the postwar years explicitly makes the connection between consumption and social marginalization users experienced after the war. She argues that users, though often unable to participate in formal forms of consumer life, often used heroin as a substitute. They existed as part of a unique subculture, and formulated alternative identities that helped them counter this social marginalization. See: “Becoming a Hype: Heroin Consumption, Subcultural Formation, and Resistance in Canada, 1945-1965,” Contemporary Drug Problems 29 (2002), pp. 91-115.

83 Minutes, Meeting of Legislative Committee to Study the Narcotics Problem in Michigan (Aug. 22, 1951), p. 48.
though, was also ephemeral, encouraging users to continue to purchase heroin in search of this highly sensual experience. One former heroin user recounted that he began using in search of the elusive physical experience many users raved about. When asked to describe the feeling he had when he began taking the drug, he recalled: “Well, it’s very difficult to describe, even the way I felt. Some people have said it’s the way to…one of the great sexual experiences one might have. It’s been also compared to a man having a climax with a female possibly at the same moment. It’s one of those highly sensual types of feelings, but it’s a fleeting type of thing.”

Similarly, at a conference on addiction held in Toronto, one researcher noted that heroin users across Ontario regularly described the feeling they got from heroin as an “orgiastic climax.”

Another former heroin user explained that he began using heroin as an alternative to drinking and marijuana. When asked why preferred heroin over sobriety, he said he did not mind sobriety, but, “…if I could feel better, I’d rather feel better.” This desire to “feel better” encouraged many users to begin using the drug; once they had experienced the desired feeling, they often continued using in an attempt to recapture it.

While drug use could bring intense physical pleasure, users also enjoyed the satisfaction of feeling like they were part of an alternative urban community. One former addict, in his interview before the Michigan Legislative Committee, recalled that he became intrigued by heroin when he learned that some of the major musicians and stars he looked up to were users. As he explained, “It became a fad….Most of the young people started using it after so many top

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84 Hall, Anonymous interview, Lafayette Clinic, Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library, pp. 7-8.
86 Rodger Moyer, Interview with Gwen Hall, Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library, pp. 1-2. All names have been changed to maintain anonymity of interviewees.
bands and stuff like that, they found out they were using it and, after one main star got arrested for it, it more or less became a fad from then on with the younger generation."\textsuperscript{87} The link between youth, excitement, and 'coolness' was likewise expressed in a 1953 study commissioned by Mayor Albert E. Cobo. This study of Detroit users argued that because of heroin's association with coolness and "daring," young people often used it as a way to distinguish themselves among their peers. Through their use of heroin, young people living in urban centers could cultivate interpersonal relationships and attain a status as cool or hip. They began using slang and showing certain clothing styles and modes of comportment that distinguished them from other members of their communities. According to the committee, once they chose this path, "the addicted person tend[ed] to become more or less part of a definite sub-culture, with most activity drug-motivated and dominated by the drug using group."\textsuperscript{88} Just as prostitutes became marked by their ability to maintain particular class markers, such as nice clothing, neat make-up, and well-groomed hair, heroin users were judged according to the way they used the drug and the effect this would have on their personal appearance and community ties. Eric Schneider argues that people who began using in North American cities in the 1940s were often, "neighborhood 'cool cats'—hustlers, gamblers, and pimps who made their living on the street." These figures conveyed the message that heroin was hip and that its users were an elite distinguished from the ordinary working people of the neighborhood. The earlier generation of heroin users who began in the 1940s was perceived as respectable; they never passed out in the streets, and they never leave home without being presentable. This was

\textsuperscript{87} Michigan Legislative Committee, P. 30. \\
\textsuperscript{88} Michigan Legislative Committee, p. 30.
contrasted with users who started in the 1960s, who were perceived as stereotypical street ‘junkies,’ and who quickly became addicted to shooting heroin.\textsuperscript{89}

One former heroin user similarly described a clear hierarchy among users, with heroin-shooting addicts at the bottom and controlled users who snorted heroin at the top. He explained that a person snorting heroin attempted to act the same as before he became addicted to the drug—they kept up their jobs, their personal appearance, and their social ties. In contrast, according to his interview, the intravenous user, “sever[d] all his ties…and would not be conscientious about his dress or his personal appearance or personal hygiene. They just don’t seem to care anymore, the majority of them.” As a result, he found that, “the people who are involved indirectly or directly with drugs sort of look down on a person who shoots. Whereas a person who snorts is...higher on the hierarchy.”\textsuperscript{90} McGowan also described the class differentiation among heroin users, describing the “main-liner” as a person who, “is vaguely respected by the rest of the addicts who only use the capsule method.”\textsuperscript{91} In this way, someone shooting heroin was considered lower on the community hierarchy because he or she displayed the markers of a low-class individual: they ignored their personal appearance and failed to demonstrate proper social skills that enabled them to maintain their status in the community hierarchy.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{89} Schneider, \textit{Smack}, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{90} Hall, Gwen. Interview at Lafayette Clinic with Anonymous Patient, Detroit, MI (June 6, 1970), p. 6. Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library.
\textsuperscript{91} McGowan, \textit{Motor City Madam}, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{92} Interestingly, this mirrors arguments that were later made about the class differences between cocaine and crack cocaine users. See: Craig Reinarman and Harry G. Levine, eds., \textit{Crack in America: Demon Drugs and Social Justice} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Tanya Telfair Sharpe, \textit{Behind the Eight Ball: Sex for Crack Cocaine Exchange and Poor Black Women} (New York: Haworth Press, 2005); Henry H. Brownstein, \textit{The Rise and Fall of a Violent Crime Wave: Crack Cocaine and the Social Construction of a Crime Problem
Many users were introduced to drugs through their connection to the jazz scene of the 1940s and 1950s, further facilitating the connection between heroin use and coolness in urban communities. Musicians often used the drug as a way to fit in with the exclusive communities of hipsters that dominated the jazz scene of the late-1940s and early-1950s. Yet while heroin use initially allowed some individuals to join these groups, long-term drug use also had detrimental effects on their musical abilities. Through their addiction they were transformed from neighborhood 'cool cats' into socially marginal junkies. Ted Stewart, a musician and former heroin addict, recalled that in 1955 he, “was introduced to marijuana by a friend of mine. Both he and I were musicians. He offered me a marijuana cigarette…I didn’t want to show I was the least bit square, because at the time I wanted to be hip, we used to call it then. I smoked marijuana and I got high off it, and to be truthful about it, I enjoyed the feeling at the time.”

As a tenor saxophone player, he recalled that, “This was a reason also for me to be drawn more to narcotics, because all of the people I admired were musicians like Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, and they used narcotics.” While drug use initially helped Stewart engage in a wider community of hip musicians that traveled between cities to make money, played music, and enjoyed themselves, the long-term effects of heroin use also made it difficult for him to stay involved in the music scene. “I thought it would improve my playing,” he lamented, “but it never did.”

In this way, there were very real and unintended consequences of consuming substances like heroin, and their


93 Ted Stewart interview, Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library, p. 1.

94 Stewart interview, Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library, p. 36.
pleasurable effects were tempered by the realities of addiction that many users were facing by the end of the 1950s.

Similarly, Rodger Moyer was fifteen years old when, in the late 1940s, he left Detroit with his band and headed to New York City. There he met members of another band from Detroit who introduced him to heroin: “We were all in a room together, and they asked me if I wanted to get high. Rather than say no, for fear of being ostracized, or being looked upon as a square, I said yes. And that’s when I took my first shot of heroin… I was just wanting to belong to a certain group of people, to my peer group.”⁹⁵ Moyer explained that he continued heroin when he returned to Detroit because, unlike alcohol and marijuana, it allowed him to perform as a musician. He further explained, “I functioned for a while as a musician, and I did a lot of traveling around the country. And for a while I was making a pretty decent buck. But then all good things come to an end. Big bands went out. Jazz became sort of out of fashion. And by this time, I was deeply into the drug subculture.”⁹⁶ Moyer's decision to use was directly linked to his desire to fit into a hip community of people; by proving that he was not a “square,” he was able to feel that he fit in amongst his peers. Heroin was so intertwined in the music and entertainment scene in North American cities that young men and women felt it necessary to partake in order to prove their own authenticity. Yet musicians like Moyer, who were left behind when jazz went out of style in the late-1950s, found that they were left with little other than a bad drug habit. Moyer's close community, initially that of musicians and other artists, was instead made up of other long-term users by the early 1960s.

⁹⁵ Stewart interview, Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library, p. 36.
⁹⁶ Moyer Interview, Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library, p. 11.
While many men and women began using as a way to prove their coolness and to fit into a hip community of users, others had overtly political objectives and saw it as a way to embrace their marginal status in urban communities. Several historians have shown that purchasing particular goods and demonstrating an ability to participate in a consumer culture were key ways of building solidarity within working-class and minority communities in the first half of the twentieth century.\footnote{For an historical analyses of the political implications of consumption, see, for example: George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles* (New York: X, 1993); Robert E. Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1998); Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1999).} Within this context, men and women reformulated consumption patterns as a way to establish distinct cultural identities and to exercise political power. Davarian Baldwin and Victoria Wolcott argue that illicit forms of consumption played crucial roles in black communities across the US. Illicit and informal economies often provided African American men and women with alternative ways to both make and spend money, and in doing so helped to create distinct social communities in urban centers like Chicago and Detroit.\footnote{Davarian Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Victoria Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).} Within this context, drug consumption was more than just a symptom of urban or African American poverty. It also created a community of individuals who established their own consumption patterns and norms, challenging dominant notions of race, consumerism, and belonging. In an era where consumerism was increasingly equated with citizenship, the choice to consume particular illegal substances was not a neutral one. Instead, it was a way of claiming membership within an illicit community that rejected the norms of mainstream America.\footnote{The emphasis on ‘white’ consumers can be seen on several levels, all the way up to policies of the Federal Housing Administration and the G.I. Bill. For studies on the connection between race and consumer patterns, see}
In her study of postwar drug users, Catherine Carstairs similarly argues that the choice to take drugs was an explicitly political decision for some Canadian users, and that the desire for physical pleasure and community membership were explicitly linked to political motivations aimed at rejecting mainstream, middle-class culture in urban centers. Heroin use allowed some men and women to form an oppositional identity through the creation of a community of individuals who shared a love of drugs and a rejection of society’s rules. Particularly for young people living in urban centers, drug use allowed them to defy authority and an emphasis on toughness in using communities led many to glorify the often-times risky lifestyles of heroin users. In this way, they explicitly rejected contemporary perceptions of them as outcasts and deviants, instead embracing their marginal status in major Canadian urban centers.\(^\text{100}\)

In the United States, subcultural status took a particularly racialized form, and marginal African American residents sometimes found that illicit economies provided an avenue through which they could express their discontent with segregation and other social inequalities. The 1955 Mayor’s Committee for the Rehabilitation of Narcotics Addicts in Detroit provides a detailed analysis of the link between race and drug use in the city. Significantly, the report argues that there was no inherent connection between race and one's susceptibility to addiction. Instead, the study found that the “social disintegration” of black neighborhoods, racism on the part of white society, and the over-policing of black neighborhoods were key factors in the widespread drug use among African American communities.\(^\text{101}\) The report also argues that drug use provided many poor, black residents with an alternative form of consumption and access to a distinct commodity culture. This culture operated in opposition to middle-class values and appealed, “the

\(^{100}\) Carstairs, “Becoming a Hype,” pp. 91-115.
\(^{101}\) Detroit Mayor’s Committee, p. 39.
individual’s feelings of lack of status because he has no good job, house, car, etc. In groups made up of individuals that feel deprived…drugs circulate and are a form of social activity, carried on mainly together.” The report further explained that, “since the war the earning ability, while not large, of even those often considered least employable has put drug purchases within the reach of many group-members.”

Rather than eschewing consumption altogether, these communities created an alternative commodity culture that helped to counter the marginalization many people felt as a result of their race and socio-economic status.

Interviews with recovered addicts similarly indicate that drug use, while damaging for many black communities, also performed an important function for young, black men in particular. For example, Rodger Moyer recalled that selling heroin provided an important outlet for young men who had few work options available: “When I was young, I was raised in a culture where if some guy went to school he got to be a pullman porter. And I didn’t relish the idea of going to school to be a pullman porter. At this time, a young black, if he went to school and got an education, you couldn’t do anything with it…”

Instead, Moyer found the culture of using and selling drugs to be an alternative to the bleak outlook he found as a young, black man with little formal education. Through the illicit drug market, Moyer could make enough money to sustain his living style and attain an elevated social status among those living in his neighborhood. Though barred from more formal forms of work, education, and economic advancement, he could use the illicit drug market as a way to bolster his social standing among his peers. John Hammond similarly expressed his frustration with the racial discrimination he faced as a young, African American man in Detroit, and claimed that part of his motivation

102 Detroit Mayor’s Committee, p. 39.
103 Moyer Interview, Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library, p. 12.
behind using was to get back at society. Hammond had served his country in the Korean War, but felt cheated when he was called back to duty, “before they had declared a national emergency.” For Hammond, “my way of getting back at I should say society was I started using drugs.”¹⁰⁴ Men like Hammond and Moyer thus had overtly political reasons behind their desire to use drugs. They understood these choices as explicit rejections of a social order that placed them at the bottom, and that effectively limited them to second class citizenship. It provided them with alternative forms of income and a close community of users who shared their values. Through their membership in using communities, men and women were no longer outsiders, rejected by middle class America. They were individuals who made the decision to join an alternative urban culture—one that allowed a degree of mobility and belonging seldom afforded to them through the formal economy. For some users, then, illicit consumption patterns were far from neutral, but instead signaled their explicit reformulation of dominant cultural values.

**Conclusion**

Illicit economies provide an important way to re-examine the postwar period, an era defined in part by its obsession with consumption, leisure, and travel. Rather than viewing vice industries as an anomaly within the push for heterosexual marriages, suburban families, and summer vacations, vice economies drew on notions of consumption and leisure, and in doing so, created their own forms that both mirrored and critiqued certain elements of mainstream North American culture. Men and women traveled to the Detroit-Windsor region to engage in multiple forms of leisure and entertainment, heightened by the appeal of ‘doing bad’ in urban and

¹⁰⁴ Hammond Interview, Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library, p. 11.
borderland spaces. The scale on which these interactions took place suggests that we can gain important insight into the wide variety of cultural values operating in the postwar years. Men and women, while certainly influenced by normative notions of consumer practices and sexual orders, were not entirely bound by them. Sex workers, johns, and heroin users and sellers all engaged in alternative forms of value-making. They rejected the normative forms of pleasure, leisure, and travel emphasized in popular discourses, suggesting that these narrow definitions, so well-documented by historians, were also limited. Many people acted outside of them, sometimes reformulating them to fit their own desires, sometimes explicitly rejecting them as a form of cultural or political resistance.

In the border cities, commercial sex brought men and women together to enjoy illicit sexual pleasure and adventure. Part of the appeal of sex work was the possibility of experiencing non-normative sexual interactions outside the bounds of heterosexual marriage. Men and women engaged in many forms of sex, and the illicit nature of these interactions heightened their appeal. Yet the transgressions performed in commercial sex had limits, and the industry often reinforced key tenants of the local social geography. Lines of race, class, and sexuality were reinforced as often as they were questioned, demonstrating that in reality there was no clear line between normal and abnormal values. For example, white men might seek out women of color, and in doing so push the sexual boundaries that existed in a highly segregated region. This also, however, reaffirmed white men's access to women of color, and the influx of white visitors into black neighborhoods encouraged an increased police presence in those neighborhoods. Sexual practices were, then, also shaped by normative race, class, and gender values in urban centers,
and cultural values were formulated according to competing definitions of licit and illicit in the urban borderland.

Likewise, heroin use produced using communities that privileged physical pleasure and gratification and that reformulated mainstream consumer practices to fit their needs. While long-term drug use was devastating for many users, we nonetheless need to understand why men and women chose to engage in this activity in the first place. Users came from lower- and working-class backgrounds, and were often unable to purchase homes or cars, or work nine-to-five jobs. They often consumed heroin and other substances as a way to attain intense physical pleasure and membership in what they perceived to be a unique and thriving community. The flow of both goods and people brought Americans and Canadians into contact along the border, and the insular nature of using communities meant that men and women could often navigate using cultures across the border cities. For many users, the participation in alternative forms of consumption provided them with a way to counter their marginal status, and some explicitly engaged with the illicit using community as a way of rejecting normative values that did not fit with their experiences in urban neighborhoods. In this way, the values expressed by heroin users similarly reflected and modified the push towards consumption, and indicate how men and women could reformulate social codes to fit their particular social locations.

When O. Mary Hill described the Windsor-Detroit region as a quintessential postwar border city where Americans and Canadians were employed in large numbers, earned a high income, and used their expendable money on consumer goods, cars, and new homes, the author was actually describing the experiences of only part of the local population. The border cities also facilitated illicit cross-border interactions that did not fit easily with normative perceptions
of middle-class living and prosperity. The growth of commercial sex and cross-border drug markets demonstrates that many men and women openly defied these narrow cultural values, reformulating them to fit their experiences in local political economy. The turn towards consumption and leisure, then, was by no means limited to the middle class. Instead, illicit cross-border interactions played a key role in shaping cultural values and in determining how Americans and Canadians would interact in the Detroit-Windsor border region.
Chapter Three
Illicit Working-Class Economies: Selling Sex and Drugs in the Detroit-Windsor Region

On Saturday November 14, 1953 twenty women walked off their jobs at a taxi-dance hall in downtown Detroit. Tired of the “intolerable conditions” in which they labored, the women formed a picket line outside of the establishment. The workers were tired of being docked pay for minor infractions and felt that they were entitled to more than the five-cent cut of the 12-cent-per-dance song they were currently receiving. These young ladies picketing outside the hall quickly drew a crowd of male onlookers and policemen, putting further pressure on the owner of the establishment to try to get the women back to work. Their unofficial job action was effective—after only one day on the picket line most of the women struck an agreement with the owner of the hall and returned to work.¹

Though taxi-dance halls were legal in Detroit (in fact two cents of every dance went to the government) they were still considered illicit activities. At taxi-dance halls, men would purchase tickets, in this case for twelve cents apiece, and exchange them for dances with women of their choice. Sometimes referred to as “pink-light districts,” these clubs had long been associated with prostitution, drug and alcohol use, immoral sexual interactions, and other deviant behaviors.² The illicit nature of taxi-dance halls makes the women's decision to publicly picket

² While no sex-for-money exchanges officially occurred, paying a girl to perform a sensual act like dancing drew harsh criticism from moral reforms and the wives of the male patrons alike. Local women regularly complained to the Detroit police about the existence of these establishments in their neighborhoods, claiming that they attracted an undesirable crowd and effectively legalized prostitution, to which their own husbands often fell victim. Clyde Bennett Vedder, “An Analysis of the Taxi-Dance Hall as a Social Institution with Special Reference to Los Angeles and Detroit,” PhD Dissertation (University of Southern California, 1947), p. 73.
on the city streets all the more significant. They were not only actively fighting back against exploitation in their workplace, they were also simultaneously challenging the notion that the work they did was somehow immoral and unproductive. Through their decision to mirror the tactics of organized labor, which had deep roots in the border region, they adopted a traditionally masculine approach used in the formal economy and applied it to their feminized work in the illicit service industry. While in some ways their situation was unique—indeed there are few examples of men and women taking formal and public actions to affect their working conditions in illicit industries—their efforts were also symbolic of broader cultural debates over the meaning of labor and the place of illicit forms of work in the postwar city.

Though contemporary lawmakers, legal officials, and reformers were quick to condemn illicit economies as outgrowths of urban poverty, and viewed them as wholly damaging to the urban neighborhoods in which they took place, a closer evaluation of men's and women's work in the unofficial, and often illegal, industries challenges these broad moralizing narratives. By reassessing the personal backgrounds and working conditions of sex workers and drugs sellers in Detroit and Windsor it becomes clear that, far from being relegated to an urban underclass, illicit economies were often deeply embedded in working-class communities of the border region. The men and women who worked within illicit industries often grew up in neighborhoods where industrial labor was the primary mode of employment. Their fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, 

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3 The analysis that follows owes much to the insights provided by Victoria Wolcott, Timothy Gilfoyle, and Kevin Mumford who situate vice networks within the broader marketplaces and working-class neighborhoods in which they operated. Rather than viewing vice communities as completely separate from other forms of culture, leisure, and labor, they demonstrate that it is necessary to understand the important role illicit economies played in shaping the broader socio-economic character of urban centers. See: Victoria Wolcott, Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Timothy Gilfoyle, City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992); Kevin Mumford, Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in New York and Chicago (New York: Colombia University Press, 1997).
and lovers were usually employed in blue-collar work and they themselves were most likely to engage in industrial and service occupations in the formal economy.\(^4\) The gender and racial barriers that kept many men and women from attaining full-time industrial employment made illicit forms of money-making appealing. Selling sex or drugs provided some working-class residents with alternative means of income in a precarious and volatile market economy.

At the same time, illicit economies provided an alternative work environment, one that differed considerably from the work regimes located in the formal industrial economy. By engaging in illicit activities like selling sex and drugs, men and women participated in forms of immaterial and affective labor that did not always resonate with traditional conceptions of blue-collar work in the industrial cities. Many men and women chose to participate in illicit economies because they provided a degree of sociability and mobility lacking in many sectors of the formal economy. They made their own hours, operated as their own bosses, and developed strong inter-personal networks across and between cities. As such, illicit economies sometimes helped to counter the alienating characteristics of the formal economy, all the while providing much-needed economic gain.

Immaterial labor, though, was also very much shaped by the material and structural conditions that animated the socio-economic order in the Detroit-Windsor borderland. Since

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\(^4\) This chapter draws on Ileen Devault's assertion that historians need to learn to live with the ambiguities that everyday Americans experienced in relation to class identity and class lines. In her study of clerical workers at the turn-of-the-century, she demonstrates that the line between the 'middle' and 'working' classes was not nearly as defined as these categories suggest. Instead, by invoking the concept of the “social estuary,” Devault explains that men and women married across class lines and envisioned a range of social positions that did not necessarily fall on one side of the line or the other. This chapter likewise views illicit economies as “social estuaries” that brought together individuals from a range of social backgrounds. Rather than viewing its participants as predominately “lower” class, this chapter instead focuses on the important cultural and economic connections that often tied these men and women to the working-class communities in which they lived and worked. Devault, *Sons and Daughters of Labor: Clerical Work in Turn-of-the-Century Pittsburgh* (1990). On “social estuary” see: p. 177.
these alternative forms of labor were in fact embedded within broader working-class neighborhoods, they were also subject to the race, class, and gender codes that shaped these communities. As a result, the drug trade was increasingly segmented along racial lines, wherein African American and working class sellers were at the bottom and white drug syndicates were at the top. Likewise, for sex workers, a combination of race and gender prescriptions served to further marginalize African American and poor women within working-class neighborhoods. As women were forced out of brothels and onto city streets, they were increasingly subject to the whims of pimps, male clients, and legal authorities. Men and women working in illicit trades walked a fine line between seeking alternative modes of work and sociability while always being subject to larger structural forces operating within the region. Though illicit economies sometimes challenged normative definitions of labor in the border region they were not able to escape the social codes that dominated the formal economy.

An attention to illicit forms of work helps us re-frame both contemporary conceptions of labor, which were most often defined by one's ability to attain gainful employment in formal industries, and historical accounts of working-class life in the border region. The failure of labor historians to fully explore the meaning of illicit and illegal forms of work is in part the product of contemporaries’ attempts to relegate these activities to the margins of urban centers. It is also the result of relatively narrow conceptions of the ‘working class.’ Scholars who study the Detroit-

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Windsor region tend to define the working class according to formal employment, union membership, and signs of increasing consumer power. Yet it was often illicit income that helped fill the gap between the money needed to survive and their part-time, precarious incomes in formal blue-collar and service industry jobs. In this way, workers in illicit economies challenged the very notion of productivity by engaging in alternative forms of work, and at times, explicitly defended their decisions to do so. Whether in the form of formal picket lines, as in the case of the taxi-dancers, or their continued participation in illegal and illicit forms of money-making despite growing legal regulations, men and women actively formulated their own conceptions of productivity and meaningful labor in the postwar industrial city.

**Illicit Economies as “Working-Class” Economies**

The rapid social and economic changes sparked by World War II had contradictory impacts on the cities of Windsor and Detroit, and ultimately created an environment where illicit industries could prosper. As cities with deep roots in industrial labor and an expansive infrastructure that could accommodate wartime needs, their primary position in the wartime economy seemed almost inevitable. As the military's need for heavy industrial goods skyrocketed, the auto industry was poised to take advantage of this growing demand. Across the border region, Ford converted its assembly lines into mass producers of military hardware, airplanes, tanks, and other war machines, and the city of Detroit in particular became the “arsenal

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of democracy,” leading the U.S. out of the Great Depression.\textsuperscript{7} Notably, between 1940 and 1947, manufacturing employment in Detroit increased by forty percent.\textsuperscript{8} For many men and women in the greater Detroit area, the postwar years brought an increased growth in income and continued prosperity.\textsuperscript{9} Similarly, in 1942 seventy-four percent of those employed in the city of Windsor worked in the automotive industry and, by 1950, earned more on average than industrial workers in any other Canadian city.\textsuperscript{10}

The economic gains made during the war, however, did not remain steady through the 1950s, as access to income and the standard of living became divided along race and class lines. By the early 1950s, automation had reshaped the auto industry, displacing thousands of workers across Canada and the United States. Many companies also moved their plants to the newly developing “Sunbelt” in order to take advantage of cheaper labor and tax incentives.\textsuperscript{11} This was especially devastating for residents of cities like Windsor and Detroit, whose main source of employment was in industrial manufacturing.\textsuperscript{12} Among the men and women who remained


\textsuperscript{8} Sugrue, \textit{The Origins of the Urban Crisis}, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{9} Between 1949 and 1954, the median family income in Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland counties increased thirty-nine percent, to almost $4100 in 1954. The medium family income was also higher than the national average, approximately $6500 compared to the national average of $5520. Social Services, \textit{Detroit Area Study}, (1956) Archives of Michigan, RG 69-68, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{10} The Greater Windsor Industrial Commission, “Industrial Prospects are Bright in Windsor” (Windsor: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1957), p. 5. The average weekly earnings in Windsor was $52.50. This was compared to $50.81 in St. Catharines, $49.40 in Montreal, $48.11 in Hamilton, $45.39 in Toronto, and $42.12 in Vancouver. See: Ewing Laverty and Melwyn Breen, “Windsor: Border—Not Barrier,” \textit{Saturday Night}, vol. 36 (April 25, 1950), p. 10.

\textsuperscript{11} Steven High provides a detailed analysis of how industries' move away from Michigan and Ontario shaped the lives of men and women living in the region. Though his study focuses predominately on the 1970s and 1980s, his book provides an important understanding of the ultimate impacts of these processes, which began in the 1950s. See: \textit{Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rustbelt, 1969-1984} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

\textsuperscript{12} At the same time that new tools and technologies were introduced, eliminating many blue-collar jobs, several firms reduced their capital investment in the area, leading to the building of many new plants outside of Detroit and Michigan. Thus, workers lost jobs through both technological advancement and reduced investment in the region. See: John C. Leggett, \textit{Class, Race, and Labor: Working-Class Consciousness in Detroit} (New York:
employed through the economic downturn, many were facing permanent unemployment or employment in jobs that paid significantly less and had little job security. This was not the same for members of the middle class, who were college-educated in unprecedented numbers, and whose jobs had not been eliminated by automation.  

As the number of jobs declined many residents moved from the city centers to suburbs, creating depressed markets and neighborhoods in the downtown cores. In Windsor, as “poverty pockets” developed in areas where industries were no longer operating, middle class residents moved to peripheral neighborhoods of South Windsor, Sandwich East, and Riverside, leaving low-income, depressed neighborhoods behind. Similarly, Detroit experienced a significant shift in population from the city center to its suburbs. Prosperity and poverty were again directly linked to class, race, and geography—as white workers moved to the suburbs, conditions for African American workers rapidly deteriorated. Coupled with segregated housing, a shortage of recreational facilities, and police brutality, economic conditions for black residents became all

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14 In 1945, 85 percent of the people in Essex County lived in the City of Windsor; by 1956, the city contained only 65 percent of the population. Robert A. Heuton, “Urban Sprawl: A Comparative Study of the Detroit-Windsor Region” (PhD dissertation, Wayne State University, 2005), p. 142. In his study of “poverty pockets” in the city during the early 1960s, L.H.T. Oliver argued that there was a direct correlation between existence of available labor, and one’s social and geographical position within the city. He noted that poverty was concentrated in the downtown areas, and that non-poverty pockets and upper middle income areas became “more distinctly peripheral in location.” L.H.T. Oliver, “The Identification of Poverty Pockets in the City of Windsor,” (University of Windsor, 1971), p. X.

15 The Detroit Area Study, conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan in 1956, noted that though the average and median income of families in Detroit and its surrounding suburbs were rising, there remained a significant gap between black and white families. In 1951, the differential between the white and black median family income was $1300. In 1955, the difference had increased to $2000. Social Services, Detroit Area Study, p. 4.
the more difficult.\textsuperscript{16} As both industries and workers moved from the city centers, working-class residents who remained in the downtown core faced increasingly volatile and difficult labor markets.

Within this context the changing social and racial structures of urban communities, as well as the decline of jobs and adequate housing from city cores, sparked public debates over the future of postwar cities. As subsequent chapters will show, these concerns were explicitly framed in anti-vice rhetoric through which lawmakers, legal authorities, social agencies, and the media disparaged the growth of illicit economies across the border region. These disparate groups were united in the view that illicit economies were outgrowths of a growing poverty-stricken underclass. Contemporary discussions about illicit forms of money-making centered on its criminal nature and its destructive effects on urban communities.\textsuperscript{17} Officials regularly argued that these were unskilled activities that people performed in order to make “easy money.”\textsuperscript{18} Opting to view these undertakings as purely criminal and deviant, politicians and legal officials argued that they undermined the health and prosperity of formal economic sectors by chasing away jobs, demoralizing participants, and by leading to a downward spiral of sexual delinquency and crime.

Within the context of growing deindustrialization and urban poverty, illicit economies became one more sign of the ill health of urban economies and the growing underbellies lurking in inner cities.


\textsuperscript{17} For example, Contemporary reports on the problems of drug addiction and prostitution often emphasized that the men and women involved were unemployed members of the criminal class, despite statistics that affirmed that at 25\% of them were actually employed in the formal economy. Detroit, \textit{Report of the Mayor’s Committee for the Rehabilitation of Narcotic Addicts}, p. 35; Canada, Senate, \textit{Proceedings and Report of Canada Parliament Senate Special-Committee on the Traffic in Narcotic Drugs in Canada}, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{18} For example, in 1950 the Canadian the Minister of Health asserted that women moved to Windsor to work as prostitutes because it was a source of comparatively “easy money.” M.O.H. Will Lead Drive, ” \textit{Windsor Star} (Jan. 18, 1945), p. X.
Contemporary sociologists were one of the first groups to notice that this decisive anti-vice rhetoric did not seem to match the experiences of men and women participating in illicit activities, and several notable studies offered alternative views on the causes and effects of urban vice. Emerging as part of the Chicago School approach to urban studies, these researchers became interested in the lifestyles and motivations of men and women living in inner-cities. These early studies argued that urban cultures were an adaptive response to the wider spatial environment rather than simply a symptom of some form of inherent deviance in marginal city residents.¹⁹ Scholars like Hyman Rodman, Herbart Gans, and Elliot Liebow stressed both the importance of material conditions in shaping the experience of men and women who inhabited the margins of urban centers and the fluidity between the supposedly disparate categories of 'middle,' 'working,' and 'lower' class. Significantly, Rodman argued that stereotypical characteristics of “lower-class life” (illegitimacy, promiscuity, and desertion) should not be viewed as problems, but as the solutions to the problems that people living in inner cities faced.

In this sense contemporary sociologists began to stress both material and systematic causes for

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¹⁹ While there were several theories put forth by researchers, two studies remain particularly salient to understanding the relationship between class and informal economies. Herbart Gans's study of an inner-city Boston neighborhood identified multiple levels of communities in the city, including middle-, working-, and lower-class subcultures. He argued that these subcultures were “responses that people make to the opportunities and the deprivations that they encounter.” In the long run, the form these communities took was related to the availability of employment. In this case, both downward and upward mobility were possible, and lower-class life therefore was simply a situational adaptation to material conditions in one's own community. Elliot Liebow's 1967 study of twenty-four African American men who shared a street-corner in D.C. Similarly further complicates our understandings of why urban residents engaged in illicit forms of money-making. The men examined in his study were between 20 and 50 years of age and were either manual workers or were unemployed. For Liebow, like Gans, their behavior was a direct result of the conditions of lower-class rather than some attempt to adhere to cultural imperatives. He argued that “this inside world does not appear as a self-contained, self-generating, self-sustaining system or even subsystem with clear boundaries marking it off from the larger world around it.” Instead, the street-corner operated as space where they could invert and negotiate perceptions of success and failure. The “street-corner man” was not simply a member of a perpetual underclass; instead, the informal economy became a space where he could negotiate his of understanding his attempts at “achieving many of the goals and values of larger society, his failures to do this, and of concealing his failure from others and from himself the best he can.” John Welshman, Underclass: A History of the Excluded, 1880-2000 (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), pp. 94-95.
participation in illicit activities and began to challenge the notion that these were simply deviant activities performed by poor and demoralized residents in urban centers.

More recently, Paul Draus, Juliette Roddy, and Mark Greenwald's sociological study of heroin users in Detroit during the first decade of the twenty-first century challenges us to question the rigid lines between “poor” and “working” class. They argue that the daily routines of many heroin users and sellers exhibited a striking dedication to orderly, fixed routines that occupied their days in a manner similar to those of the presumably stable working classes. They suggest that heroin use per se is not necessarily incompatible with “productive” patterns of work, but may in fact be woven into these patterns in a very consistent way. Rather than viewing illicit forms of work as deviant activities undertaken by urban “hustlers,” the authors argue that work patterns among the so-called “underclass” were in fact closely aligned with the values and lifestyles of the broader working-class community.20

Building on the work of urban sociologists, an analysis of the social backgrounds of the men and women who worked in illicit economies likewise counters notions that this was simply an urban underworld. Indeed, illicit work often served as one solution to the problem of underwork in blue-collar cities by providing men and women with a way to cope with unemployment or supplement their low and unpredictable incomes. From this perspective, we need to view men's and women's decisions to participate in illicit economies as a combination of both choice and necessity—within the urban neighborhoods of Detroit and Windsor, race, gender, class, and ethnicity determined to a large degree what type of employment one was eligible for and whether or not one could make a sustainable living in this way. As members of the working class, drug

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sellers and sex workers were able to tap into illicit economies in order to counter the economic depression developing in the downtown cores of Windsor and Detroit.

Though the actual daily activities of sex workers and heroin users may have differed from those employed in local factories, they were nonetheless connected to broader patterns of working-class life in Detroit and Windsor. In fact, the majority of both black and white men and women working in illicit economies were from working-class backgrounds. Several contemporary sources provide insight into the history of sex workers in the Detroit-Windsor region and their previous work experiences. In 1961, Virginia Sobotka published a quantitative, comparative analysis of the arrest records of 445 women working as prostitutes in Detroit in the 1930s and 1950s. It indicates that women who worked within the prostitution industry in Detroit were predominately from working-class families, as both their parents and husbands were overwhelmingly listed as “unskilled” wage earners in the city. According to their case histories, 48.3% of women came from homes where their fathers worked in “unskilled” occupations, and 25.4% had mothers who worked in “domestic” service.\textsuperscript{21} Similarly, 55.3% of women’s spouses (both legal husbands and common-law partners) were employed in “unskilled” occupations.\textsuperscript{22} The numbers suggest that these women grew up as members of the working class and remained so as they became adults and began their own families.

The employment history of the sex workers themselves indicates that they were also overwhelmingly employed in the blue-collar and service positions available to women. During the 1950s, by far the most common forms of formal employment held by women who sold sex in


\textsuperscript{22} Sobotka, “A Comparative Study,” p. 49.
Detroit were, in order: “domestic,” “waitress,” “factory” worker, and “sales-girl.” While there are no comparable studies of prostitution in Windsor, police records reveal a similar pattern of employment and class backgrounds among Canadian sex workers. According to Windsor police records, the most common forms of employment listed were, in order: “domestic,” “house wife,” “factory worker,” “waitress,” and “housekeeper.” These patterns fit what feminist scholars have identified as the “sexual segregation of labor,” wherein occupational segregation along gender/sex lines parallels the sexual division of labor within the family. The majority of these positions reflect gendered notions that women’s proper role was in the home and that they were uniquely suited to work centered on the domestic, private sphere. The similar employment patterns between women working in Windsor and Detroit suggest that their experiences were shaped less by their status as Americans or Canadians, and more by their positions as women within the regional working-class economy that made up the Midwestern/Southern Ontario industrial corridor. The sexual segregation of labor operated across the national border and determined the type of paid and unpaid work women performed.

The fact that women arrested for prostitution were overwhelmingly from working-class backgrounds and had employment experience in blue-collar or service work, suggests that sex work needs to be viewed as but one form of employment available to working women. In her sociological analysis of sex workers’ employment patterns in Detroit, Sobotka argues that, “…the belief that prostitutes are raised in a condition of utter poverty and that it is the poverty which

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drives them into prostitution is an oversimplification and an unclear view of the matter.”

Instead, as her study suggests, we cannot understand the economic factors that encouraged women to work in illicit economies without recognizing the many complex factors that shaped women’s experiences in formal employment during this period. As workers within an economy where definitions of proper female labor centered on work duties performed in the home, reproductive labor, and service work, it is perhaps unsurprising that many women found the transition to selling sexual labor a logical one. It also suggests that the work experience of women who chose to sell sex was not exponentially different from women working across various sectors. In fact, by 1960, nearly eighty percent of women who earned wages in the U.S. worked in jobs that were considered to be “female.” Instead, prostitution operated as a part of a larger gendered system of labor that relegated women to low-paying, irregular work centered on service, domestic, and feminine labor.

While the individuals who sold heroin in Detroit and Windsor tended to be male, they likewise often held blue-collar jobs in the cities. According to arrest records from the Windsor


27 Several scholars have studied the relationship between service work, care work, and what Arlene Hoschchild calls “emotional labor.” For Hochschild service work requires a type of “emotional labor,” which requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others. This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self she argues we honor as deep and integral to our individuality. It is similar to physical labor in that there is the possibility for the worker to become estranged or alienated from an aspect of self—either the body or the margins of the soul—that is used to do the work. This in turn is a profoundly gendered experience, with women making up a large majority of ‘care’ or ‘service’ workers. Similarly, scholars like Amalia Cabezas argue that emotional labor is central to sex work, and is used to break down the boundaries of commercial exchanges and to blur the lines between intimacy and labor. This liminal space is marked by fluidity, ambiguity, and heterogeneity and provides opportunities that direct commercial transactions cannot. As feminine ‘service’ work, then, sex work often shares many of the requirements of other types of care work including a combination of emotional and manual labor in exchange for money, and a blurring of the emotional and the physical. See: Hochschild, The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling (1983), p. 7; Amalia Cabezas, “Between Love and Money: Sex, Tourism, and Citizenship in Cuba and the Dominican Republic,” Signs: Journal of Women and Culture Vol. 29, no. 4 (2004);

Police Department, the majority of people arrested under the Opium and Narcotic Act were listed as “laborer,” “machinist,” or “factory worker.” Contemporary legislative committees focused on users and sellers in Detroit emphasized that they were usually from working-class or marginal backgrounds. The fact that these studies failed to make a clear distinction between “marginal” and “working class” suggests that the line between these two categories was sometimes difficult to define. In an industrial economy where boom and bust cycles required men and women working in “unskilled,” “semi-skilled,” or service job to piece together contract work, the line between gainfully employed and unemployed was not always clear. As such, researchers, politicians, legislatures, and law enforcement often had a difficult time identifying the social status of members working in illicit economies. At times simply engaging in illicit activities was enough for legislators, law enforcement officials, and other interest groups to identify individuals as members of a “poor” class. However, such narrow definitions failed to recognize the strong ties these individuals often had to established working-class communities, the fact that they were often employed in various formal sector jobs (even if on temporary or contract bases), and the class divisions and stratification among members of illicit economies itself (which will be discussed in further detail below).

For both men and women, licit and illicit forms of money-making overlapped in important ways in working-class neighborhoods, as the low pay and cycles of unemployment that characterized many service and unskilled jobs encouraged them to supplement their income

30 According to the Report of the Mayor’s Committee for the Rehabilitation of Narcotic Addicts in Detroit, “employment in gainful occupations [among drug users and sellers] tends to be irregular and confined almost wholly to the unskilled and semi-skilled pursuits.” In 1952, the Detroit Police Department estimated that “less than 25% of the addiction cases coming to its attention were gainfully employed.” Report of the Mayor’s Committee for the Rehabilitation of Narcotic Addicts, City of Detroit (1953), p. 35.
through illegal means. In order to do so, drug sellers often performed some combination of licit and illicit employment, further blurring the lines between acceptable and unacceptable forms of labor. For example, in contemporary interviews, men who sold drugs discussed performing a wide variety of blue-collar jobs including unloading trucks, inspecting factories, welding, and assembling cars in the Ford plants. Female sellers and users were more likely to supplement their income through service industry jobs, working as waitresses, clerks in stories, cashiers in theaters, and also, prostitutes. As Chapter Two demonstrated, many men and women working in the commercial sex and heroin economies depended on clients and customers who earned their money through industrial wage labor. Consequently, capital and income between licit and illicit economies flowed in multiple directions and further reinforced the connection between formal and informal work in the region.

**Immaterial Labor: Alternative Working-Class Economies**

Underemployment was only part of the motivation behind an individual’s decision to join illicit economies. This was in fact an active decision made by women and men, one that demonstrates the draw and importance of illicit forms of money-making in urban centers. Illicit economies provided alternative work experiences for members of the urban working class. They challenged middle-class perceptions of respectability and provided different ways to earn income, to engage with members of urban neighborhoods, and to define work itself. While

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industrial labor was linked directly to the production of material goods, selling sex and drugs functioned as forms of immaterial and affective labor, whose work methods and products differed considerably from that of factory work. Illicit economies provided not only monetary compensation, they also enabled individuals to participate in alternative work practices that were associated with increased feelings of mobility, community, and flexibility. Though the positive elements of this labor could be short-lived—the transition to long-term drug use made it increasingly difficult for users to perform basic tasks, women often worked under pimps, and problems with the law could serve to alienate participants from other community members—they were nonetheless important in drawing some men and women into illicit economies.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri define immaterial labor as work that creates “immaterial products” such as “knowledge, information, communication, a relationship or an emotional response.” Unlike the industrial wage economies that dominated the Detroit-Windsor landscape, they do not primarily produce material objects; instead, immaterial labor produces the less-tangible, symbolic, and social dimensions of labor. Towards this end, Hardt argues that a central tenant of this labor is its “affective face.” Building on feminist analyses of “care work,” he proposes that immaterial labor produces affective responses, “social networks, forms of community, biopower.” Sex work and selling heroin fit within these parameters, as they produce affective and social connections rather than actual material commodities. The centrality of affective responses—such as the excitement, euphoria, pleasure, and feelings of community

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34 Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter, Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games (Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2001), p. 4.
discussed in Chapter Two—were at the heart of the sex and drug economies. Though the notion of immaterial labor has predominately been used to articulate shifts in the formal economy towards a post-industrial order of temporary, precarious, and part-time employment beginning in the 1970s, this periodization obscures its roots in earlier forms of labor stratification at the height of the industrial age. A closer look at immaterial forms of labor demonstrates the extent to which they were central to many men’s and women’s work experiences and indicates that members of the urban working class undertook a wide range of labor practices—immaterial as well as material.

Immaterial labor offered an alternative to industrial labor regimes enacted over the course of the twentieth century, regimes that came under increasing criticism due to the work environments they maintained. These critiques emerged in the Detroit-Windsor region as reactions to the Fordism and specific working conditions in auto factories. Industrial work was often characterized by rigidly structured days filled with repetitive, menial tasks. “In terms of workplace organization, the same principals of top-down management” that emerged in the Ford factories at the early twentieth century prevailed through the 1960s. “Most jobs were still sub-divided and pigeon-holed into detailed repetitive tasks requiring little or no training. Workers were still expected to follow orders and obey rules like soldiers in an industrial army.” At the end

36 While the sale of heroin is more closely aligned with normative conceptions of commodity cultures than sex work is, the drug itself would not be desirable without the euphoric, affective, and physical responses it produces.

of the postwar period, “factory command structures remained as authoritarian as ever…”38 Women working in ‘unskilled’ jobs also dealt with frustrating circumstances on a regular basis, including, “small salaries, long hours, little choice of occupations, limited opportunities for advancement, irregular work, exploitation by employers, and demands for sexual favors on threat of discharge by foreman.”39 Therefore, many men and women who managed to hold on to industrial and service jobs in the fluctuating labor markets of the 1950s and early-1960s were dissatisfied with these workplaces and the labor performed therein.

Since historical narratives tend to focus on industrial labor in the cities of Detroit and Windsor, they obscure the important impact of illicit and informal economies in the region. Indeed, working-class Detroiter and Windsorites often grew up in neighborhoods where illicit economies—whether in the form of blind pigs, gambling, drug use, or prostitution—had a visible presence in their lives on a daily basis. The visibility of vice economies had its roots in the decades of the 1920s, and subsequent illegal industries opened up by Prohibition on both sides of the border. In his autobiography, Coleman Young, future Mayor of Detroit, recalled this divide between licit and illicit work in Detroit during the 1920s: “I basically had two role models in those days—the hustlers, with their flashy clothes and money clips, and the Ford Mules…stragglng home from work all dirty and sweaty and beat.”40 Here Young draws stark contrast between the choice of realities he perceived open to him as a young black man in the city. Young observed with great fascination and awe the earning abilities and consumerism enabled through participation in illicit markets. These individuals demonstrated both literal and

cultural capital, with their incomes subsidizing and enabling their coolness, exemplified by their “flashy clothes.” This is in clear opposition to his perception of men who held traditional blue-collar jobs, or the “Ford Mules,” who seemed to work endlessly for non of the cultural or financial payoffs afforded to the neighborhood hustler. Their clothes were dirty, and their bodies worn out as they “straggled” home from the factories, creating a rather unglamorous image.

The perceived benefits of engaging in illicit activities continued in the postwar period with the expanding visibility of vice economies on city streets. Rather than viewing illicit forms of money-making as something that would alienate them from their peers, many users and sex workers viewed the forms of work as an ingrained part of their community. In oral interviews conducted with men who used heroin in the 1940s and 1950s, interviewees often described Detroit as a city where neighborhoods operated on a wide-open basis and where drugs and sex could be easily bought and sold. For example, one recovered addict from Detroit explained that it was easy for him to turn to illicit economies due to both the few choices available to him and the ease with which he could integrate into the illicit community. He explained that the “environment” that he grew up in during the 1950s, and “the people that I was closely associated with at that time and most of my life had been directly or indirectly involved in narcotics. And our neighbors, and our neighborhoods [in Detroit], almost in every other block there was some form of dope house.”

Therefore, when few appealing licit forms of employment materialized, illicit economies provided an obvious alternative. Similarly, Rodger Moyer’s frustration with the few job opportunities open to him as a young black man encouraged him to join the illicit economy. Rather than go to school only to find himself limited to segregated forms of

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41 Anonymous, Interview with Gwen Hall, (June 6, 1970) Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library, p. 3.
employment, like working as a Pullman porter, Moyer decided that selling drugs was a better way to climb the economic ladder. For him, the payoff between the time and energy put into training, and the actual employment opportunities that would result in the formal economy, was not worth it.\(^{42}\)

Similarly in Windsor, the sex industry had a noticeable presence on the streets and its reputation and wide-open nature encouraged both local and out of town women to participate. In the late-1940s and early-1950s, city residents commonly complained that Windsor's vice trades dominated the downtown core and operated with tacit acceptance.\(^{43}\) Several sources cite the lines that occurred outside bawdy houses, where men would line up night after night to wait their turn to purchase sexual services.\(^{44}\) This served to both attract customers and out of town tourists, as discussed in the previous chapter, but also women from across the country seeking employment. For example, one woman who moved to Windsor from Winnipeg noted that she moved there to pursue the lucrative sex industry she heard existed in the city as a result of the booming industry brought by World War II.\(^{45}\) In this case, both word of mouth and a presence in the downtown core encouraged her to move to Windsor in order to participate in the trade. The very visibility of illicit economies was part of its appeal—many perceived it as a lucrative alternative to the industrial work experiences and low-paying jobs held by many of their parents and peers.

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\(^{42}\) Rodger Moyer, Interview with Gwen Hall, (May 28, 1970) Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library, p. 12.

\(^{43}\) Gerald Anglin’s article on vice in Windsor described it as a “wide open town,” and details that cops often ignored the vice operations that took place openly on the streets and city businesses. See: “He Blew the Whistle on Windsor Vice,” *Macleans* (May 1, 1950), p. 62.

\(^{44}\) For example, according to retired Windsor police officer Jim Ure, in the postwar years men would wait outside brothels, such as the one at 359 Brandt Street, be given chits, and have to wait their turn for service. Patrick Brode, Interview with Jim Ure, January 20, 2006.

\(^{45}\) “Attracted to Windsor,” *Windsor Daily Star* (May 24, 1943), p. 3.
Towards this end, illicit economies provided alternative working environments where the jobs one performed and the schedule one kept differed significantly from those in the licit labor force. Workers often set their own hours and interacted with individuals across the city on a regular basis. There was an element of sociability that appealed to men and women, based in part on the necessity to remain undetected by legal authorities. The Report of the Mayor’s Committee described those who used and sold drugs as “part of a sub-culture,” with “the circle of acquaintances of those who belong, among those who also belong,” likely “tremendous.” This was a close community that facilitated the drug market through “well-defined relationships and narcotics associations.” Within this context, “they buy and sell drugs from each other and inform each other about ‘connections’ for purchase.”46 The illegal status of narcotics required those buying and selling them to establish particular codes and interpersonal relationships in order to facilitate transactions without arrest. These relationships established networks that were quite large and extended across cities, states, and the national border. Sex workers in Windsor and Detroit similarly relied on a large network of people, ranging from fellow prostitutes to cab drivers, bartenders, hotel owners, bellboys, pimps, madams, drug sellers, city acquaintances, and others who helped to direct customers their way. Helen McGowan indicates that the very illegal nature of sex work necessitated a close community between women working in the industry, as they were alienated from more “respectable” circles and had to help one another avoid arrest.47

The networks built by women and men working in the illicit trade blended social and business networks within the downtown neighborhoods of Windsor and Detroit, complicating the

46 Mayor’s Committee for the Rehabilitation of Narcotics Addicts in Detroit, p. 40.
47 McGowan, Motor City Madam, p. 135.
supposedly rigid binaries of employer/employee and leisure/work found in the Fordist model of industrial labor.

Central to these alternative forms of work was mobility, as women and men moved around and between cities in order to work in illicit trades. Drug sellers in particular worked in a wide variety of spaces in order to find business. As one seller told the Michigan Legislative Committee, “…the peddler, now, he changes places so often. He might be at dances and, again, he might be in beer gardens, in a show. He might be anywhere.” Though this invokes the specter of the dope peddler lurking around every corner, it also highlights the various spaces in which drug sellers operated—“beer joints, all-night theaters, dime-a-dance places, dances halls”—work spaces a far cry from the loud and rigid factory. Sex workers in Detroit and Windsor also operated in a wide range of spaces across the cities—from dance halls, bars, and hotels, to brothels, blind pigs, and private residences. Significantly, the spaces in which these men and women worked blended legal and illegal, and licit and illicit spaces. In this sense, the working environments of illicit economies were the cities themselves, as men and women took advantage of both public and private space to perform their transactions.

Flexibility was also key in illicit industries. Workers had to function in a wide variety of environments and keep personal contacts with a wide range of people. This was particularly important for those who earned their income through both licit and illicit means. One of the biggest difficulties for drug users in particular was keeping their dual lives separate due to the physical effects of the drugs and the legal persecution they often faced. As such, users and sellers often worked licit jobs on a casual or semi-casual basis in order to accommodate their routines and physical needs. For example, John Hammond moved to Detroit when a friend got him a job

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48 Legislative Committee To Study the Narcotic Drug Problem in Michigan, p. 39.
at the Detroit Edison Company in the midst of racial integration. According to Hammond, “They wanted a black fellow to come out there, you know, just like Jackie Robinson in baseball...I went to work for the Detroit Edison Company, working four days a week and then going to school one day a week at Wayne University, taking Steam Engineering at the expense of the company.” Despite regular drug use, Hammond was able to keep this job for four years. However, he lost his position when his employers found out about a televised raid on a drug house in which he was busted. That was the last full-time formal job he held while using drugs because he viewed it as his “best opportunity” to participate in what he perceived as a lucrative drug market. Other users found semi-casual jobs more amenable to their lifestyles in the informal economy. In an anonymous interview with a user from Detroit, one man described his work unloading trucks as an ideal position because he could pick up work on a truck-by-truck basis, leaving him time in-between to take a cab across town, buy dope, and return to the job again. For example, he could earn $25 for unloading a truck of frozen chickens, and this money would be paid to him in cash right away, also bringing him the ability to purchase drugs when necessary throughout his week. In many ways, working men and women drew on the flexibility of illicit industries, often coupling it with casual or semi-casual work in the formal economy. This served to blur the lines between licit and illicit labor and provided the necessary income in a volatile labor market.

Helen McGowan's autobiography, Motor City Madam, provides important insight into how some individuals perceived their positions within the local economy in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Her book provides a first-hand evaluation of the sex trade in Detroit.

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50 Anonymous, Interview with Gwen Hall, (June 6, 1970) Methadone Treatment for Heroin Addiction Collection, Box 70-U, Folder: Oral History Partial Transcript #1, Bentley Historical Library, pp. 1, 9.
between 1930 and 1960, and as such is a much needed addition to the contemporary records left behind by legal and government authorities who tend to either ignore or distort the perspectives of women and men who worked in illicit industries. McGowan's book is a reflection on her thirty years working as a prostitute and madam and traces the changes to the trade and the daily experiences of women working in the illicit industry. In her book, McGowan demonstrates a form of class-consciousness, one based on her position as both a member of the working class and as a woman. In tracing her experience as a woman in industrial America, she demonstrates how individuals drew upon the language of labor in order to both challenge traditional notions of work and to push for safer conditions for women working in illicit economies.

*Motor City Madam* presents a complex picture of the sex trade, detailing the competing factors that shaped the author’s decision to work as a prostitute in Detroit. In part McGowan viewed her decision to join the sex trade as a result of her lack of education and the few employment opportunities open to women in this period. Yet she also seems to have viewed the vice economy as a way to escape the traditional gender and sexual roles that shaped young women’s lives. Her decision, she explained, was partly a way to counter the sexual exploitation she experienced as a young woman. She writes, “I was young and more than pretty enough to attract men…As a man had betrayed me, I decided men would pay.”

Throughout the text, McGowan presents illicit economies as an avenue through which poor or uneducated women could both make a living wage and use their sexuality for their own economic and social gain: “I was sick of poverty, sick of being kicked around, and here was a chance to rise in the world, to become respectable, for respectability, I had learned, was mainly a matter of money.”

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51 Ibid, p.37.
52 Ibid, p.35.
economies functioned as both a form of work and an alternative culture wherein McGowan perceived additional social avenues open to her. McGowan's conception of respectability differed from middle class definitions of proper comportment and decorum and instead was based on her ability to attain power and status within the working-class neighborhoods in which she lived.

McGowan is careful to characterize herself as a working-class madam, identifying with both her working-class roots and her customers who were predominately blue-collar workers. Though raised on a small farm in Malden, Missouri, her first paid job was in a spark-plug factory in Flint, Michigan at the age of fifteen. McGowan quit this position after facing harassment by her foreman, but continued to work in various service jobs in Chicago and Detroit. It was through these positions that she met men and women who helped her enter the sex trade. Drawing on these roots, McGowan viewed her business as service work catering to the working-class men of the city. She writes, “I am a working man’s madam. Although lawyers, doctors and many other professional men frequent my parlors, the majority of callers are from the working class, the one-hundred-dollar-a-week boys.” As a member of the working community, McGowan knew the benefits her services provided as well as the economic limitations of her customers: “I charge a fair price, well within the means of the lonely employed worker. My men know that they won’t be rolled, they don’t have to worry about venereal disease: they feel safe in my house. And they must certainly like my girls because some of my clients are twenty-five year veterans...[including many] autoworkers.”

For the author, her work helped to alleviate the loneliness and boredom of autoworkers and other laborers in the city, and her employees provided important services at prices they could afford on their fluctuating “hundred-dollar-a-week” incomes.

McGowan’s work experience demonstrates the complex and at times contradictory realities faced by women who performed sexual service. On the one hand the author presents herself as an accomplished businesswoman and a fair employer. She spends much of the text discussing her business tactics and her ability to take care of her employees. The author regularly refers to women who work for her as professionals and emphasizes their skills and abilities.\(^{54}\) She claims to have had a close relationship with the women that work for her. In the “Appreciation” to her book McGowan gives “heartfelt thanks” to her girls for making it possible to live a comfortable life.\(^{55}\) She recounts the friendships she made with her various employees and her belief that it was her role to ensure they had a safe working environment. For example, she paid for regular physical exams for the women working in her houses and discouraged the use of drugs and alcohol whenever possible. Significantly, she characterized the relationship between herself and her employees as going beyond the traditional worker/employer relationship due to the illegal status of the trade. She writes, “In a house of prostitution the madam and the girls usually stick together. You better believe it. There is a kind of honor in the group. It is survival for the troupe if they do not betray one another, prison if they do.”\(^{56}\) While McGowan operated in many ways as a boss, she also cultivated a close working relationship with many of her employees, pushing the boundaries between personal and financial relationships.

Throughout the text, McGowan makes references to the political motivations behind her decision to write about her life. The author makes it very clear that she sees the problem not in prostitution, but in prostitution's illegal status. In the opening “Appreciation,” she writes: “I hope that some of you will profit from my experiences—this goes especially for mothers who have

\(^{54}\) Ibid, p. 108.  
\(^{55}\) Ibid, “Appreciation.”  
\(^{56}\) Ibid, p. 135.
daughters growing into womanhood. They, I hope, will vote for legalized prostitution in America someday to protect their daughters from the sex-crazed maniacs who walk the streets.”

Here we see echoes of the ‘safety valve’ argument, where sex work creates a necessary outlet for men’s sexual desires. Yet there is more to it than this. McGowan in many ways anticipates later calls by sex work advocates for legalization or deregulation on the grounds of the safety and dignity of the workers involved. She argues that by the early 1960s, amateurs had displaced the professionals, resulting in high rate of venereal disease and thousands of teen pregnancies and abortions. In McGowan’s opinion, “Wrecked young lives is the price we are paying for the refusal to legalize and control prostitution.”

She views this as a question of the dignity of work coupled with the gender discrimination faced by women in society; for McGowan, this was a violation of their rights as both workers and women. As she sums up poignantly in the last line of her book, “Talk about Civil Rights! These poor whores should have marched on Washington if anyone ever did!” While McGowan fails to critically engage with the interconnections between race and gender in her work, she is clearly drawing a connection between the discrimination faced by people of color and by women working in illicit economies (who in Detroit, were predominately women of color). While her racial politics remain murky, McGowan makes it clear that prostitution was work, and work was political.

On the surface level, McGowan’s autobiography demonstrates a nostalgic longing for better days in the sex industry; but there is also a sense that she was writing this for the women who, because of early deaths and public silences, were unable to make their voices heard. In

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57 Ibid, “Appreciation.”
recounting the experience of her friend Shirley, who was among the many who died young and impoverished, McGowan writes, “One final word about Shirley. You could buy her body but not her principles…She was not an enemy of society but a tool. She made life brighter for a thousand men. She gave new confidence to the rejected and the lonely. She made a man feel like a man. Shirley gave more life than she ever received. Can you say the same?” McGowan uses the life and death of one of her dear friends and former employee as a way to convey a political message. She is eschewing attempts to degrade or devalue the life of a sex worker and questioning the very premise on which assumptions about work, utility, and happiness are made. These are not disposable lives, or criminal elements of an unwanted underworld. Instead, for McGowan, they are women deserving of rights, regardless of their occupational status or their social standing.

_Motor City Madam_ demonstrates that—much like the taxi-dance hall women who took to the picket lines—sex workers did in fact take themselves seriously as workers and laborers. In providing a strong defense of the work these women did, McGowan challenged both patriarchal authority and the abuse of women who worked on the streets. By placing their employment experiences at the forefront women were sometimes able to counter the multiple margins to which they had been relegated and to provide explicit critiques of the gendered system of labor in industrial cities. In this way, men and women working within the illicit economies served as important counter-voices to conceptions of labor presented by government officials and experts. Rather than accepting the notion that illegal economies were immoral, criminal undertakings tearing at the fabric of North American society, workers like Helen McGowan recognized the important role they played in working-class communities. In an era of unpredictable labor

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60 Ibid, p. 67.
markets, illicit economies provided both needed income and leisure outlets for countless men and women, and as such, deserved respect as legitimate employment.

**Gender, Race, and Class Stratification in Illicit Economies**

That the informal economy served to challenge particular forms of work in the Detroit-Windsor region is clear from the records left behind by those who labored within it. Illicit economies were, however, less successful at challenging the structural inequalities based on race, class, and gender that shaped legitimate forms of employment in the region. In fact, as micro-economies, illicit industries often mirrored many of the inequalities found in the formal economy. In North American cities, illegal drug markets were divided into several levels, with African American and working-class peddlers operating at the lowest, least profitable levels. Sex work was marked by similar social divisions, creating a stratified market that served to reinforce the challenges faced by women who performed these services. Though prostitution did offer women an alternative form of employment, women had to answer to male authorities on a regular basis—pimps, police officers, lawyers, judges, parole officers, and husbands—complicating their attempts to make a living wage. As policing activities pushed women out of brothels and into city streets their working conditions became increasingly unsafe and unpredictable, particularly for African American and transient Canadian women. The combination of race, class, and gender, then, continued to make the lives of workers challenging and difficult, even within the informal, alternative economies.

The work cultures and marketplaces created by illegal drug users and sellers were hierarchical and stratified, with many of these divisions reflecting broader race and class divides
present in North American culture. In both Canada and the United States, this economy had several levels, ranging from small-scale street dealers to high-level members of drug rackets and organized syndicates. The distinction between the levels of drug sellers was determined by both the scale on which one sold drugs and the profits one made. Towards this end, a common distinction made in contemporary sources was that between a ‘trafficker’ and a ‘peddler.’ 'Trafficker’ tended to refer to individuals who engaged in the international, or large-scale, sale and importation of illegal drugs. 'Peddler' usually referred to sellers who operated on smaller, local levels. As the Canadian Minister of National Health and Welfare described them, peddlers were “trafficker[s] in a small way.” Similarly, a publication by the Board of Education in Detroit identified two categories of drug sellers: “the criminal gangster who perhaps might be more properly designated as a distributor, and the street peddler who is on of the links between a centralized distribution point and the individual consumer.” According to the booklet, “Gangsters forming the drug syndicate are less apt to be addicts than are the street peddlers. To the former, the drug racket is an extremely lucrative enterprise.” The peddler on the other hand, made little money, and was viewed by the authors as a “victim” of the organized, higher levels of the traffic. They tended to be users themselves and be the ones responsible for keeping contacts and making sales within the local market. While the difference between a trafficker and a peddler was likely

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61 Though an in-depth discussion of organized crime and international drug syndicates is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is still necessary to recognize that drugs operated as an international commodity, which raises its own implications in terms of who has the ability to shape and control the illegal marketplace. See Chapter Four for a discussion on the way Canadian and American officials attempted to deal with the ‘transnational,’ cross-border nature of the drug markets.


more fluid than these records suggest, there was clearly a distinction between large-scale, lucrative international operations and smaller-scale sales at the city or regional level.

The Detroit-Windsor border region attracted both large-scale traffickers and small-scale peddlers because they offered a convenient point of contact between the drug markets in each country. Cities in close proximity to the national border became key sites of exchange for users and sellers interested in acquiring new products or purchasing illegal drugs in bulk from local distributors. As the busiest crossing point between the two countries, the cities of Detroit and Windsor in particular proved to be useful meeting places for users and sellers because the large volume of legal traffic meant that sellers could often blend in as tourists or commuters. Smugglers became adept at moving their products in resourceful ways, often creating secret compartments in cars or personal clothing in which they would stash the illegal goods. The compact nature of heroin meant that the illegal products could often make it through customs inspections undetected.64 Contemporary customs authorities further noted that this cross-border smuggling between Canada and the US was directly linked to the effectiveness of policing at major sea ports—as policing heated up in cities like New York, the Canadian border became increasingly desirable for those smuggling drugs between the two countries.65

The cities of Detroit and Windsor were home to several infamous large-scale smugglers whose business was successful primarily due to their ability to capitalize on cross-border business. For example, the 1963 US Senate Subcommittee on “Organized Crime and Illicit Traffic in Narcotics” took a special interest in large-scale operations along the national border. Their investigation noted that drug markets in Detroit and Windsor were closely intertwined,

64 Canada, Special Senate Committee, pp. 22-23.
65 US, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, p. 802.
with major importers and distributors regularly supply drugs across the national line. Members of local organized crime families such as Joseph “Cockeyed Joe” Catalanotti, Moses Costillo, Nicholas Cicchini, and Andrew Bottancino came under investigation by the RCMP and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) alike for cross-border smuggling in the late-1950s and early 1960s. Similarly, other large-scale dealers like Peter Devlin made headlines in local papers when they were arrested for smuggling large quantities of heroin across the Detroit-Windsor border. Another local importer, Barabara La Prad (known as “Mother Bee”) came to the attention of customs authorities for a smuggling ring based out of her Detroit boarding house. She and her son rented out several rooms to “lake workers” who brought heroin across the border in the inner tubes of spare tires. Many contemporary newspapers reported on similar narcotics rings across the Great Lakes region. For example, one Saskatoon Star article claimed Toronto’s increase in dope addicts was due in large part to “a flourishing Detroit dope ring.” While it is impossible to know the exact amount of heroin that crossed between Ontario and Michigan, what is clear is that there was a sizeable number of large-scale importers who used the close proximity of border cities to connect the drug markets between the US and Canada.

The national border performed a contradictory role in the cross-border heroin market: on the one hand it served as a site of increased regulation, while on the other it functioned as a fluid  

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68 National Archives, Treasury Department, Bureau of Customs, Central Files, Subject Classified Correspondence (1938-1965), Box 162.
space that enabled illegal activities to take place. In fact, the heroin market was shaped by the paradoxical nature of the border itself, which operated simultaneously as both a barrier and a crossing point.\textsuperscript{70} In the Great Lakes border region, members of law enforcement at the municipal, state, provincial, and federal levels worked closely to monitor the flow of illegal goods and attempted to aid one another as often as possible. For example, the Commissioner of Customs for the US regularly had officers stationed in Canada who worked closely with Canadian officials in order to reduce illegal smuggling. While these officers did not focus exclusively on narcotics, they did work closely with Canadian customs officials on drug issues whenever necessary.\textsuperscript{71} Similarly, the RCMP had a liaison officer stationed in Washington D.C. who regularly met with “all enforcement agencies in the United States,” including frequent meetings with the Federal Bureau Narcotics on joint problems.\textsuperscript{72} Canadian and American authorities touted the close working relationship between enforcement officials on each side of the border and recognized the need for cooperation if they were going to be successful at stemming the flow of illegal goods between their respective countries.

Yet the number of large-volume smugglers operating across the border suggests that the multiple jurisdictional lines that crossed the border region sometimes made it possible for smugglers to slip through enforcement attempts, and it was not uncommon for smugglers busted on one side of the border to cross to the other side in an attempt to avoid a potentially long jail sentence. This was particularly true for large-scale traffickers who had the personal connections and financial resources to help them avoid arrest and detection. For example, “Cockeyed Joe”

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\textsuperscript{71} US, \textit{Illicit Narcotics Traffic}, p. 129.

Catalanotti secured temporary visas for his family and moved them to Windsor in order to escape arrest in the US.\textsuperscript{73} Though extradition for narcotics crimes did take place, they were challenging because they depended on the neighboring law enforcement agencies to detect and apprehend the fugitive.\textsuperscript{74} In this way, border cities like Detroit and Windsor were desirable locations for heroin importers and distributors. The fluid nature of the borderland and the bureaucratic nature of multiple levels of policing meant they had the potential to not only evade arrest but also make large profits by tapping into the illegal markets of both countries.

Lower-level drug sellers, or peddlers, had an arguably greater impact on the character of local drug markets due to their day to day presence on the city streets and their close contact with users. Contemporary records indicate that there were many ways in which men and women could participate in the trade in the Detroit-Windsor region. Some functioned as relatively large-scale peddlers, who traveled between cities to obtain drugs, maintained customers in various locations, and had men and women who worked under them. For example Doris White regularly traveled between Chicago and Detroit to buy drugs wholesale. She employed several people who then sold her product across the two cities.\textsuperscript{75} There were also large-scale sellers who operated within a particular city and had a predominately local customer base. Though the distinction between ‘large’ and ‘small’ operators is fairly arbitrary, two indicators of size are the amount of drugs sold and the existence of a regular client base of considerable proportion. For example, according to the Detroit Mayor’s Report, “One individual whose record was brought to the attention of the

\textsuperscript{74} As Chapter Four will show, the US Senate Committee paid considerable attention to the issue of cross-border cooperation between the policing agencies, and provides several examples of when these efforts were successful. See, for example: US, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, pp. 707-708.  
\textsuperscript{75} US, Senate Committee, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, pp. 4592-3.
Committee would be classed a big peddler because he made daily deliveries to perhaps twenty customers and sold as many as fifty capsules of heroin per day.” This man had fairly regular customers throughout the city and was able to sustain the “large-volume” operation for two years, until his arrest and conviction. Finally, there were many sellers who would purchase drugs wholesale from the larger peddlers in order to sell to friends and acquaintances and to maintain their own habit. This is the most common type of dealer found within the various contemporary sources and the size and scale of their operations varied considerably. Likewise, it is impossible to determine the proportion of users within each of these levels of local sales with any certainty, but what is clear is that it was very common for someone who used and became physically addicted to drugs to at some point begin selling them.

Given the illegal nature of the industry, it is difficult to determine with any certainty exactly how much money individuals made through selling drugs. However evidence from contemporary sources suggests that few local peddlers became wealthy through the illegal drug market. For example, in 1951 the Michigan Legislative Committee interviewed “Larry,” a man serving two to fifteen years in a Michigan penal institution for crimes committed in order to obtain drugs, about how to “formulate laws to stop the narcotics traffic.” Larry’s answer revealed the fact that he perceived a clear divide between traffickers at the top and local sellers trying to make ends meet: “All I know is that it is a vicious racket, a million dollar racket for whoever is behind it.” When the interviewer used the term trafficker and peddler interchangeably, Larry responded: “I am not quite clear on what do you mean by the peddlers...because a lot of the peddlers that I know—what I call a peddler—is little men who have nothing and they’re just

76 Report of the Mayor’s Committee for the Rehabilitation of Narcotic Addicts, p. 29.
77 The Detroit Police Department estimated that as many as 80% of ‘addicts’ “sell drugs at one time or another.” See Report of the Mayor’s Committee for the Rehabilitation of Narcotic Addicts, p. 28.
pushing the stuff to keep up their own habits, more or less.” For Larry, the legislators’ discussion of trafficking did not fit his experience within the local Detroit market. Though he perceived that there was a “million dollar racket” at the top, the sellers he came into contact on a daily basis made little money, just enough to “keep up their own habits.” Another local dealer, considered by the Michigan Legislative Committee to be a large-scale peddler in Detroit, barely made enough money to break even once his own heroin habit was covered for the day. He paid $1.25 for pills of heroin and sold them for about $2.50, “but his own habit necessitated ten heroin capsules a day. This man had earned a substantial income through dealing, but it was not fabulous, and he was a large-volume operator.” Similarly, Rodger Moyer, who sold drugs in Detroit during the early 1960s, noted that in his experience, few local-level sellers made large profits off selling drugs: “I believe it’s only a very small percentage who make a big profit off narcotics. The ones who make a great profit don’t use and the ones who do use don’t make too big of a profit. They might maintain a home or maybe keep a small family, even buy a car now and then, but I think most of them sell it for their own convenience.” In Moyer’s experience, while selling drugs could bring some profit for local sellers (enough to buy a car or help take care of his or her family), they by no means became wealthy through the drug trade.

Drug sellers at the local levels also tended to be from working-class and, in the case of Detroit, African American backgrounds, creating a clear link between race and class status and the amount of money one could make through the illicit market. A pattern emerges when one compares the studies of ‘addiction’ (i.e. street users and peddlers) with contemporary studies of

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78 Legislative Committee to Study the Narcotic Problem in Michigan, p. 30.
79 Report of the Mayor’s Committee for the Rehabilitation of Narcotic Addicts, p. 29.
‘organized crime’ (i.e. large-scale traffickers): the race and class disparities between these two groups of illegal drugs sellers reflect an internal logic of inequality animating illicit economies.\footnote{Though the issue of international drug smuggling will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, it is important to note that the majority of men and women studied as members of organized crime and drug syndicates were white, or from white ethnic backgrounds, such as French or Italian. This suggests a clear racial and ethnic divide between seller at the top and bottom of the illegal market hierarchy. See: Ontario, \textit{Report of the Ontario Police Commission on Organized Crime} (Toronto: The Commission, 1964); US, \textit{Special Senate Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in International Commerce} (New York: Didier, 1951); US, Senate, \textit{Illicit Narcotics Traffic} (1955); Canada, Senate, \textit{Proceedings and Report of Canada Parliament Senate Special-Committee on the Traffic in Narcotic Drugs in Canada} (1955).} The local dealers in Detroit, the ones least likely to make large profits off the drug trade, were predominately African American. According to Russell McCarthy, Inspector of the Narcotic Bureau for the Detroit Police Department, the majority of illegal drug trafficking (almost seventy percent) was located in the area of the city bordered by Woodward Avenue to the west, Lafayette Street to the south and East Grand Boulevard to the north. McCarthy described this area as “a lower-class section of the city” where “the housing conditions are not as they are in other sections of the city.” He further estimated that seventy percent of narcotics use took place in these neighborhoods and that eighty-nine percent of those arrested were African American.\footnote{US, Senate, \textit{Illicit Narcotics Traffic}, p. 4489.} The neighborhoods in which many local peddlers operated were segregated by race and class and represented areas made up of low-income and African American residents. Unlike the white traffickers who worked at the top of the trade, small-scale peddlers did not have the financial resources to help them avoid arrest and often became regular users of the products they sold.

Though the racial divide was not the same in Ontario, local users in Windsor were similarly from lower- and working-class backgrounds. According to the Jail Register of the Windsor Police Department, the majority of men and women arrested for drug offenses in the
city were listed as either employed in unskilled industrial jobs or unemployed. Clayton Mosher’s study of drug arrests in five cities in Ontario, including Windsor, found that about sixty-six percent of users and seller were from “working” class backgrounds, with roughly an additional fifteen percent listed as “unemployed.” Catherine Carstairs’s study of drug users across English Canada reveals a similar pattern where users and sellers were overwhelmingly from “economically disadvantaged backgrounds.” In both Detroit and Windsor, then, the men and women who worked as local peddlers, often the people who made the least amount of money in the drug trade, tended to be members of marginal communities in the city. Just as the formal capitalist economy was stratified by race and class, African American and working-class Canadians at the bottom of the drug market hierarchy tended to make little monetarily, were susceptible to long-term drug addiction, and were regularly subject to intense policing practices.

Sex work in Windsor and Detroit was also shaped by class and racial inequality, and changes to the working conditions for sex workers over the middle decades of the twentieth

84 Mosher’s analysis covers five cities in Ontario, including: Toronto, Windsor, Hamilton, London, and Ottawa. Though Windsor had the fourth largest population, it was the third largest percentage of arrests in his study (just under 5%). He attributed this discrepancy to the fact that Windsor is a border city, and therefore close to the drug market in the US, and subject to increased policing by enforcement officials. See Mosher, The Legal Response, p. 114; p. 123.
85 Carstairs, Jailed for Possession, p. 71. These numbers reflect larger national patterns among drug users and sellers, wherein the majority of men and women imprisoned for drug selling and using were from working class, poor, and/or minority backgrounds. For example, a study of drug users at Oakalla Prison Farm in British Colombia during the 1950s found that almost a quarter of drug users lived in homes that needed welfare assistance at some point in time, and only about one third came from homes there were considered economically sound by the creators of the study. In New York, an epidemiological study concluded that fifteen percent of the census tracts in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, home to just thirty percent of the city’s sixteen- to twenty-year-old males, contributed over eighty percent of the male adolescent heroin users. See Carstairs, Jailed for Possession, p. 71; Schneider, Smack, p. 42.
86 Local peddlers often operated in low-income neighborhoods where they were subject to intense policing practices due to the racial and class divisions that characterized postwar cities. As The Report of the Mayor’s Committee in Detroit noted, “…the low economic status of most persons living in the depressed neighborhoods does not permit much concealment of a drug habit once acquired, and police vigilance in those neighborhoods is high.” See Report of the Mayor’s Committee for the Rehabilitation of Narcotic Addicts, p. 39.
century were a direct result of these. In Detroit, changes in working conditions corresponded to shifting demographic patterns among sex workers; as women of color became the primary workers in the industry, sex work became increasingly segregated into particular communities and forced out of brothels into the city streets, alleys, cars, or hotels. In his 1933 study on prostitution in Detroit, Taylor noted that the working conditions for women were changing considerably with the decline of the “parlor house” that occurred between the 1920s and 1930s. Parlor houses, which were run by madams, afforded women some form of protection from both customers and police officers. In return for a fee the madam of the house would provide “safety, court aid, a room and occasional board.”

During the Great Depression, though, the number of prostitutes grew disproportionately larger than the number of available customers. This led to a sizable pool of women who had to compete for an increasingly scarce customer base. Since parlor houses tended to charge more money for sexual services they were increasingly competing with women who solicited customers in more informal ways. By the mid-1930s, women tended to pick customers up on the streets and service them in their apartment or “call-flats” that they shared, usually with one other woman. Women also used various other practices to attract customers, including “automobile prostitution, referrals through agents such as taxi drivers, restaurant owners, pool room operators, pimps, etc. and solicitation in bind pigs, cheap shows, etc.” By the 1930s, the decline of parlor houses and the ascendancy of street-walking, pimps, and work in private residences characterized the daily experiences of prostitutes.

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87 Taylor, *Prostitution in Detroit*, p. 117.
88 Taylor argues that just as formal modes of employment suffered during the Great Depression, so did prostitution. With more women out of jobs and needing money, the number of women selling sexual services also ballooned. This created a very competitive market and women were left to compete for a decreasing customer base. As he argues, “Economic necessity had forced many girls to resort to the practice, but illicit sex being a luxury, the demand has suffered a sharp decline.” Taylor, *Prostitution in Detroit*, p. 32-33.
89 Taylor, *Prostitution in Detroit*, p. 117.
The changing labor conditions for sex workers in Detroit, when coupled with demographic and geographic shifts in the industry, suggest that as women of color became the predominant workers within the industry the conditions of women deteriorated, with women increasingly working on streets, for male pimps, and in private, unprotected residences. This demographic shift occurred rapidly and was fueled by the migration of Southern blacks into the city during the Second Great Migration. In roughly a fifteen year period, the racial make-up of among sex workers shifted from a predominately white occupation in the late-1930s to a predominately African American one by the 1950s. According to Sobotka’s study, whites went from making up 53.4% of prostitutes in the city in the 1930s, to 20.7% by the mid-1950s.\textsuperscript{90} This also correlates to changes in the location of prostitution—as sex workers gained a visible presence on the streets, they became increasingly relegated to African American neighborhoods. According to Sobotka, “the ‘area’ of the street-walking prostitute is, of course, the area commonly called the slums. The percentage of Negro [prostitutes] per Negro population living in these areas is greater than the corresponding percentage of whites. It is simply easier, in other words, for Negro women to learn the pattern of prostitution because they are exposed to it.”\textsuperscript{91} While the author’s analysis is overly simplistic in its assumption that simply being exposed to prostitution causes one to choose this form of work, it does support the idea that being immersed in an area where illicit economies is visible and vibrant makes it a more viable option.

Similarly there were significant shifts in the character of sex work in the city of Windsor during the middle decades of the twentieth century, including a turn away from brothel-style prostitution towards street solicitation. In part this was facilitated by an increase in public...
attention to prostitution and a correlating crackdown by city police. Prior to the early 1950s, brothels were the predominant place in which prostitution took place. Estimates of the number of brothels in the city ranged from about forty to fifty establishments, a considerable size given the population of the city.\textsuperscript{92} As noted above, these brothels operated openly in the downtown district, often with line-ups outside on weekends. However, as city residents, newspapers, and police turned their attention to the problem of vice in the city, bawdy houses were increasingly shut down, forcing women to operate out of streets, hotels, bars, restaurants and automobiles. The 1951 Annual Report of the Windsor Police Department claimed that, “many prosecutions were directed” at brothels, and as a result, they “are not getting the traffic they formerly enjoyed.”\textsuperscript{93} This did not mean that prostitution disappeared, but instead, that it was increasingly taking different forms. The same report noted that prostitution, “is a lucrative field and in view of the fact that many prosecutions have been directed at the Houses, quite a number are plying their wares around restaurants and hotels, and some on the streets.”\textsuperscript{94} As police continued the pressure, and as booming economic conditions leveled off in the city, by the mid-1950s, the sex trade in Windsor had slowed considerably and became almost wholly based in public streets or private, makeshift spaces. According to the 1959 Annual Report, “the number of complaints received during the past year concerning so-called vice have been very few. Bawdy houses are non-existent. The method of operation of prostitutes has changed drastically and they no longer operate from a house except in very isolated instance.” According to the report, the few prostitutes left in Windsor used automobiles, motels, or hotel rooms in order to perform their

\textsuperscript{92} Anglin, “He Blew the Whistle on Windsor Vice,” p. 62.
\textsuperscript{93} Annual Report, Windsor Police Department, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{94} Annual Report, WPD (1951) p. 17.
services and rarely used the same accommodation more than once. By 1959, operation that would formerly have been termed “Bawdy Houses” by the police had also changed—no longer were they organized spaces run by men and women and housing a number of different workers—by 1959, the madam also tended to work as a prostitute and had to solicit her “own business from the street and public places,” or “operate from automobiles or rooms.” By 1950, the Windsor Police Department declared that prostitution in brothels had been stamped out.

Over the course of the postwar period, then, the working conditions for sex workers changed considerably—no longer able to operate out of organized houses, women were forced to operate in public spaces where they had little protection from violent customers, abusive pimps, or police officers. While it is unlikely that the Windsor Police Department had fully eliminated organized prostitution as they claimed in their 1959 Annual Report (the Police Department after all had its own agenda and desire to prove that prostitution had been eliminated from the city, not the least of which was the 1950 scandal involving corruption among local police that put an international spotlight on the city), what is clear is that a combination of increasingly harsh policing practices, and a leveling off of the booming labor market, had a direct impact on the lives of the women working within the illicit trade in the city.

In both Windsor and Detroit, women were often subject to male authorities in various capacities, and their status as marginal women left then little protection from legal authorities, pimps, or johns. Though women certainly faced a number of complicated and difficult circumstances in other forms of labor, women's vulnerability because of their gender was

exacerbated by the illegal nature of the sex trade and the race and class divides within the urban centers of Windsor and Detroit. For example, when women worked from brothels run by other women, they often had some degree of protection from violent johns and police harassment, and also had some legal support provided for them if they were arrested.\textsuperscript{99} As pimps became more common, and as women were forced to operate on the street or in other public or semi-public places, they increasingly came into contact with male officials in various capacities, including police officers judges, and lawyers. According to McGowan, by the early 1960s changes in the working conditions of sex workers brought them further under the authority of men who served to profit off of the industry: “my very old profession is still flourishing and profitable, but the chief money-takers are not the girls or the madam. Pimps, bondsmen, lawyers and rackets boys take most of the love money.”\textsuperscript{100} Though prostitution theoretically provided women with an alternative form of income, many still struggled with low take-home pay and the regulation of their income and labor by the men in their lives.

Towards this end, it was not uncommon for women to also be either married to or in a common law relationship with their pimps, which further complicated the worker/employee relationship. Windsor Police Records reveal that men and women with the same last name were often arrested together in raids on bawdy houses in the 1940s and 1950s.\textsuperscript{101} In McGowan’s autobiography, she discusses many situations where women fell for men who became their pimps, noting over and over the precarious situation this placed women in. These women often became physically, financially, and emotionally dependent on their husbands/boyfriends/pimps, and their freedom and financial situation became increasingly linked to this relationship. She

\textsuperscript{99} Taylor, Prostitution in Detroit, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{100} McGowan, Motor City Madam, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{101} Windsor Police Registers, 1945-1960.
provides several examples of men using the women for their income and then leaving them destitute, sometimes addicted to drugs or alcohol.\textsuperscript{102} This is a common occurrence in McGowan’s work and demonstrates the complicated nature of an illicit business that operates outside of traditional labor practices, but also within social conceptions of particular gendered relationships between men and women, relationships where men continued to hold the authority over women who operated simultaneously as their wives, lovers, and employees. She explains, “Every madam has two bosses: Mr. Citizen and Mr. X, who represents the rackets. It’s like steering a boat between two jagged rocks in an ebb tide and it’s not easy.”\textsuperscript{103} Despite McGowan’s determination, she was unable to operate without the consent of the masculine authorities (both legal and illegal). Her work provides an important testimonial of a woman attempting to make a living without resorting to the direct supervision of male superiors, yet always having to reassert herself as a formidable opponent and cooperative woman within the male-dominated, and often violent, informal economy.

The combination of race, class, and gender continued to make the lives of marginal workers very challenging and difficult. Though prostitution did offer women an alternative form of employment, male pimps often dominated the industry. Women had to answer to a range of male authorities on a regular basis, further complicating their attempts to make a living wage. As policing activities pushed women out of brothels and into city streets their working conditions became increasingly unsafe and unpredictable, particularly for African American and transient Canadian women. Similarly, stratification within the illegal drug market operated along race and class lines, with African American and working-class men and women operating at the lowest,\textsuperscript{102}\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{102} McGowan, \textit{Motor City Madam}, pp. 55-6; 81-4; 89-93.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, p. 68.
least profitable level of the drug hierarchy. Consequently, the amount of money one could make and the social mobility afforded through illicit economies was hampered by its roots in race, class, and gender ideologies that permeated the industrial region.

**Conclusion**

The case of the taxi-dance hall workers who walked out on their jobs in protest provides a rare glimpse into the role of illicit forms of labor and their broader cultural meaning in working-class neighborhoods across Detroit and Windsor. On the one hand, the women's approach demonstrates that their conceptions of work were deeply rooted in working-class communities, and they adopted the tactics of organized labor in order to draw attention to their cause. Despite public perceptions that these were immoral women working in a dirty industry, they were clearly not embarrassed or ashamed of the work they performed. Instead these women believed it was legitimate and that they needed to be properly compensated as a result. Their decision to take to the streets in a highly visible manner also demonstrates that these were not simply seedy establishments hidden among the run-down buildings of the postwar city—they were vibrant and booming economies that had a noticeable presence on the streets of working-class communities.

At the same time newspaper reports about their job action also helped to re-inscribe some of the gender and class patterns shaping working-class communities. Though the women asserted their rights as workers and were successful at attaining at least some of their demands, the media coverage of their actions nonetheless served to trivialize their public protest. Described as “the best looking picket line ever to pound Detroit's pavement,” news reports used gendered language to devalue the women's actions. Explaining that the “cute picket line” did not last long, the
author of a *Sarasota Herald* report noted that the sexy “redheads, brunettes, and blonds” who attracted many “male well-wishers” returned to their jobs quite easily.\textsuperscript{104} The report was closer to that of an amusing public interest piece than a story about a labor struggle. In the end, the women were able to win some of the gains they had hoped for, yet the media continued to portray them as attractive young women whose “cute” attempt to improve their working conditions was mainly important due to the spectacle it provided for local men.

In this way, illicit economies became one key site where men and women debated the cultural meaning of labor and work in cities that were rapidly undergoing deindustrialization. Illicit forms of labor provided much needed income for working-class residents, as well as alternative work environments that provided some degree of independence and sociability. Many men and women therefore viewed their illicit, and often illegal, forms of work as gainful employment. Yet sex workers and drug sellers also struggled within the larger structural inequalities that shaped the Detroit-Windsor border region and were never fully able to operate outside these norms. This was particularly true for the men and women who worked at the lowest levels of the formal and informal economies—African Americans, women, and the unskilled laborers of the working class. As the final two chapters of this dissertation will show, as lawmakers, legal officials, and reformers sought to eliminate these forms of income and entertainment in city centers, the working conditions in these industries became even more dangerous and difficult.

\textsuperscript{104} “Cute Picket Line,” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, p. 2.
Across Canada and the United States, illegal drugs smuggling and the spread of drug addiction gained national prominence in the postwar period. State officials became increasingly concerned about the rise in heroin use in cities across the two nations, which seemed to represent both a crumbling of social mores and the emergence of a serious community health problem. In city after city, local and national officials were horrified by the lurid stories they heard about the decimation of urban neighborhoods and the downward spiral of addiction that was apparently affecting a growing number of North Americans. From New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Detroit, to Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto, men and women seemed to be turning to heroin and other illicit drugs in rapidly increasing numbers. As a result, the Canadian and American governments decided that something must be done to stem the rising tide of addiction afflicting their nations’ cities. These debates culminated in 1955 when the Canadian and American senates formed special committees to study drug use and its social consequences in the two countries.

These investigations, which were large-scale and national in scope, were aimed at assessing the extent of the drug problem and finding the best ways to eliminate it. The Canadian committee was completed in less than three months—in June of that year—and was already putting their recommendations together as their US counterpart was getting underway. As a testament to the close relationship between the two countries, the US Senate Committee invited two members of the Canadian committee to join their investigative team. Senator Tom Reid,
Chairman of the Canadian Committee, and Mr. Curran, its chief counsel, were warmly welcomed by the American Senators in the opening hearing on June 2, 1955. Senator Reid was in fact asked to provide the first comments before the committee, in which he spoke of the significance of the drug problem, the common situation facing Canada and the US, and the appreciation he felt for being invited to sit on the US committee. After all, Reid asserted, this was “the first time in the history of the two countries that a Canadian Senator has had the privilege of sitting in with the Senate of the United States.”\(^1\) The congenial remarks were shared by the Americans who offered their Canadian counterparts a warm welcome. As Senator Welker of Idaho put it, “The committee realizes that we have a touching human-interest problem to solve. Probably no greater problem will ever rest upon the shoulders of any members of this committee. We have dedicated ourselves to try to solve or at least to help solve this problem. With the cooperation of the great neighboring visitors who are here and the members of their staffs and their committees, I am sure that we will come up with something realistic, which in effect will help…both countries.”\(^2\)

Though there were significant differences in the size and scope of the drug problem in Canada and the United States, the goals and objectives of both committees dovetailed in important ways and suggest a unity of purpose in enforcement attempts across the national line. The Canadian and American senators were able to work together on this “touching human-interest problem” because they shared a belief in a prohibitionist ideology, one that emphasized the need to enforce a clear line between acceptable and unacceptable drug use through legal means. Both committees drew on the prohibition legacy built over the course of the early twentieth century, when legislators, law enforcement officials, courts, correctional facilities, and


the medical profession came together to define proper forms of drug use, regulate individuals who used, and punish those who violated narcotics laws. The witnesses before the senate committees demonstrate that legal and medical authorities continued to function as moral regulators, defining drug use and addiction in terms of binary categories of 'good and evil' and 'villain and victim.' The legal and medical approaches overlapped significantly in this period, with legal professionals drawing on the language of sickness to describe the problem, and medical authorities promoting punitive means to cure the addict. Though tensions between these fields sometimes arose, legal and medical authorities reached a general consensus that a combined use of both punishment and treatment was needed to deal with the problem.

In both countries, then, the senators were engaging directly in what Kenneth Meijer terms “moral politics,” as they attempted to impose particular values and change the behavior of individuals within their societies through government intervention. Sociologists Charles Lidz, Andrew Walker, and Nachman Ben-Yehuda likewise define morality as “the process of defining any object in the world as good or evil or any similar evaluative dualism.” From this perspective, the main focus of morality is “to orient and direct social actions toward specified goals. It not only determines social goals but defines the legitimate way to achieve them.” Prohibitionist approaches were indeed attempting to effect social action toward specific goals—ultimately,

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3 Meijer identifies drugs as a primary example of “moral politics.” In this formulation, moral politics develop when one segment of society attempts by “government fiat to impose their values on the rest of society.” They not only seek to redistribute values but also to change behavior; they tend to be highly salient, and any information that challenges the dominant perspective is often ignored. Meijer, The Politics of Sin: Drugs, Alcohol, and Public Policy (London: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1994), p. 4.

4 Moreover, morality is represented by a complex “structure of symbols that establish and communicate the significance attached to various ethical factors and problem. In this sense, the differential damages attributed to deviant acts...are peripheral to the main offense, which is a moral one.” Nachman Ben-Yehuda, Deviance and Moral Boundaries: Witchcraft, the Occult, Science Fiction, Deviant Sciences, and Scientists (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 17-18. Charles Lidz and Andrew Walker, Heroin, Deviance, and Morality (London: Sage Publications, 1980).
within a prohibitionist framework, the use of particular substances such as heroin was left explicitly to medical authorities, and legal regimes were given the power to regulate illegal distribution of these substances. In this way the medical profession and legal authorities both became state actors who enforced the prohibitionist moral program. Ultimately, expert discourses strengthened the role of the state by formulating a complex moral schema in which notions of addiction, disease, and danger were interwoven. These competing discourses further served to define the lines between productive citizenship and weak or damaged individuals, often by infusing these notions with particular gender, class, and racial codes. The prohibitionist goals thus helped to define who did or did not belong in postwar society, and how to best eliminate the contaminating elements so damaging to North American urban centers.

If the distinction between licit and illicit drug use was used to demarcate lines of citizenship in North America, this struggle became particularly acute at national borders. It was at these crossing points that the nation became uniquely vulnerable to the influx of illicit and dangerous substances. Consequently, both committees framed the issue as, in many ways, a problem of illegal importation and viewed the border as the first line of defense against it. Canadian and American officials regularly touted the close relationship between enforcement officers in the two countries and cited numerous examples of the many ways the countries worked together to enforce similar prohibitive policies and laws. The testimonies before the senate committees also remind us that these were in fact different nations with divergent national perspectives. While Canadian officials were particularly interested in stemming the flow of drugs into their country from the US, their American counterparts were more concerned with their major sea ports and their southern border with Mexico. As a result, the committees’ approach to
the border differed to some degree, and could at times lead to diplomatic ruptures and frustrations. In this way cross-border vice activities brought these two nations into close contact, but could also lead to political tensions and failed enforcement attempts. The dual function of the border as both a barrier and a crossing-point was central to debates over illegal smuggling, as the Canadian and American governments alike grappled with how to filter out unwanted cross-border flows while also promoting freedom and friendship at their borders.

**Prohibition and the Push for Drug Regulation in the Twentieth Century**

The 1955 senate committees had their roots in over half a century of attempts to regulate, suppress, and control narcotics, and it is therefore necessary to briefly situate them within this longer legacy. Since the American Civil War, the proper use and effects of psychotropic substances have been vigorously debated in North American society, reflecting shifting notions of pleasure, health, addiction, and disease.\(^5\) While the study of illicit substances is a relatively new area for historians, this emerging literature has demonstrated the way in which the meaning of substances change over time and how their use and legal status is determined by a set of complex factors, including medical and legal regimes, as well as race, class, and gender codes.

Though today the boundary between legal and illegal, and licit and illicit, drugs may seem relatively static, a brief examination of the changes in attitudes towards various narcotics highlights the shifting place of drugs in North American society. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, doctors regularly prescribed opiates for a wide range of ailments and

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\(^5\) During the Civil War, large amounts of opiates were issued, and wounded veterans expanded the pool of candidates for iatrogenic addiction. David T. Courtwright, *Dark Paradise: Opiate Addiction in America before 1940* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 56.
the general public could purchase opiates and cocaine without a prescription.\textsuperscript{6} For most of the nineteenth century, drug addicts did not constitute a deviant social group or criminal class, but were simply individuals guilty of a specific moral transgression.\textsuperscript{7} Many North American elites regularly smoked opium, and by 1876, the chewing of opium was on the increase. Products containing cocaine were sold as soft drinks and alcoholic beverages, and some members of the medical profession endorsed these substances for their medicinal values.\textsuperscript{8} As a result, a large majority of opiate users in the late-nineteenth century were white, middle- and upper-class women who began using under the guidance of medical professionals.\textsuperscript{9} An estimated 200,000 to 2,000,000 Americans were addicted to opiate drugs at the turn of the century, and while no relevant statistics are available for Canada, Clayton Mosher argues it is likely that a similar situation prevailed there.\textsuperscript{10}

By the turn of the century, the rising number of addicts and a demographic shift in drug users changed the face of use in Canada and the United States. Due to an onslaught of medical addiction among North Americans, doctors became increasingly reluctant to prescribe opium and morphine for their patients.\textsuperscript{11} At the same time, legal measures were taken in Canada in 1908 and 1911 under the Opium and Drug Act, and in the US in 1914 under the Harrison Narcotics Act, to criminalize the once commonly-used substances. The drug market “shifted from unregulated sale to a combination of highly regulated sale for medical purposes and a growing illicit market for any purchase not authorized by a physician, facilitating a demographic shift in the types of

\textsuperscript{8} Mosher, “The Legal Response,” p. 35.
\textsuperscript{9} Courtwright, \textit{Dark Paradise}, pp. 36-37.
\textsuperscript{10} Mosher, “The Legal Response,” p. 35
\textsuperscript{11} Courtwright, \textit{Dark Paradise}, p. 3.
people likely to be addicted to opiates.”

As a result of a decrease in supply and an increase in policing, drug use ceased to be concentrated among upper- and middle-class white females and began to appear more frequently in lower-class urban males, often members of the underworld.

With the implementation of the Harrison Act and the Opium and Drug Act, a binary set of categories was created to distinguish legal from illegal patterns of use. As Caroline Acker argues, the Progressive Era anti-vice campaigns helped create this polarity by placing drug use in a moral framework. According to this model, “pleasure-seeking” use was seen as undermining the bourgeois values of self-denial and thrift and as a rejection of middle class norms regarding gender, class, and sexuality. Simultaneously, reform-minded physicians sought increased authority to control the uses of medicine, and the Harrison Act’s creation of prescription requirements for the sale of opiates and cocaine added to this power. Within this context, medical (i.e. legal) use was sharply contrasted with use for pleasure, amusement, or socialization (i.e. illegal). Further, the Harrison Act and the Opium Drug Act virtually ignored the treatment of addicts, and the “addict was gradually forced out of the role of the legitimately ill and into the role of the willfully criminal. As legal agencies developed an increasing vested interest in the handling of drug addicts they helped to bring about the law that made them more significant and gave them even greater control.” Put another way, once the role of drug handling shifted from a medical to a legal approach, it became a mutually-reinforcing process.

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13 Courtwright, Dark Paradise, p. 3.
Between the implementation of the Harrison Act and the Opium and Drug Act and the mid-1960s, there were many different attempts to regulate and control illicit substances, and the context in which anti-drug campaigns targeted specific substances varied. One factor, however, remained constant across North America: law enforcement officials and medical professionals maintained their status as the primary authorities over drug users and the determiners of the proper modes through which to address the problem of illegal drug use and addiction. With this long legacy of prohibition and enforcement mentalities, the re-emergence of illegal drug use following the end of World War II again raised questions about the status of drug users, the meaning of addiction, and the best method to combat its widespread growth. Were legal means still the most effective way to deal with this new group of users? Was addiction essentially a symptom of criminality or was it a physical illness? What was the best way to prevent the spread of this social problem? The questions on many North Americans’ minds reflected both the legacy of prohibitionist attitudes towards particular narcotic substances and increasingly unique conditions that emerged in the postwar period.

The 1955 senate committees arose, in part, as a way to address both the rising number of users across North America and the changing demographic patterns among users themselves. Anti-drug efforts had long been rooted in arguments that racial minorities were particularly susceptible to drug addiction and were central to spreading drug use in urban communities across Canada and the US. These perceptions first gained currency in the mid-nineteenth century when North Americans targeted Chinese immigrants for their supposed obsession with smoking opium. In fact, some of the earliest anti-drug laws arose in the nineteenth century as a way to prevent
Chinese communities from importing opium into the United States.\footnote{Musto, *The American Disease*, p. 3-4.} The racialization of drug use was further expanded in the United States in the early twentieth century, when Southerners and Progressive reformers alike blamed the increasing racial unrest and militancy of black Americans on cocaine use. Within this perspective, whites argued that out-of-control, cocaine-crazed blacks were rioting in the streets and raping white women. In fact, the association between racial minorities and drug use united Southern Democrats and Progressive reformers, enabling legislators to pass the controversial Harrison Narcotics Act.\footnote{Michael M Cohen, “Jim Crow’s Drug War: Race, Coca Cola, and the Southern Origins of Drug Prohibition” *Southern Cultures*, Volume 12, Issue 3 (2006), p. 55-79.} Likewise, in Canada, the association between opium and the “yellow peril” allowed legislators from disparate political backgrounds to come together in support of anti-drug laws in the early twentieth century.\footnote{Catherine Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession: Illegal Drug Use, Regulation, and Power in Canada, 1920-1961* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 17.}

The deep roots connecting racial ideologies and anti-drug laws set the context for the postwar panic over the spread of heroin use. In the US, heroin use grew exponentially among African American and Latino youth following the close of the war. Young people living in increasingly segregated and economically depressed neighborhoods began to view drug use as one solution to their alienation. As Eric Schneider has shown, they often looked to hipsters, jazz musicians, and hustlers as alternative role models, viewing their parents as dupes of the mythology of the American Dream—a notion that seemed far removed from their experiences in urban neighborhoods.\footnote{Eric Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 35.} For members of the US Senate Committee, the fact that drug use was spreading rapidly among young minorities enabled them to frame this as a racialized problem wherein the urban centers were at risk of threatening otherwise wholesome suburban...
communities that bordered them. Indeed, though African Americans and Latinos represented the largest using group across the nation, drug panics centered on the fear that this phenomenon was likely to spread to white, middle-class suburban teens, who were attracted to the exciting and alluring prospects of participating in these urban subcultures. The notion that the plague of addiction could spread from urban centers to the suburbs and otherwise wholesome communities helped the committee gain national attention and newspapers across the country reported the dire addiction statistics provided by witnesses in cities across America.

In Canada, though drug users were in fact primarily white, working-class men and women, national debates were fueled by public perceptions that this was a problem spread by immigrants and nearby US slums. In the media coverage of drug use, immigrant neighborhoods were often fingered as the source of the drug problem. For example, news reports described places like the College-Spadina-Queen-Bathurst section of Toronto as areas where newcomers to Canada congregated and where local youth were turning to drug use, pimping, and prostitution. Canadian newspapers also regularly reported on the problem of drug use in the US, providing lurid stories about heroin addiction in black neighborhoods like Harlem. These stories became even more alarming when placed beside reports on smuggling rings bringing drugs from US

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20 Anti-drug narratives aimed at teenagers in the postwar period provided images of white, middle-class kids who were addicted through unscrupulous pushers who hung around school yards and places where kids hung out to socialize outside of the supervision of parents. For example, the 1951 film The Terrible Truth (Davis Productions) told the story of a white suburban teenager who gets addicted to heroin, moves to the city, and begins to engage in crime in order to cover her habit.


urban centers into Canadian cities.\textsuperscript{24} Thus, though the majority of users were in fact white in Canada, Canadians continued to worry that immigrant, racial minorities, and emerging American youth gangs would eventually spread of drug addiction across their cities.\textsuperscript{25}

Within the context of these animated public debates, the Canadian and American senates set out to determine the extent and causes of the drug problem in their respective countries. On February 24\textsuperscript{th}, 1955, the Canadian Senate adopted a resolution to form the Special Senate Committee on the Traffic in Narcotic Drugs in Canada, which subsequently conducted investigations between March 9th and June 7th of that year. Tom Reid acted as Chairman of the committee, which consisted of twenty-three additional Senators. Hearings were held in the major cities across Canada, including Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, and received testimonies from physicians, drug researchers, the Vancouver Community Chest, social welfare agencies, private citizens, federal officials, police representatives, and Harry J. Anslinger, the Commissioner of the American Bureau of Narcotics. Its focus on the major urban centers reflected the committee’s assertion from the start that drug use in Canada was overwhelmingly an urban problem. Vancouver monopolized the majority of the hearings, given that it was by far the city with the largest number of drug users in the country.\textsuperscript{26} The Senate also


\textsuperscript{25} Mosher also examines a series of high-profile drug cases, arguing that they heightened public anxiety over the issue, and encouraged the Canadian government to address it at the federal level. Mosher, The Legal Response, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{26} In fact, according to Clayton Mosher, the Canadian Senate Committee was established in large part as a response to specific events that occurred on Canada’s west coast following the close of the war. In April and May of 1953, a large-scale drug bust took place, in which 31 suspects were apprehended in Vancouver for trafficking in drugs. Subsequently, the Vancouver police claimed that the city contained 1400 addicts, and the Vancouver Community Chest and city council set up a committee to solve the problem. The president of the committee, Dr. Wallace Wilson, sent a letter to the House of Commons outlining their recommendations, which included experimental treatment centers, education programs, and narcotics clinics that would dispense drugs to addicts. Over the
viewed drug use as a national problem, though, and studied the nature of illegal narcotics across the country.

Following closely on the heels of the Canadian Senate Committee, on June 2, 1955, US authorities similarly commenced a Senate investigation to determine the extent of the drug problem in the US and how to stem the tide of illegal drug consumption. Like their Canadian counterpart, the US committee also concentrated on urban centers across the country and held hearings in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York, Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland. The committee was chaired by Senator Daniel Price of Texas and consisted of five additional US Senators. As mentioned in the introduction, Senator Reid and Mr. Curran of the Canadian Senate Committee also joined the US Senators. Given the size of the US, and the estimated number of drug users across the country, the committee took considerably longer to conduct, lasting until November 25, 1955.27

In both Canada and the United States, the Senate committees purported to take a comprehensive approach to the drug problem, and the witnesses interviewed by both committees reflected similar goals on both sides of the border. In explaining their goals and intentions, the Canadian committee asserted that it would take as “comprehensive” an approach “as possible.” Accordingly, “the Committee decided to hear evidence on all the ramifications of the drug problem,” which would include not only experts from a variety of fields but also, “views of the
course of the early 1950s, concern over the rise in drug use, particularly among children, continued in Parliamentary debates, aided as well by the high profile the issues was attaining in the national media. Mosher, “The Legal Response,” pp. 69-71.
27 The length of the records of the Senate committees also gives some indication of the scale on which they took place. The Canadian committees final published report totaled 551 pages, while the US committee report totaled 4896 pages.
addicts and of society in general.” Similarly, the US Committee asserted that “the purpose of the investigation is to hear, as far as possible at our initial meetings, the extent and the concentration of the narcotic problem in the United States, with breakdowns by cities and States, and then to have a review from the Federal officials as to what is being done under present law to cope with the problem.” From there, the committee would branch out to specific locations, and hold one session particularly devoted to the medical implications of drug addiction. Thus both committees began with an attempt to elucidate the drug problem at the national and local levels, examine the types of laws currently in place, and interview a combination of expert and non-expert witnesses to help provide a comprehensive understanding of the many issues at hand. This “touching human-interest problem” needed to be addressed on several fronts, and the official policies of the senate committees purported that their members would do just that.

**Policemen, Doctors, and Deviant Addicts**

Despite their expansive goals and lofty rhetoric, however, a detailed reading of the senate committees reveals that they in fact fell far short of a comprehensive approach to the drug problem. While the senate committees interviewed a wide range of witnesses in an attempt to understand all aspects of the drug problem, their approach ultimately reinforced a prohibitionist ideology by treating legal and medical authorities as the foremost experts on the drug problem in their nations' cities. Not only were law enforcement officials and medical experts almost always the first witnesses interviewed in each city, they also made up the majority of witnesses across

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both committees.\textsuperscript{30} Since, as historian David Musto argues, law enforcers and the medical profession “have at least one objective in common—effective and knowledgeable control of deviant behavior,” their approaches to the drug problem often overlapped in important ways.\textsuperscript{31} Legal officers drew on the language of sickness in discussing their subjects, and the medical profession advocated treatment approaches that had punitive effects. Medical and legal authorities also created binary categories to define drug users and attempted to frame the problem in terms of villains and victims, with some users in need of help and others in need of punishment. By placing drug use within this binary moral framework the witnesses helped reinforce a line between licit and illicit forms of drug consumption. Doctors retained their control over the licit realm of drug administration while legal authorities continued to arrest and punish those who engaged in recreational drug use. In this way, their combined approach to the drug problem ultimately supported the states’ prohibitionist agendas designed to eliminate illegal drug use and its corrupting influences on North American citizens.

Over the course of their many testimonies in front of the senators, legal and medical witnesses proved their knowledge about drug addiction by providing statistical, quantitative, and seemingly objective data to support their arguments. Canadian and American Senators were borderline obsessed with numbers and statistics, collecting a wide range of data sets for the geographical areas under examination. This included, for example, the number of addicts in each city, the number of people arrested for drug-related offenses in a given time period, the number

\textsuperscript{30} For example, of the twenty-three witnesses interviewed by the Canadian Senate Committee in Vancouver, ten, or a full 43%, were made up of law enforcement officials. This was followed by physicians and psychiatrists, who represented about 30% of the witness list. The remainder was a miscellaneous group of provincial legislators, members of social organizations, clergy, and lay people. The breakdown for the U.S. Senate Committee was likewise centered around experts, with law enforcement officials making up over 63% percent of those interviewed in the opening hearing, and the remaining witnesses comprised of medical officers.

\textsuperscript{31} Musto, \textit{The American Disease}, p. 241.
of individuals who underwent treatment versus those who were considered cured, and the amount of money lost to the illegal economy in a given city. In fact, the collection of statistical information was one of the key goals of the committees, reflecting an increasing belief in empirical, quantitative analysis during this period and the notion that experts could provide unmediated knowledge on a particular subject.\(^\text{32}\) According to the first witness of the Canadian Senate Committee, Minister of National Health and Welfare Paul Martin, these proceedings were designed to be “sober, factual, and objective examinations” of the drug problem. The use of the word sober here is telling—the committees would collect their information in large part from authorities who had attained their knowledge of the drug problem through education, training, and professional experience rather than through actual drug use. In setting this goal, the committee members were clearly asserting that this was a problem that could be quantified by these professionals, and if quantified accurately, could also be cured with the proper ratio of punishment and treatment.

Members of law enforcement agencies at both local and national levels took up a large portion of the time before members of both committees and were called upon to testify on a wide range of issues related to illegal narcotics. Perhaps not surprisingly they were asked to provide data on arrest numbers, convictions, and jail sentences. Significantly, though, they were also expected to provide information that was not directly linked to their role as law enforcement officials—ranging from the social life of users prior to their involvement with illegal drugs to their lives after arrest, incarceration, or treatment—information that enforcement officials were not necessarily equipped to provide. Yet many officials were willing to provide this additional

\(^{32}\) Mona Gleason, “Psychology and the Construction of the Normal Family in Postwar Canada” *Canadian Historical Review*, 78, no. 3 (September 1997), pp. 446-447.
information when asked, and their responses tended to include anecdotal evidence that served a particular moralistic objective. For example, Senator Welker encouraged Harry Anslinger to provide testimony as to the effectiveness of “cold turkey” treatments for narcotics addictions. Though the Senator acknowledged that Anslinger was “not a medical man,” he still insisted that his long history of law enforcement work made him a foremost expert on drug-related issues. Despite his lack of medical training, “…thousands of Americans, all of us, would be interested in your recommendation—yes, your enlightenment for the American people—as to the treatment of drug addict.” In his response, rather than focusing on the medical reasons that the “cold turkey” approach worked, Anslinger emphasized the moral ones. He argued that forcing users to undergo this method made them less likely to seek out drugs in the first place—they would remember this terrible experience and in the future would choose to forgo taking the drug that had caused it. Though Anslinger had no actual medical evidence to support his opinion, he felt confident making such a claim because it fit within his broader objectives of curing an addict's drug habit through a means that would simultaneously punish them and work as a deterrent.33 For the head of the FBN, the goal was not only to rid the addict of their affliction, but also to punish them in the hopes that it would prevent a relapse in the future.

Some law enforcement officials were more reluctant to attempt to explain the causes behind drug use to any considerable degree, and in fact dismissed this information as incidental to their goals of regulating a criminal class of people. In his testimony in Vancouver, Commissioner Nicholson of the RCMP argued that “psychiatrists and sociologist may explain the fundamental reasons which led to the unhappy condition these people are in. From the

According to Nicholson, there was little reason to understand the causes behind one's decision to begin using drugs—they were first and foremost criminals who had a negative impact on the neighborhoods in which they lived. In his testimony he also asserted that law enforcement officials maintained a unique authority on drug-related issues since they interacted with users on a “day to day” basis, something medial and sociological experts were supposedly lacking. For officers like Nicholson, it was not necessary to understand what caused addiction—instead, they knew all they needed to know through their daily interactions with users. These were parasites who infected otherwise healthy neighborhoods and led to degraded conditions in inner cities across North America.

Medical and legal experts employed moralistic classifications of drug addicts, relying on binary notions of villain and victim in order to determine how to treat users. The distinction between trafficker and peddler, as discussed in the previous chapter, was partly made along the lines of the scale on which drug use took place and the profits one made. Yet these categories were also defined by moral readings of the intentions of the men and women who performed these roles. Officials viewed traffickers as morally corrupt because they sold drugs to make a profit. As a result virtually no witnesses showed any sympathy for traffickers or large-scale peddlers, who they viewed as the central villains in the struggle against narcotics addiction.35

34 Canada, Special Senate Committee, p. 28.
35 Significantly, scholars such as John Rublowsky link this inability to feel sympathy for the addict directly to prohibition policies that developed in the twentieth century. He argues that the image of the addict as “fiend,” or social degenerate, was rooted in the implementation of laws such as the Harrison Narcotics Act, which led to a “full scale propaganda war” against drugs, one perpetuated through “sensational news stories, books, lectures, magazine articles, and sermons on the evils of addiction…” See Rublowsky, The Stoned Age: A History of Drugs in America (New York: Capricorn Books, 1976), p. 134.
The testimony of Reverend Dr. J. Hobden of the John Howard Society—a Canadian organization that helped criminals readjust after incarceration—typified descriptions of traffickers on both sides of the border. He stated that the illicit traffic in Canada, “is a vicious criminal movement, promoted for personal and selfish gain, without any regard whatsoever for the bodies and souls of its victims. The chief promoters, who usually remain far enough in the background to avoid any evidence of actual unlawful distribution, are among the worst enemies of the State, and are foes of Law and Order and Decency. They deserve very little pity when apprehended for their wrong doing.”

Here Hobden uses moralistic rhetoric, asserting that these people were not only an affront to “Law and Order” but also “Decency,” which in this formulation was supposed to be upheld through law enforcement. He goes so far as to call traffickers “enemies of the State,” suggesting that through breaking social and legal codes they were undermining the very order and structure necessary for a well-functioning nation. These were cowards who hid in the background so as not to risk their personal freedom or their profits—instead, they had small-scale peddlers do their bidding. This perception encouraged many witnesses to view the trafficker as simply a criminal in need of punishment rather than as a victim in need of rehabilitation. As Nicholson of the RCMP explained, “I think [traffickers] are criminals and that is all there is to it, and they should be jailed as criminals.”

In contrast, many witnesses believed that addicts, though morally weak, could perhaps be cured and re-integrated back into normal society. In this formulation, users were framed as victims of the large-scale, nefarious traffickers. In his testimony before the US Senate Committee, the Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice

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36 Canada, Special Senate Committee, p. 209.
37 Canada, Special Senate Committee, p. 34.
described the difference between “vicious, despicable, big time racketeering violator[s],” and the “pitiful victim of the sordid business who has become ensnared by it.” Similarly, Nicholson of the RCMP asserted that, “While the addict as such may be deserving of sympathy and because his motivation is a drive of his addiction rather than the profit, he cannot be regarded as being in the same vicious class as those criminals who traffic solely for money.” In this instance, the head of the RCMP was making a clear distinction between people who used drugs because of a physical addiction and people who sold drugs purely for profit. Though both were considered morally corrupt, it was on a different scale. Tellingly, Nicholson further argued that “the addict…forfeit[s] much of this sympathy when he becomes involved in distribution.” In this way, he could feel some sympathy for individuals who broke the law in order to satisfy a physical addiction; as soon as they started selling, even if only to pay for their own habit, they gave up their status as victim and instead joined the ranks of the “vicious class.”

Indeed, the line between villain and victim was often blurred by addicts who turned to selling in order to support their own habits. In these cases, officials worked hard to reinforce the notion that any sympathy for these individuals was dangerous and misguided. The head of the National Health and Welfare Department in Canada struggled with how to apply these strict moral categories to men and women who participated in the illegal narcotics market and warned the senators that these lines needed to be clearly enforced in order to properly deal with the drug problem. As he explained, “the victim of the peddler is often looked upon with a degree of sympathy and compassion, but this cannot always be reconciled with his alternative role of

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39 Canada, Special Senate Committee, p. 24.
peddler, to say nothing of his usual criminal record or background.” For Martin, addicts might seem like they deserved sympathy and help, but a closer look showed that they were in fact themselves often people with long criminal records. Similarly, Anslinger, in his testimony before the US Senate Committee, warned the Senators against feeling much sympathy for addicts, particularly those who were arrested for selling drugs. He asserted that judges were often swayed by the plight of individuals before them, and saw them as “poor drug addicts.” He warned the senators to not be taken by this misplaced sympathy, because given the chance the addict would peddle a “capsule or he will peddle a kilo or a thousand ounces or a ton if he can.” For Anslinger, whether one was a user, peddler, or trafficker mattered little—all had to be taken off the street because they all participated in what he perceived as an immoral, illegal, and socially-devastating economy. In the long run, for officials like Anslinger and Martin, sympathy was misguided and ultimately harmed both the individual user and the society in which they lived.

The language used to distinguish between traffickers and peddlers took distinctly racialized tones in the US, since white ethnic dealers tended to operate at the top of the drug market and African Americans and Latinos tended to work at the lowest, least profitable, levels of the trade. Though members of transnational syndicates were considered the most morally depraved because they made money off of other people's habits, they were also viewed as sophisticated and cunning criminals. Their ability to capitalize on the transnational drug market, while incredibly dangerous, also suggested that they were highly organized and intelligent individuals who used creative means to skirt federal enforcement authorities and smuggle goods across the border. As one District Attorney explained, “They are professional criminals. They

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40 Canada, Special Senate Committee, p. 5.
41 US, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, pp. 40.
have lots of money. They have powerful allies. They have expert knowledge as to how to evade the law and to escape detection.” They likewise are never addicts themselves and rarely handle the drugs. Instead they have scores of henchmen who carry out their bidding. Thus while enforcement authorities viewed them as the most dangerous elements of the drug trade they also simultaneously provided these criminals with some degree of agency. They were in many ways the white-ethnic elite of the criminal world whose intelligence, expert knowledge, and power enabled them to rise to the top of the illicit market.

In contrast, small-scale peddlers were lowly, degraded citizens whose weak wills left them susceptible to a life of addiction and crime. In this way, though the problem of smugglers was a transnational problem, the issue of users and small-scale peddlers became a distinctly racialized American problem. The drug addict-turned-small-time dealer, someone increasingly associated with black communities—with “the Negro sections of the city”—were denied the modicum of entrepreneurial respect that even the most vicious of traffickers received. Instead, they were constantly referred to in feminized language that removed any power or agency from these individuals. The small-scale dealer and the local dope addict was the “carrier; he is the individual who spreads this insidious death known as narcotic-drug addiction,” and he did so within his own communities and among his peers. In this way, the poorest drug addicts were likewise viewed as the weakest members of society who would even go so far as to infect their own neighborhoods with this deadly habit.

The feminization of the addict (and the correlating masculine nature of the large-scale trafficker) was reinforced by the image of the drug-addicted prostitute who literally would sell

42 US, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, pp. 718.
43 US, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, pp. 783.
44 US, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, pp. 548.
anything she had in order to get her fix. Indeed, medical and legal authorities believed that drug use and prostitution were mutually-reinforcing activities. Women often turned to prostitution in order to pay for their drugs, but prostitution often also encouraged women to begin using drugs in order to cope with the requirements of their profession. In this way causal explanations for deviant behavior among young women living in urban centers were often interchangeable. Further, if addicts brought disease into a community through their addictions, this was doubly true for addicted prostitutes who likewise spread “social diseases” within inner city neighborhoods. As slaves to their addiction, both users and prostitutes were perceived as weak individuals who led to the moral decay of their neighborhoods. Throughout the senate committees, this was constantly framed as a problem of inner-city life, one that encouraged people to destroy their social ties and physical health in pursuit of fleeting physical pleasures. Since American cities were increasingly home to African American and Latino communities, this image of the weak individual who was a slave to their drug habit also took on explicitly racialized overtones.

The belief that drug users and sellers were participants in a dangerous economy that could spread like a disease throughout the nations’ cities led the overwhelming majority of witnesses to advocate for the suppression of both cross-border trafficking and domestic use through the implementation of harsh and punitive measures. Law enforcement officials drew on the language of sickness in order to describe addiction and argued that since it was a self-induced disease, the person needed to be punished. For example, in his testimony before the US Senate Committee, Judge W. McKay Skillman of the Detroit Recorder’s Court insisted that drug addiction was “like

45 US, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, pp. 815.
In his exchange with Senator Daniel, Skillman again emphasized that this was a sickness that did not deserve sympathy. Daniel explained that he did not “…like to look on addicts as sick people alone. They are not only sick because of something that they have done to themselves, but most every one of them either were in crime to start with, or at least are continuing and violating the law to keep up their habit.” Skillman replied, “Oh yes; we can waste a lot of sympathy on people who probably don’t deserve much sympathy…they are a menace to society and should be dealt with. And if they don’t want to voluntarily take the cure, they ought to be compelled to do so.” Skillman then suggested that a State or Federal hospital was the right place to do so, but if this was not feasible, perhaps they should be sent to a “farm colony, home or something to keep them in, so they will not get back and spread the addiction to society.” After all, he concluded, “we quarantine people for other diseases, I don’t know why we shouldn’t quarantine people for this disease.”

This blending of medical and legal understandings of drug use happened throughout both senate committees and demonstrates the increasingly blurred line between the two discourses. Many witnesses believed that punishment could actually work as a form of treatment and that the state needed to exert a high degree of control over users in order to facilitate their transition from criminals into productive citizens. According to McClellan of the RCMP, if addicts were to be rehabilitated they needed to be placed “under conditions of complete control.” In order to achieve this, he recommended removing addicts from their community, placing them in isolation, and keeping “him under” the “thumb” of the state, since “any attempt to rehabilitate or treat the addict under the squalid conditions in which he lives is doomed to failure.” Melville Anthony,

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48 Canada, Special Senate Committee, pp. 317, 322-2.
Chief Constable of the city of Edmonton, similarly blamed addicts for their state of addiction and argued that they had to be removed from city streets. He recommended that they be held financially responsible for their own treatment and argued that “the greater percentage of addicts become addicted through their own mental weakness, and if they can be cured, they should in some manner be required to pay for their cure.” Anthony also asserted that once released from treatment facilities, addicts should be further monitored through a work program in which they would earn credit money that parole officers would hold onto and distribute to them when necessary.49 When asked if addicts should be isolated on an island until cured, a suggestion that came up in several previous testimonies, he argued that it was one possible approach because, “if we are going to try to help these people we have to be ruthless about it.”50 The Chief Constable of Toronto further advocated whipping for traffickers, and Senator Hodges went so far as to suggest large-scale traffickers be hanged, “but apparently it was not thought to be practicable.”51

The testimony of law enforcement officials and medical professionals demonstrates how even supposedly treatment-based approaches were in fact used in punitive ways. Addicts were victims of their mental or moral weaknesses, and as such, were a menace to other community members. Isolation on an island was not considered too harsh—they had in fact forfeited their right to remain within the broader society through their participation in the illegal narcotics market. These testimonies also demonstrates that officials feared that addicts could never be cured, could never be fully trusted, and needed to be regulated even after their release from

49 Canada, Special Senate Committee, p. 284.
50 Canada, Special Senate Committee, p. 295.
51 Canada, Special Senate Committee, pp. 328, 296. Senator Daniel of the US Senate Committee expressed similar sentiments, citing an article by an Ontario doctor, which argued that a shot of dope is murder just as a shot from a gun. Therefore, according to Daniels, “those who deal in dope...should be punished the same as murderers and kidnappers.” See US, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, p. 3559.
treatment and correctional institutions. Further, though legal authorities often suggested some form of treatment for addicts, this treatment was often intended to also serve a punitive function, and treatment facilities could serve as alternative places of incarceration for offenders. This would achieve the goal of getting users off the streets, out of the local communities, and away from other members of society. For the larger traffickers, corporeal and capital punishment was not considered too harsh by Canadian officials. In this way, medical and legal officials maintained the prohibition approach to illegal drug use, suggested increasingly harsh penalties, and used treatment methods as another tool to punish users and addicts for immoral behavior.

Though experts tended to refer to both drug addicts and sellers as men throughout their testimonies, witnesses expressed particular concern over women who used drugs. Legal and medical authorities alike assumed that female addicts violated multiple social codes, not only consuming illegal, pleasurable substances but also likely engaging in illicit forms of sexual activity in order to pay for them. In discussions about how to treat female addicts, it becomes clear that legal and medical experts believed that they were dealing with many interrelated problems that needed to be addressed, including sexual abnormalities and other deviations from respectable womanhood. While treatment facilities were recommended for men, some witnesses thought that women should be housed in home-type foster care. As one witness explained, “Because of their previous immoral habits it seems undesirable that women should be living fifteen to twenty in one house as was recommended for the men.” Their feminine natures meant they would be much better suited to foster care facilities where an authority figure could keep a close watch over them. Their assumed sexual transgressions left officials concerned that if
housed in one large room, their immoral tendencies might spread to the rest of the women.\textsuperscript{52} This notion invokes contemporary perceptions that delinquent women were susceptible to both sexual promiscuity and lesbianism, and housing them together in large numbers would enable these behaviors.\textsuperscript{53} In this way, their deviant personalities—as indicated by their drug addiction and prostitution—could snowball into multiple social transgressions if not treated with the utmost care and by the proper authorities.

Despite their stated intentions of finding complex solutions to this public health problem, the senate committees ultimately ended up reinforcing a prohibitionist framework that relied on punitive measures to fight addiction. Men and women who chose to use drugs were presented as weak individuals who fore-fitted their right to remain in the wider society by their choice to engage in illegal drug use. Medical and legal officials argued that quarantining drug addicts and separating them from decent citizens was key to stopping addiction. After all, this was a sickness that spread across communities much the way a communicable disease would. Punishment and treatment approaches, then, often worked hand in hand. Law enforcement drew on notions of sickness, and medical experts increasingly promoted correctional treatment methods, such as forced institutionalization. The measures became increasingly punitive for traffickers, who were the ultimate villains in the moral crusade to rid the countries of drug addiction. The victims, however, were likewise often vilified as weakened individuals whose failure to function as a productive citizen meant they needed to be subjected to close regulation by the state. In this way

\textsuperscript{52} Canada, \textit{Special Senate Committee}, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{53} Estelle B. Freedman argues that the image of the homosexual inmate gained new prominence in the postwar era. Some contemporaries argued that lesbianism was a substitute for heterosexual relations outside the prison walls and the relative tolerance of lesbianism in prisons in the early-twentieth century gave way to surveillance and increasing condemnation in the postwar period. The committees emphasis on home-style reforms for women also reaffirmed the postwar belief that female sexuality was potentially dangerous and needed to be contained. Freedman, “The Prison Lesbian: Race, Class, and the Construction of the aggressive Female Homosexual, 1915-1965,” \textit{Feminist Studies} vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer 1996), pp. 404-405.
the legal and medical authorities both perpetuated a moral agenda that served to keep the power out of the hands of actual drug users, and maintain it firmly within the realm of the states and the authorities that carried out their prohibition policies.

**Powders, Pills, and the Porous Border**

Since anti-drug authorities viewed traffickers as the central villains behind the drug problem, the senate committees entertained detailed discussion about how to regulate and suppress the importation of these substances into North America. As a result, throughout both senate committees the problem of drug addiction was directly linked to the problem of enforcement along their national borders. Witness testimonies reinforced the notion that the drug economy was necessarily a transnational one, where both goods and people flowed across cities, states, provinces, and nations, with varying degrees of mobility. The committees also indicate that Canada and the US both adopted stringent enforcement methods when trying to combat international drug smuggling. This enforcement approach took place within a Cold War internationalist framework, wherein countries like “Red China” garnered much attention as a source of illegal heroin. The Senators in both Canada and the United States had a clear sense that they were not simply addressing a domestic problem but also a global one.

The transnational nature of the drug trade also brought increasing interest in the Canada-US border and the relationship between the two nations. Canadian and American authorities were in close contact with one another, and witnesses before the committees demonstrate the importance both sides placed in these cross-border interactions. Though the working relationship between the two countries remained quite strong, there were points of contention due to differing national interests and the fact that each country was situated differently within this global illicit
economy. From the Canadian perspective, the US remained the primary supplier of heroin and other illegal narcotics during this period. In the US, they were more concerned with their major sea ports, such as New York City, and the Mexico border. Thus, the position of enforcement and customs agents differed on both sides of the border according to both local conditions and global developments in the illegal economy.

Towards this end, this 'friendly' relationship between Canada and the US was not always easy to maintain. In part, the Canadian side viewed their close proximity to the American border as one of the key reasons it faced issues of illegal narcotics. An attention to the ways in which interviewees discussed the border highlights this tension between remaining close trade allies and stopping the flow of drugs between them, for stopping the flow of illegal goods could have negative effects on legal commodities and tourists central to the borderlands economies. As such, authorities walked a fine line in attempting to control illegal commodities without negatively impacting the important economic, social, and diplomatic ties between the two countries, particularly in borderlands like the Detroit-Windsor region.

Throughout the senate committees drug use was viewed as more than simply a domestic problem, and in order to combat the growing number of users in both countries Canadian and American officials worked to understand the transnational nature of the trade. They heard testimonies from a wide variety of individuals about where heroin was being produced, how it was imported, and who was in charge of these activities. Officials provided evidence that heroin was produced externally in Mexico, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and China, and trafficked through various trade routes, usually through European countries like France and Italy,
or Asian trade routes based in Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{54} There was some evidence that the main sources of heroin had shifted from the Middle East in the early postwar period, to mainland China by the mid-1950s, in part the result of the opening of trade routes following the war. In the case of marijuana, American officials asserted that most supplies originated in Mexico and were smuggled across the border, and occasionally, up to Canada.\textsuperscript{55} The committees certainly acknowledge the role of organized crime in these networks, but unlike the Kefauver Committee of 1950, they were not particularly interested in the internal workings of crime syndicates.\textsuperscript{56} Instead, they mainly sought to understand where the drugs were coming from and how they were smuggled into the United States and Canada on such a large scale.

Some witnesses argued that these global networks had important political implications within a Cold War framework, linking them directly to the global struggle between Communist and 'free' nations. China was of particular concern in the discussions of global drug trafficking, and heroin was sometimes discussed as a tool utilized by communists against the West. The link between dangerous outside influences and drug enforcement was explicitly made in the Hale Boggs Act of 1951, which first declared mandatory minimum sentences for narcotics offenders. As Musto argues, this act was passed within the context of the early McCarthy era, growing fears of Soviet aggression, and the rise of Communist China, creating a clear link between domestic drug policies and perceived threats of communist influence.\textsuperscript{57} Four years later, testimonies before the Senate committees reinforced the link between the use of illegal substances and communist subversion, framing the problem as one of both international communist influence and domestic

\textsuperscript{54} Canada, \textit{Special Senate Committee}, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{55} US, \textit{Illicit Narcotics Traffic}, 4492.
\textsuperscript{57} Musto, \textit{The American Disease}, p. 231.
infiltration. For example, in his testimony before the US committee the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Frank Berry M.D., articulated the fear that Chinese officials were “purposefully encouraging the sending of these drugs to members of the armed services of our country and of the other free nations, and to the people of the free nations to try to demoralize them, and also to try to make money for Communist China.”\textsuperscript{58} According to Berry, the US had “sworn statements from Communists that they were directed to sell this material to finance their own party organization,” thus supporting the notion that Communist leaders were making money off of 'demoralizing' American soldiers and citizens.

American and Canadian officials were likewise concerned that heroin from Communist China was being imported into North America and having a devastating effect on its inner cities. In his testimony before the US Senate Committee, Anslinger stated that the heroin coming from the “Far East” was much stronger than the heroin that entered the US through New York ports. This was leading, according to his testimony, to instances of overdoses in California because users were not used to the high doses found in heroin imported from Asia. As he explained, “addicts, being accustomed” to New York levels of heroin, “might by chance buy some of this heroin from Communist China, and that is the end of him.” When asked if this could also lead to a “quick death” for a user in New York who got a hold of heroin from Communist China, Anslinger replied that it had in fact already happened.\textsuperscript{59} According the head of the Bureau of Narcotics, the spread of deadly heroin from China was not only a problem for soldiers living abroad or individuals living on the West Coast, but because of the fluid nature of drug networks and the devious intention of communists, it had already spread across the country.

\textsuperscript{58} US, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, p. 205.
\textsuperscript{59} US, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, p. 43.
The notion that communist countries were supplying Western addicts with strong heroin worked well with the villain/victim binary, and extended its implications from urban centers to the international level. If drugs were purposefully coming from countries like China, it was easier to view domestic users in sympathetic terms and to frame the fight against drug addiction within a Cold War moral framework that had clear ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys.’ Just as traffickers and addicts were viewed as violating moral codes at different levels, the notion that drug importers were from outside Canada and the US, and worse, from communist nations enabled this moral and simplistic interpretation of exporting and importing nations. Kyle Grason argues that in fact the process of state-making itself relies on the identities of 'self' and 'other,' wherein the state attempts to fix the boundaries around which protective barriers must be built in order to thwart the intrusion of Otherness. In identifying countries like China as primary producers and exporters of deadly heroin, these notions were also “presented as self-evident categorizations to a targeted audience that share[d] similar ontological norms.”60 For drug enforcement authorities and diplomats, this was a problem of both foreignness and policy. If it was indeed official Chinese policy to subvert North American nations by willfully addicting their soldiers and civilians, this necessarily reinforced the foreignness of the threat. By pinning the importation of heroin on Communist China, American and Canadian authorities were framing the drug problem as an international one, linked to the problem of porous borders and the precarious place of free states within a global, Cold War context.

Linking the US heroin problem to Chinese Communists also drew on a long history of racialized perceptions of drug users and traffickers as immoral outsiders who threatened the

health and welfare of North American cities. The association between Chinese immigrants and
opium that developed in the mid-nineteenth century had ingrained the conception that the
Chinese represented a distinctly demoralizing race that would ultimately devastate North
America. What linked turn-of-the-century discussions about Chinese opiate use and perceptions
of Communist subversion from abroad was the notion that importing this potent substance was in
fact an act of imperial aggression that ultimately would lead to deteriorated North American
cities. The growth of Chinatowns in the late-nineteenth century seemed to embody this threat,
and Americans and Canadians pointed to these neighborhoods as dangerous spaces that spread
sin, disease, and other debilitating problems in urban centers. In the postwar years, the imperial
aspirations of the Chinese were much more covert. Rather than sending hordes of migrants, the
Communists chose instead to send dangerous and deadly forms of heroin. The racialized image
of the cunning Chinaman thus re-emerged in anti-drug narratives, and the villain became
explicitly racialized as an overt and dangerous threat from evil Asian communists.

With this emphasis on the transnational nature of the drug trade and the potential threat
posed by external producers of the heroin, it is not surprising that the national border was of
particular interest to the senators of both committees. They were especially concerned with the
actual process of smuggling and how criminals could get this material out of the country of

61 Gina Marchetti, Romance and the “Yellow Peril”: Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction
62 As Christina Klein argues, during the postwar period the US and Soviets both argued that the other was engaging
in an imperial war against the decolonizing world. In this context, the US invoked the issue of Chinese
infiltration by asserting that the imperial project was central to the Communist agenda. Of course the US
likewise had to try to counter notions that it was also engaging in an imperial struggle. It was left particularly
vulnerable to claims that racial prejudice against African Americans represented an internal form of imperialism,
one that the US sought to enact against people of color abroad. Klein, Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the
origin and into North American markets. According to W. H. Mulligan, chief constable of
Vancouver, traffickers created crafty and effective ways to smuggle drugs across both land and
sea borders. He explained that the heroin that arrived in Vancouver was brought into eastern
Canadian cities from the US, and smuggled by “automobiles, trains, planes, and by mail.”
Further, he asserted that “there are numerous ways, depending on the ingenuity of the distributor.
Drugs are often sent through the mail in small parcels, in a talcum powder tin, or hidden in other
types of cosmetics; it may be in rubber containers in the gas tank of a car; it may be secreted in
the false bottom of a suitcase or other type of baggage.”

Similarly, Commissioner Nicholson of the RCMP explained that the general flow of narcotics was from the United States into Canada, and that traffickers were adept at smuggling large quantities of heroin across the border. He brought several exhibits for the senators, including a one kilo tin can, a religious book with the inside cut out, a Chinese magazine cut out, a shoe with a hollow heel, and a vest with secret pockets for concealing drugs. His goal was to explain to the committee just how easy it was to smuggle in large quantities of heroin, enough to net the trafficker anywhere from $19,000 to $28,000 in one run.

Significantly, his choice of a religious book and a Chinese magazine are telling—they reinforced both the immoral nature of the drug trade and the racialized images of Chinese Communists attempting to harm Canadian nationals. Further, all of these products could easily be smuggled in automobiles, the primary mode of cross-country transportation. Interestingly, this fear that smugglers were using everyday goods and forms of transportation to move drugs into and across Canada encouraged the Canadian Senate Committee to ultimately recommend that individuals convicted of a drug offense should have their license suspended as a

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64 Canada, *Special Senate Committee*, p. 63.
65 Canada, *Special Senate Committee*, pp. 22-23.
way of hindering the movement of users.\textsuperscript{66} Officials were becoming increasingly concerned that mobility enabled widespread smuggling across and within the countries.

The United States was less concerned with the Canada-US border since, from their perspective, drugs tended to flow outward rather than in; instead much of their focus was on New York, San Francisco, and the Mexico-US border.\textsuperscript{67} Yet the US Senate Committee was also interested in understanding the process of smuggling and did recognize that at times drugs were smuggled from Canada into the US. In fact, there was a direct relationship between policing efforts at the major sea ports, and the drug trade across the land borders: the ability of Customs officials to successfully police places like New York and San Francisco meant that the Canadian border became a more common site of importation for traffickers. As one customs officer testified, when enforcement officials cracked down on smuggling at major seaports, the “time honored tradition of trunk smuggling from Canada and Mexico” increased.\textsuperscript{68} Enforcement officials working along the border also noticed this trend. For example, in his interview before the Detroit session of the Senate Committee, when asked how to curb the drug problem in Detroit, Commissioner Piggins argued that one important way would be to strengthen the role of the Federal Government, particularly the Customs Department, so they could “stop the importation at the port of entry.”\textsuperscript{69} While Piggins’s testimony focused mainly on the use of drugs within the city limits of Detroit, it is likely that as the Commissioner of a border city he was

\textsuperscript{66} Canada, \textit{Special Senate Committee}, p. xix.
\textsuperscript{67} The US focus on the Mexico-US border is clear in their choices of where to hold the hearings. Five of thirteen cities visited were located in Texas, while Detroit was the only city visited along the Canada-US border. It is also likely that the focus on Texas and the southern border reflected the fact that the chairman of the committee was a Senator from that state.
\textsuperscript{68} US, \textit{Illicit Narcotics Traffic}, p. 802.
\textsuperscript{69} US, \textit{Illicit Narcotics Traffic}, p. 4483.
acutely aware of the porous nature of the border with Canada and consequently viewed increased Customs enforcement as one important way to curb trafficking within Detroit.

The ease with which people could smuggle drugs across the Canada-US border raised the question of how the border itself was being enforced and how Canadian and American enforcement officials interacted in order to prevent it. Several customs officials were interviewed by the committees and their testimonies demonstrate the great importance they put on cross-border cooperation between officials working in multiple capacities. For example, the Commissioner of Customs for the U.S. explained that he had officers regularly stationed in Canada who worked closely with Canadian officials in order to reduce illegal smuggling. While these officers did not focus exclusively on narcotics, they did work closely with Canadian customs officials on drug issues whenever necessary. 70 Similarly, the RCMP had a liaison officer stationed in Washington D.C. who regularly met with “all enforcement agencies in the United States,” including frequent meetings with the “Bureau of Narcotics on joint problems.” 71 By maintaining these official contacts in the neighboring country, both were able to keep lines of communication open, which helped them keep on top of the cross-border illegal trade.

Enforcement officials cited numerous examples of specific cases where this cross-border interaction facilitated drug-related busts and arrests. Since the mobility of drug traffickers meant they often crossed multiple jurisdictions over the course of their trade route, it was crucial to have the municipal, state, provincial, and federal levels in conversation with one another. Several witnesses provided examples of how this could be successfully performed. For example, when a man by the name of Mallock, who was wanted by Canadian authorities for three years on drug-

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70 US, Illicit Narcotics Traffic, p. 129.
related offenses, jumped the Canadian border and headed for Mexico, American authorities helped to track and arrest him. This man, who was described as a “very bad egg,” was eventually tracked to Mexico City, detained, returned to Canada, and sentenced to 27.5 years in prison. His brother John was not so lucky and was killed by the Mexican authorities while trying to escape.  

Traffickers like Mallock attempted to elude arrest by crossing national borders, and therefore enforcement officials had to be in contact with one another in order to prevent their escape. Similarly, the case of Lee Won Sing demonstrates the way the border operated as a means of surveillance and regulation, and when working as intended, could filter out individuals who sought to smuggle illegal drugs across. Sing, while on bail for charges laid in Washington D.C., attempted to smuggle Chinese merchandise from Windsor through the Detroit border. When he was searched, customs officials found a stick of opium on him and contacted the police in D.C. Sing consequently faced not only the original charges for which he was on bail, but also attempted trafficking. In his decision to smuggle goods from Windsor to Detroit, then, Sing took a chance that he would not be discovered by authorities—an unfortunate miscalculation it turns out.  

In this way the border could act as a filter, adding an additional layer of enforcement against men and women who attempted to move contraband. In order for the border to work properly, officials at multiple levels and locations needed to be in contact with one another, as users and sellers moved from one jurisdiction to the next.

Over and over throughout the committees, witnesses testified about the close working relationship between the two countries, suggesting they viewed their drug problems in similar ways and adopted similar solutions. In Anslinger’s testimony before the US Senate Committee,

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he asserted that the situation between the two countries was “parallel,” with both countries seeing a decline in heroin use during World War II, then a rapid increase with the close of the war.\(^{74}\) He further explained the problems the US had with enforcement along the Mexico border, and suggested that they should seek to mirror the close relationship fostered at the Canada-US border with their southern neighbor.\(^{75}\) Over and over, Canadian and American officials praised the ability of the two countries to work together to fight this menace. For example, in his description of the various agencies involved in enforcing narcotics legislation in Canada, the head of the RCMP claimed that he “would be discourteous if I did not mention as well the close link we have with the US Bureau of Narcotics and the great help we get from that agency. We get the very best type of help from that Bureau.”\(^{76}\) Similarly, McClellan of the RCMP asserted that “the R.C.M. Police have been most fortunate in the quality of the co-operation which we receive from the United States Bureau of Narcotics, and in particular, the Agents of that Bureau at the border points” of Southern Ontario.\(^{77}\) There was a common recognition on both sides that if this transnational trade was to be eliminated, it required close cross-border cooperation.

Yet the large numbers of users in both countries clearly suggests that the enforcement of the border was often unsuccessful, and policing the border was a very complicated process. Further, Canada and the US held different positions within the global illicit economy, which had important implications for how enforcement officers perceived of the border. Significantly, though witnesses before the US committee discussed the enforcement relationship between the two countries and provided some examples of the cross-border implications of the drug trade,

\(^{76}\) Canada, *Special Senate Committee*, p. 21.
\(^{77}\) Canada, *Special Senate Committee*, p. 314.
they did not frame the problem as a problem of ‘borderlands,’ but rather one of transnational networks always on the move. Even the witnesses from border cities like Detroit failed to engage in great detail with the city's location on the national border—they mentioned the need for increased customs agents but failed to discuss the broader implications of its position along the border. This was likely done, in part, because drugs more often than not moved from Detroit into Ontario. But it also suggests the uneven experiences of borderlands, and the uneven relationship between the United States and Canada. Detroit officials seemed to find it sufficient to focus internally and to look to larger US metropolises like Chicago, New York, and Cleveland as the source of supply. They were less interested in assessing how the city’s location on the national border also facilitated the flow of drugs outward and into Ontario.

This was not the case in interviews with officials from southern Ontario, who were extremely aware of the border and the region’s position as a borderland. In fact, in his testimony before the Canadian Senate Committee session held in Toronto, McClellan of the RCMP explained in great detail the tensions between attempting to eliminate illegal smuggling without hindering formal economies, trade routes, tourism, and cross-border commuters. In fact, from his initial description of the region, McClellan stressed its close proximity to the US border, and the constant traffic across it. He described southern Ontario as “a densely populated area containing one-quarter of the [country’s] population. In addition there is a very long frontier for at least one thousand miles separated from the United States, for the most part, by the Great Lakes System but coming into contact with the United States as a number of points of dense population and heavy industrialization.” He further emphasized that while Toronto had the largest population in the region, cities like Windsor and Hamilton were within a close proximity to booming US cities.
like Detroit and Buffalo. For the RCMP in Ontario, this proximity to major US cities, and the long border between the countries, was the central enforcement problem. He explained that “there is a heavy flow of international traffic in both directions, by rail, air, and automobile. This is a very free flow of traffic in accordance with the mutual trust and understanding between the two countries…[This] poses many problems for both Canadian and US Immigration and Customs Officials…”78 McClellan explained that it would be completely impossible “to establish any rigid system of checking traffic without completely tying up the free movement of people and goods essential to our international commerce and tourist trade.” A study of “the Ambassador Bridge and the Tunnel between Windsor and Detroit…would quickly indicate that any attempt to make a thorough Customs search of each vehicle would result in a complete tie-up for miles on both sides of the Border.” At the time of his interview, Windsor was able to accommodate 1,000 cars per hour, and any slowing of this would be detrimental to the formal economy. For McClellan, this heavy traffic, combined with the fact that “most affluent elements of the criminal underworld on the United States side reside in areas easily accessible to the Ontario and Quebec borders,” made smuggling relatively easy for traffickers, and made regulation extremely difficult for enforcement officials.79

The differing national interests, and the divergent experiences and perceptions of the border, could sometimes challenge the diplomatic relationship between the two countries, further jeopardizing efforts to curb smuggling between Canada and the US. These tensions, though not necessarily expressed in public forums such as the Senate Committees, nonetheless had an impact on enforcement and can tell us much about the varied interpretations of the borderland.

78 Canada, Special Senate Committee, 313.
79 Canada, Special Senate Committee, p. 312.
When the US Senate conducted the Kefauver Report on vice and organized crime in 1950, in many ways a precursor to the 1956 committee, it subsequently led to a diplomatic rift between US and Canadian. Private correspondence between the Premier of Ontario, Leslie M. Frost K.C., and US Senator Estes Kefauver, demonstrate the precarious relationship that could develop between Canadian and American officials working to eliminate cross-border vice. In 1950, Detroit and Windsor became the source of tension between these two officials when the US Senate Crime Investigating Committee undertook investigations of gambling rings and other vice rackets within the region. The tension began with an article published in the *Globe and Mail* on November 23, 1950, entitled “Windsor Wire Service: Predict US Senate Will Rap Ontario.” In the article, the author claimed that the US Senate Committee was “investigating the big-time gambling link between Windsor and Detroit.” This had broader implications on vice industries in the region, since “the same people who are involved in the gambling rackets are mixed up with narcotics and prostitution…” According to the article, “speculation by police officials here is that the Ontario Provincial Government will receive a severe condemnation by the US Senate,” and would be expected to take strong action to “clean up Windsor.”

Essentially the article was predicting a public denunciation of Ontario responses to illegal vice activities and suggested that the US Senate would take a strong-armed approach to dealing with their Canadian neighbors.

The personal letters of Premier Frost reveal that he considered this to be a diplomatic affront and he quickly contacted Kefauver in order to prevent a public lashing by the US Senate Committee. Frost took this one step further, though, and used it as an opportunity to suggest that it was in fact US authorities who had failed to do their duty to prevent cross-border vice and smuggling. In a letter sent to Kefauver on November 23rd, 1950, Frost defended the work of

Canadian agents, blasted the lack of cooperation he felt he received from US officials, and suggested further meetings between Canadian and American police forces in order to deal with the problem. After providing a detailed account of the approach taken by Ontario officials over the last couple of years, which involved authorities at the municipal, provincial and federal levels, Frost asserted that “the problem is international in nature…May I draw your attention to the fact that the problems in regard to gambling and vice which we have in the Province of Ontario have their origin in the United States in nearly all cases. Our Forces here cannot effectively deal with the problem without the cooperation of the United States law enforcement agencies.” According to the Premier, if the Detroit side would give Windsor Police as much cooperation as the OPP gave their American counterparts, the problem of vice in Windsor, which was “difficult if not impossible to cope with,” would be very much improved. Frost closed his letter by inviting Kefauver to visit the Canadian side of the border next time he was in the area, since it would “be a pleasure to meet him,” and “to know we would get some real action.”

In his response to Frost on December 7, 1950, Kefauver seemed mildly annoyed by these accusations, but mainly in agreement that there needed to be increased cooperation between authorities on both sides of the border. Kefauver assured the Premier that “any prediction that the United States Senate or this Committee will ‘rap’ the province of Ontario or its officials is, of course, erroneous. I assure you that the Committee has no intention of any such breach of diplomatic propriety.” He also explained that the crime conditions in the US were “sufficiently distressing as to make it entirely unnecessary to look outside the boundaries of this country for more trouble...On the other hand,” the Senator responded, “I agree with you that the fact is that

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the patterns of gambling and other crime in the Detroit-Windsor area undoubtedly cross the international boundary, and in order to deal effectively with the problem law enforcement officers of each country must cooperative intimately with their counterpart officers in the other country.” Kefauver noted that he was “distressed” at the accusation that US authorities were not being as cooperative as necessary, and assured Frost that the Committee would give special attention to this in their Detroit investigation. He then declined the invitation to visit Toronto, due to time constraints, and invited Windsor authorities to cross the border when the committee came to Detroit in order to provide their perspective. Kefauver and Frost continued a few short correspondences after this exchange, and the matter then disappears from Frost’s collected letters altogether.82

Though nothing serious came of this exchange—there was no condemnation published by the US Senate Committee, and Frost and Kefauver ended their correspondence on civil terms—it does provide some insight into the daily operations of the Detroit-Windsor border and its meanings within broader national debates. For cities like Detroit, their position along the border did not necessarily frame how they were viewed by the Kefauver Committee, and a few years later, by the US Senate Committee on Illegal Narcotics. For Frost and other Canadian officials, they were particularly concerned with US influences and crime crossing into their border cities; for American officials, they concentrated on the urban nature of vice economies and its impact on the American nation itself. Though Canadian and US authorities shared similar goals, and both recognized the importance of effectively policing the national border between them, each side prioritized this differently. Authorities in the booming metropolis of Detroit were often

internal-looking, and primarily concerned with the drug problem within its urban borders. In contrast, Windsor and other Ontario cities placed much emphasis on their proximity to and relationship with their American neighbors, and officials were deeply aware of the region's position as a borderland. Despite attempts to reach across the border, and to fight crime and vice through a cooperative effort, these efforts were always uneven and framed differently depending on the side of the border one was on.

**Conclusion**

Ultimately the recommendations offered by both Canadian and American officials reflected the committees’ dedication to a prohibitionist ideology, one that defined illegal narcotic use as immoral and drug users themselves as undesirable citizens. Both committees recommended increased policing, harsher sentences, and other punitive measures, such as aggressive enforcement of drug-related crimes like theft and prostitution, in order to eliminate drug addiction. The recommendations of the US committee were implemented the year following their publication, in the Narcotic Control Act of 1956, which raised the minimum sentence on some drug offenses to five years and allowed a jury to impose the death penalty on anyone over the age of eighteen who was convicted of trafficking heroin to minors. Likewise, the Canadian committee’s recommendations were reflected in the 1961 Narcotic Control Act, which, among other things, increased the maximum penalty for trafficking, possession for the purposes of trafficking, and importing and exporting, from fourteen years to life. The 1961 law

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84 Musto, *The American Disease*, p. 231.
also enacted a mandatory minimum sentence of seven years for importing and exporting, making it the third highest minimum sentence requirement, behind only murder and treason.\(^8\) It appears the senators heard the voices of legal officials loud and clear: the problem of drug use was one of enforcement, and with increased penalties and improved enforcement mechanisms, it could be properly handled. The discourse that permeated the senate committees of the 1950s therefore had a direct impact on the lives of users, who were increasingly subjected to draconian drug laws and policing policies, making their ability to live in urban centers even more difficult.

Legal and medical authorities came together to fight illegal drug addiction. They created a complex moral schema that blended notions of physical sickness, mental weakness, and criminal behavior, and simultaneously worked to define binary categories of insider/outsider, villain/victim, and good/evil. The fact that drug users came from urban neighborhoods and were, in the US, increasingly African American and Latinos, made this process even more effective. Since legal and medical authorities defined these individuals as marginal members of society, they were afforded little voice within national debates over drug use and addiction. The focus on prohibition further empowered state actors and agencies to push for increasing regulation of inner-city residents and helped to define the use of drugs such as heroin and marijuana as illicit and deviant.

Finally, the Senate committees demonstrate how the border became both an opportunity for close reinforcement of shared moral values, but also a site that enabled vice to flourish and elude these codes. American and Canadian law enforcement officials worked together to create a unified front against the smuggling of illicit substances across their borders. Though the fluid nature of the drug market meant that traffickers and users often crossed many jurisdictional lines

in the moving of illegal goods, enforcement agencies worked hard to ensure that they were in close contact and tried to aid the enforcement attempts of the other agencies. Yet the shared goals of the US and Canadian authorities were not always able to transcend the national differences between these two countries. Tensions arose between enforcement agencies on both sides of the border, as Canadians looked at their neighbor as the source of illegal drugs entering their country and the US viewed Canada as just a small part of their enforcement issue. Their inability to fully police the long border between them demonstrates the resilience of illicit economies and their ability to adapt to local environments. Despite the strict prohibitionist approach, heroin remained the primary drug of choice for many users in the Detroit-Windsor region in particular and the US and Canada in general, and the border between them continued to enable this illicit economy to flourish into the 1960s.
Chapter Five
Sin, Slums, and Shady Characters: Regulating Vice in the Urban Borderland

On August 1, 1960 thousands of African Americans crossed into Windsor in order to attend the city’s annual Emancipation Day festival, an occasion celebrating the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. That evening, at a jazz concert attended by approximately 4,500 people, the majority of whom were African American, a fight broke out between rival Detroit gang members. The fight resulted in one man being stabbed in the chest and at least fifty others wounded. Local, national, and international headlines were quick to dub the incident a “jazz riot” and to denounce the emergence of a violent and disorderly youth culture. Though the use of the terms “jazz” and “riot” had racial connotations, local papers made sure to indicate the racial nature of the incident. As the Windsor Star pointed out, “police said all the rioters were Negroes from Detroit.” Local Emancipation Day supporters were horrified by the incident, and worked hard to separate their celebration from the violence that took place at the concert. Walter L. Perry, Windsor’s “Mr. Emancipation,” accused Detroit “syndicates” of exploiting the festivities for their own personal gains and consequently giving Emancipation Celebration a “bad reputation.” For Perry, the ‘jazz riot’ only confirmed his fears—that disorganized and rowdy Detroit criminals would reinforce negative racial stereotypes during the very festivities meant to celebrate racial equality and promote racial harmony.

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Windsorites and Detroitors alike viewed the “jazz riot” as an unsettling indicator of the moral decline occurring across North American cities. These fears were in fact national in scope, and many North Americans used such incidents as an occasion to express their concerns about urban decline, the developing youth culture, and the deterioration of key social institutions. One Alabama resident responded to the “riot” by asserting that Canadian and American youths' behaviors fit a clear pattern. “In at least all the Western world” the author explained, “the pattern is a sickness of moral chaos and lack of discipline. Overlaying this disorder is a fabric of tensions which seek outlets in senseless destruction and transitory excitements.” According to the editorial, “these young people are the products of a tense and chaotic age…For this is an age which no longer practices or cherishes discipline or manners. Wrong-doing and rudeness and sloppy performance are no longer penalized but shrugged off.” The result was violent events like the “jazz riot”—incidences that occurred on both sides of the border. 3 No longer were Canadians safe from the challenges embedded in the neighboring society. Instead, Canadians and Americans alike grappled with an “urban problem” that seemed to be spreading rapidly across North America.

In the Detroit-Windsor region, residents, social agencies, and community groups alike struggled with how to understand the problems of the postwar city at a time when North Americans prided themselves on attaining a standard of living unparalleled in both its own history and that of nations worldwide. It was difficult for many to reconcile images of urban poverty, violence, dilapidated houses, criminals, heroin addicts, and street walkers with the notion that the ‘American dream’ was alive and more attainable than ever before. Similarly, titles like “Toronto the Good” that enabled Canadians to purport that their cities fared considerably

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better than their US counterparts were harder to defend among the many problems faced by residents of industrial Canadian cities. The reality was that the prosperity experienced by many North Americans, and the narrow middle class vision of a North American consumerist society, did not fit with the experiences of many residents in urban centers across the two countries. As previous chapters have shown, drug use was on the rise, prostitution operated openly in city centers, and vice networks generated millions of dollars annually in illegal markets that clearly defied normative definitions of labor, leisure, and consumption patterns.

In response, communities groups, activists, newspaper reporters, and city residents actively attempted to change the moral trajectory of North American inner cities. Their combined efforts produced a complex process of moral regulation in which they sought to define the parameters of proper conduct and to provide explanations for—and solutions to—illicit industries in the border cities. Historian Alan Hunt defines “moral regulation” as a process that involves establishing a particular moralized subject and linking that subject with some practice that will bring harm to the wider community unless properly regulated.

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4 The reputation of Ontario cities were vigorously defended against attacks by neighboring cities. One such example occurred when the Mayor of Toronto claimed that it would be able to handle any influx of criminals flushed out of Windsor by the 1950 anti-vice campaign. In response, Windsor officials asserted that Toronto had its own criminals to deal with, defending the border city from these perceived attacks by the mayor of the provincial capital. One Windsor councilman even went so far as to describe a neighborhood in Toronto as a “sinkhole” of vice crimes. This encouraged Mayor McCallum to repeated emphasize the falsehoods of this characterization, and the fact that his city was still “Toronto the Good.” See: “Toronto Hits Back, Claims to be ‘Good,’” *The Calgary Herald* (Oct. 19, 1950), p. 1.

5 Hunt argues that there is an “umbrella effect” of moral regulation, through which specific social problems mobilize an array of “different social forces that otherwise would not only have had no contact, but might have lined up as part of opposed social blocs.” In these widespread effects, moral reforms are often presented as “necessary to overcome the decline and generally has a dual thrust: a specific cure for the individual ill and an expanded or symbolic dimension.” The overlapping themes found in the various primary sources analyzed in this chapter similarly demonstrate this effect, as community groups as different as, for example, the Detroit Urban League and Women’s Local Council of Windsor, drew on similar language when discussing issues related to vice in the border cities. Further the regulation of ‘vice’ was about controlling specific actions, such as drug use or prostitution, it also came to symbolize anxieties over social issues such as race and class shifts in the urban environment, the emerging youth culture, and an increasingly polarized urban/suburban divide. Hunt, *Governing Morals*, pp. 9-11.
borderland, seemingly disparate groups were brought together in order to fight against vice economies, and in doing so, participated in multi-faceted attempts at disciplining residents and pushing out undesirable people. Yet the borderland context in which this occurred also made the broader implications of this regulation clear. In addition to attempting to control the actions of individuals, anti-vice rhetoric helped define the parameters of proper citizenship in the border cities. This chapter expands Hunt's insights by arguing that moral regulation also functioned as an unofficial form of nation-building wherein the “average citizen” sought to define who did or did not belong in their community. Questions about citizenship became particularly acute in the Detroit-Windsor border region, as residents struggled with the implications of both internal and cross-border flows of people throughout the region.

The language and conclusions put forward by reform societies, researchers, community groups and the media overlapped on both sides of the border and suggest a unity of purpose across the Detroit-Windsor border. This took place through the deployment of four main themes, including the development of urban renewal programs as distinctly anti-vice projects; a fear of transient individuals; the toll vice economies took on the physical and moral health of urban communities; and finally, the devastating impact of familial breakdown. On both sides of the border these themes were formulated through particular class and racial perspectives, which tended to frame urban issues in terms of decay and decline while simultaneously promoting the

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6 This chapter also draws on the insights of Margaret Zube, who argues that 'morality' in the late-1940s and 1950s was a rather rigid concept that drew on the binary distinctions of good and evil. In her analysis of *Ladies Home Journal* she finds “numerous references to the search for a moral life, the need for a moral education or the importance of providing youth with a moral code to serve as a bases for philosophy and action.” She further argues that it is not until the 1960s that we begin to see a much more flexible concept of morality, one that focuses on the needs and desires of particular individuals. It is this collective notion of a moral order that I explore in this chapter. See: Hunt, *Governing Morals: A Social History of Moral Regulation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 4-11; Zube, “Changing Concepts of Morality: 1948-1969,” *Social Forces* Vol. 50, No. 3 (Mar. 1972), pp. 385-393.
growth of suburban living, middle-class consumption patterns, good health, and social order. While racial politics played different roles in Windsor and Detroit, in both cities black/white color lines were reinforced through moralizing discourses that defined communities along the lines of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders.’ In this way, nation-building projects were also explicitly racialized projects that reflected the anxieties many local whites felt about the shifting racial dynamics in the city of Detroit. Incidents like the “jazz riot” became the ultimate expression of what would happen if local residents were not vigilant against the corrupting influences of urban vice and crime. For reformers, the moral imperative to reign in vice activities was about more than saving North America's cities—it was also about saving the broader nations from moral decay.

Renewing the Postwar City

By the 1950s, cities across North America were dealing with issues of urban blight and decline, setting the context for local and national debates over the social implications of vice economies. Like many northern industrial centers, Windsor and Detroit had developed into large industrial centers over the first half of the twentieth century. By the 1950s, the outdated infrastructure made it difficult for both cities to accommodate the economic and demographic changes that took place after the war. Consequently in order to counter blight and all its related issues, many cities, including Windsor and Detroit, took on expansive urban renewal projects during this period. Though the cities approached urban renewal in different ways and on different scales, the various projects that fell under the umbrella of ‘urban renewal’ had similar objectives on both sides of the border. Central to their goals was the desire to remake run-down
neighborhoods in the hopes that it would eliminate poverty and crime. Concerns over drug addiction, prostitution, and other so-called delinquent behaviors were subsequently addressed within this broad framework and were most often viewed as by-products of the economic and social challenges facing urban centers.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, urban planning in Ontario was centered on several cores issues, including the provision of public services and goods, such as water, sewers, and roads, and the regulation of property uses. However, the rapid population growth of the mid-twentieth century created a demand for new urban facilities and pushed existing municipal boundaries through suburbanization. Urban planners had to grapple with the need to provide improved city services in downtown cores, and to facilitate the growth of functional suburbs around them. By the 1950s and 1960s, urban planning had achieved a degree of maturity and attained a position as a scientific and objective field, fostering its ability to reshape the urban environment. Central to the public sector planning during those decades was an emphasis on master plans, transportation planning, and planning for expansive suburban development, all responses to the growth of automobile ownership, land speculation, population growth, and demands for single-detached housing. Further, an emphasis on large urban centers within planning theories fostered what Heather Nicol and Gregg Dobbin characterize as an excessive focus on, “issues concerning the ‘urban problem,’ by which was meant redevelopment of inner city slums and the provision of social housing to alleviate ‘urban blight.’”

8 Nicol and Dobbin, “Planning at the Edge,” p. 357.
9 Nicol and Dobbin, “Planning at the Edge,” p. 358.
Within this broader context, in 1959 the City of Windsor commissioned the foremost urban renewal expert in Canada, E.G. Faludi, to propose a project that would address the city’s key problems. The resultant Faludi Study focused on the regional trends described above, including an emphasis on the interrelated issues of suburbanization and deteriorating industrial neighborhoods. Central to the study was the desire to redevelop so-called blighted areas and to rezone neighborhoods to facilitate a desirable mixing of residential, commercial, and manufacturing spaces. According to the report, one of the main goals was, “to save the City and the fringe areas from further deterioration and to reduce blight by the application of an urban renewal programme consisting of protective, preventative and curative measures.”

This was, in part, a response to the fact that by the late-1950s, many industrial sites sat vacant, and the land was deemed not only unsightly but also dangerous due to the fact that it provided locations in which various illegal activities could take place. Further, the closing of many factories also had a negative impact on the surrounding communities, and residential properties began to suffer due to the lack of income of local residents.

The Faludi Study noted that many of the issues in Windsor were caused by two interrelated problems: the city’s inability to attract the necessary level of industrial development and the increasing rate of suburbanization. As residents moved to the suburbs in high numbers, city services deteriorated in the downtown core, further facilitating urban blight. According to the study, “in contrast to the rapid suburbanization…the central parts of the City, residential,

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commercial, and industrial, are declining and give little incentive for improvement.”

Significantly, “the pattern of the outward growth is disorderly and haphazard but the inward decline is continuous and uniform. Undoubtedly much of the urban blight in the central core of the City is due to the functional defects in many parts of the structure of the City.” Maps provided by the study further demonstrated that blighted areas tended to develop along industrial sites near the Detroit River, and on streets within the downtown core. The study also noted that the economic disparities between suburban and downtown neighborhoods were directly linked to the upkeep of properties and the conditions of local infrastructure.

Contemporaries asserted that there was a direct link between the trends identified in the Faludi study and the issues of vice and the social welfare. In order to appease these concerns the report asserted that, if undertaken, its fifteen year program would have a direct impact on the social conditions of the city of Windsor in four main ways. First, by, “eliminating slum conditions; second, by, “reducing incidents of crime, disease and fire hazards”; third, by, “halting the tread of decline all over the Metropolitan community”; and finally, by, “providing up to date rental housing accommodation for an income class which cannot pay economic rents.” In effect the study promised to both prevent and cure issues of crime and disease in Windsor by gutting slum neighborhoods and replacing them with more distinctly modern, middle class housing. This in turn would aid in the economic growth in the city and lead to a generally upwardly mobile trend for city residents.

11 The report explained that “1,800 acres can be considered to be declining and 300 blighted. Of over 25,000 structures, 13.3% are vulnerable to blight; 3% are partly blighted and 0.7% completely blighted.” Faludi, “A Fifteen Year Programme,” pp. 1-2.

The connection between vice and run-down slum areas was echoed in broader discussions of illicit activities, helping to bolster the public perception that renewal programs were necessary in order to clean up the city. For example, in 1950 a *Windsor Daily Star* report claimed that many brothels, blind pigs, and gambling dens were running wide open in Windsor, in part because they flourished on account of the cover provided by deteriorating industrial and residential spaces. As the article described, “In back-room sin-bins, sandwiched between factories and tumble-down shops, wide open bootlegging or the favors of a prostitute can be enjoyed—at a price.”13 A *Maclean’s* article on the high level of vice and police corruption in Windsor similarly described the city’s vice trade: “For a $2 ride in and out [of] the compact blocks of Windsor’s business section any cab driver would point out which of the dingy rooming houses, pool rooms, and tobacco stores on Pitt, Sandwich, Assumption, and Pellissier Streets, behind whose false fronts you could get a girl, buy a drink, or place a bet.”14 It was precisely these types of spaces that urban renewal projects were established to eliminate. The Faludi Study’s emphasis on re-structuring city spaces like those described in the articles were designed to eliminate the undesirable vice activities that were supposedly flourishing within them. In this sense, the Study’s emphasis on integrating the suburbs and the city center and restructuring the downtown core also promoted a reorganization of Windsor along class lines. By eliminating symptoms of poverty and lower-class leisure and entertainment, such as prostitution and numbers-running, the Toronto-based firm purported to not only eliminate crime but to also reinvent the city of Windsor as a solidly middle-class, suburban border city.

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Cities across the American Midwest also experienced rapid population growth and suburbanization in the middle decades of the twentieth century, and urban renewal programs shared similar goals as those in large Ontario cities. Detroit was at the forefront of urban redevelopment in United States, and its 129-acre Gratiot Project was the nation’s first attempt at residential redevelopment under the Federal Housing Act of 1949. Following the war, urban renewal in the city was initially conceived of as a way to stop the exodus of business from the inner city, to turn slum areas into better housing, and to grow the city’s tax base. By March of 1963, the city had over ten urban renewal projects underway; more than 10,000 structures had been demolished or were scheduled for demolition, and 43,096 people, 70% of them African American, had been or were soon to be displaced by these projects. In 1962, the city enacted an ordinance specifically designed to eliminate vice in “skid row” districts along the Detroit River, by ending, “certain land uses originally found” in these rundown areas. “The purpose of the ordinance was to prevent a re-concentration of these uses in other areas of the City once they were forced out of the downtown area by the urban renewal project.” Not only were urban renewal projects aimed at breaking up vice and crime in downtown neighborhoods, they were also aimed at preventing their spread to middle class neighborhoods within and adjacent to the city limits.

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17 Fine, Violence in the Model City, p. 62.
18 City of Toronto, “Special Committee: Place of Amusement—Report and Recommendations,” (Toronto: City of Toronto, 1977), p. 107. Interestingly, the initial ordinance did not include the adult entertainment industry due to a lack of proliferation of these establishments. By 1972, however, there were as many as thirty-two known adult bookstores, twenty five adult theaters, and close to seventy nude bars in the city, and that year, the city amended this ordinance to cover these legal, yet illicit industries.
Given these goals, urban renewal tended to have a disproportionately negative effect on residents living in ‘slum’ areas. As Sidney Fine documents, urban renewal, though aimed at improving housing conditions in particular, often destroyed low-income housing in exchange for middle- to upper-income residential areas, leaving many poor Detroits without affordable housing. In the lag between the time an area was designated for urban renewal and when the actual process began, many renters and owners had no need to keep their properties up, further encouraging blighted areas. Once the demolition process began, vandalism and violence often increased in the area, and the lack of oversight by community members provided “cover” for multiple forms of vice activities.\textsuperscript{19} Critics of urban renewal projects noted that the results were often only “structure-deep,” since they failed to give attention to, “improving \textit{cultural} values” in the areas under redevelopment. As a Detroit Urban League (DUL) report put it, “too much attention is given to the structural elements and too little attention is given to the human elements of redevelopment.”\textsuperscript{20}

In Detroit renewal projects, class and race worked together in complex ways, and white stereotypes associating African Americans with vice and crime left many residents unable to distinguish between run-down vice districts and black neighborhoods. For example, in 1961 the DUL conducted an in-depth study of Detroit's Twelfth Street community. Between 1950 and 1957, this northwest section of the city was the scene of a large exodus of white residents and a corresponding larger influx of African American migrants. The DUL subsequently undertook a project to assess the gap between the perception of the community by local residents and the demographic realities. The researchers surveyed city residents and found that the majority of

\textsuperscript{19} Fine, \textit{Violence in the Model City}, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{20} Detroit Urban League, \textit{Twelfth Street: An Analysis of a Changed Community} (Detroit: Detroit Community Services Department, 1961), p. 29.
them perceived of Twelfth Street neighborhood as exclusively African America, as the area in the
city with the highest crime rate, and as the “only place on the Westside with ‘poor-type’ people,
structures, and facilities.”21 The study argued that in fact it was the rapid influx of large numbers
of black residents that brought these perceptions, ones that did not in fact reflect the actual
conditions in the neighborhood. The community was not exclusively poor and black, nor did it
have the highest rate of crime in the city. Significantly, the DUL found that both middle-class
African American and white leaders were deeply concerned that this perception of the
neighborhood would invite additional transients and crime that might eventually leave “their
areas” open to “invasion.” “Therefore,” the study concluded, while urban renewal projects were
aimed at improving the Twelfth Street neighborhood, “the latent interest is to contain the
residents.”22

Significantly, the DUL argued that the link between poor African American residents,
crime, and urban blight was often most vigorously enforced by black middle-class residents who
attempted to dissociate themselves with the stigma of the city’s slums.23 “In fact,” the study
found, “sometimes it is difficult to determine: who is the fastest in leaving an area which is being

23 One of the early critiques of the postwar black middle class came from E. Franklin Frazier, who was particularly
critical of what he perceived as a tendency towards integration with white communities at the expense of the
cohesion and politicization of African American communities. See, Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie (New York: Free
Press Paperbacks, 1957). More recently, historians have examined the historical roots and political implications
of the black middle class, and have tended to reject Frazier's overly critical and all-encompassing assessment of
the meaning of these communities. See, for example, Larry Tye, Rising from the Rails: Pullman Porters and the
Making of the Black Middle Class (New York: Owl Books, 1994); Victoria Wolcott, Remaking Respectability:
African American Women in Interwar Detroit (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Martin
Summers, Manliness and Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-
1930 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Leslie Brown, Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender,
Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
Press, 2008).
invaded by lower class Negroes—the white or the Negro middle class resident?" The result of the mutually reinforcing class and race divides would continue to ensure the cycle of movement and urban decline would, “being anew: the middle class Negroes, fearing a loss of status and property values, will attempt to run to the better white areas; the white residents, fearing a loss of status and property values, will run closer to the suburbs. And, in their haste to ‘escape,’ too few people are objectively aware of either what they are escaping from or where they are escaping to.”

The study of the Twelfth Street community demonstrates the complicated nature of urban renewal and the multiple lines that worked to define particular neighborhoods as desirable or undesirable places of residence. It demonstrates that the reputation of an area could have as large an impact as the reality on the ground—if a particular space was perceived as a place where crime, violence, and blight were rampant, that in and of itself was often enough to encourage those conditions to develop on a large scale. The process of fleeing one area, and attempting to contain undesirable community members in the spaces left behind, was central to urban renewal projects. Further, the association between crime and vice was directly linked to racialized and class perceptions of a given neighborhood. The fact that illegal activities were so widely associated with African Americans meant that black middle-class residents had to work even harder to dissociate themselves from areas perceived as slums. This went beyond simply moving away from those areas; it also meant becoming vocal proponents of urban renewal projects in poor neighborhoods, thus pitting African American residents against one another along class lines.

24 DUL, Twelfth Street,” p. 25.
In the Detroit-Windsor border region, then, municipal governments actively took steps to eliminate areas where vice developed and targeted particular neighborhoods that were defined by their marginal, blighted status. The goals were parallel in the two cities: they attempted to remaking blighted neighborhoods through both rebuilding structures and discouraging the settlement of undesirable characters. As symptoms of poverty, decay, and economic downturn, officials would have been more than happy to see vice districts disappear. Ironically, renewal projects tended to displace poor communities without rebuilding them in any functional way, therefore perpetuating some of the economic and social impetus behind the very vice economies they were hoping to eliminate. While urban renewal projects were able to disrupt vice patterns, it often served to merely shift the spaces in which vice took place from one neighborhood to the next—much to the chagrin of middle class and suburban residents of the border cities, and at the cost of much upheaval for the poorest residents.

**Crossing Lines: Transience in North America**

At the heart of discussion about urban blight were debates over who did or did not belong in the postwar city. As urban renewal projects suggest, discussions of vice often conjured up images of undesirable individuals infiltrating otherwise wholesome neighborhoods and subsequently changing the demographic and social character of urban centers. In this way, urban renewal projects were not only aimed at reshaping the city spaces themselves, but also at policing the individuals who inhabited those spaces. One of the key figures to emerge in contemporary discussions of blighted areas was the transient—an individual who drifted through town in order to partake in illicit activities, subsequently challenging the physical, social, and
moral character of the areas he or she passed through. The opposite of the rooted citizen, the transient had no permanent place but rather functioned parasitically, descending upon the city when it suited his or her needs and desires, and spreading vice and crime wherever they went.

The ‘transient’ was in many ways an extension of the notion of the ‘tramp’ that emerged in North American society in the late-nineteenth century. Tim Cresswell argues that the term tramp became associated with individuals and lifestyles that challenged the sedentary metaphysics ingrained in North American society. In their ability to traverse place and all that was associated with it (notions of home and roots, for example) mobile individuals were defined by a number of absences—a lack of commitment, involvement, and attachment—and subsequently became intimately linked with notions of shiftlessness, deviance, and disrepute.26 He further argues that transient people like the tramp demonstrate the multiple tensions in American ideologies of mobility, which on the one hand played central roles in the founding mythologies of the American nation, and on the other, were viewed as a threat to the rooted and moral existence of place central to cultural manifestations such as ‘small-town America.’27 While Cresswell argues that the image of the ‘tramp’ died out during World War II, a close examination of moral discourses about vice reveals that in many ways this cultural figure reemerged in the form of the transient after the close of the war. The transient came to represent the underside of the expansion of mobility in North American society, and like the tramp, was viewed as a direct threat to the safety and morality of otherwise healthy communities.

The notion that prostitutes and drug users and sellers were transient individuals did have some basis in reality; as previous chapters have shown, participants in these industries often

traveled between neighborhoods and cities, and were connected to a broader network of illicit activities. Yet contemporary observers seemed to ignore why participants in these activities were likely to move from place to place: in order for individuals to evade arrest, it was often necessary that those involved regularly move within and between cities. For example, sex workers, particularly women working out of brothels, had to regularly keep on the move in order to avoid being discovered by legal authorities. In her recollections of her years working as a prostitute and madam in the city of Detroit, Helen McGowan recalled moving on a regular basis in order to avoid detection. If she suspected one of her brothels had been ‘made’ by a policeman, she would close up shop and open her business in a new home in the city.28 Further, the influx of French-Canadian prostitutes to Windsor began on a large scale in 1946, when Montreal police enacted a major anti-vice campaign.29 In 1950, the Windsor Police Department began its own anti-vice crusade, and subsequently claimed that they had chased all of the organized prostitution out of the city by the end of the decade. Of course, displacing organized sex work (prostitution performed in brothels) from the city of Windsor meant women ended up maintaining an increasingly visible presence on city streets, and operated out of cars, motels, and hotels.30 The very regulations aimed at eliminating these industries were often part of the impetus behind their transient nature.

28 McGowan recalled that as her business got larger, and her name more notorious, it became harder to operate a brothel in the city of Detroit without the police finding her. She explained, “By now, I was becoming known as the top madam in the Motor City. Although my houses were frequently raided, I managed to find quarters for my seven girls that would allow operations for a month or two before I was raided. Sometimes I was tipped off about a proposed raid. That meant moving fast and then finding a new place as soon as possible.” Frequent moves is a common theme throughout her autobiography. McGowan, Motor City Madam, (New York: Pageant Press, 1964), p. 100.
More often than not, transients were described in moral language that framed their movement as somehow dangerous to the communities that they moved through. This danger was couched in gendered terms, with male transients presented as immoral and dangerous, and female figures as young, naive, and vulnerable. Newspaper reports promoted this gendered division of movement, and local papers regularly presented stories to support the notion that transient men were predators and transient women were likely to fall victim to these sordid men. For example, one *Star* article entitled, “Girls Who Leave Home for Larger Cities Face Dangers,” asserted that young girls who were “lured from the farm, village, or small town” for employment in larger cities were at great risk of moral and physical danger by, “men who don’t respect them.” Though the author, Dr. G. C. Meyers, acknowledges that many girls are able to make the trip unharmed, he laments the, “good many tragic letters [that] are coming to me about the teenage girl…” who are less successful at avoiding the problems associated with big cities and the dangerous characters that inhabited them.31 Young women on the move posed clear threats to the patriarchal order of the family, which purported that women were safest when overseen by either their fathers or husbands.32 Young single women challenged this order, and were subsequently

the subject of harsh criticisms by local media and social organizations designed to regulate the actions of young women moving to urban centers.33

In the city of Detroit, organizations like the Girls’ Protective League, The Girl’s Work Council, the Detroit Council for Youth Services, and the Girls’ Service Clubs were established with the purpose of overseeing and regulating young women and teens living unsupervised in the city of Detroit. These various organizations shared the goal of getting girls off the streets and into homes where they could be properly supervised. They also operated on the assumption that the longer the young girls were without formal oversight, the less likely they were to become integrated into society as productive citizens. Indeed, in the late-1950s the United Community Services organization conducted a study of the conditions of wayward girls in Detroit, and their report reaffirmed the notion that society would eventually end up paying for these girls in one form or another. They asserted that, “the girl with unresolved problems can add to the community tax burden by involvement in prostitution, illegitimacy, or long term dependency upon the public social welfare.” It further argued since, “most of the girls-with-problems were the products of broken, disorganized, or demoralized families,” service programs geared toward strengthening the family and local communities were vital. They were particularly supportive of urban renewal projects like the Great Cities Project and the Jeffries Project, and believed they would do a great deal to stunt problem of transience among young girls. If given a chance at a proper home life, the girls just might be able to make a valuable contribution to society one day, thus saving the tax-paying citizen their hard-earned money.

If young girls on the move were susceptible to the dangers of the city, shady characters who floated through these urban spaces were central to this threat. Prostitutes and drug users were obvious targets of moral campaigns, but there was a wide range of characters that came under attack. Transient figures often drew the attention of legal officials and city residents through their participation in illicit forms of urban leisure. One example was the existence of traveling carnival shows that passed through the border cities. City residents and legal authorities often expressed fears over what they deemed inappropriate and harmful behavior of the people attracted to these shows, particularly their impact on children and teenagers.

One such incident occurred when the W.G. Wade Carnival show passed through southeastern Michigan in May of 1953. Concerned local residents called the Michigan State Police to inform them of the event and to let them know that there would be illegal gambling there. When Officer Charles V. Frank arrived on the scene, he found more than just gambling. While investigating the carnival grounds, he entered the “Jezebelle Show” around 11 pm and noted a large number of teenage boys gathered there. Rex Allen entered the stage and introduced the act performed by Margareta Pagan: “Well boys, we all know what you came here for,” he belted. “Of course you’ll have to pay something. You know you never get anything in this world for nothing. If you do you want to be damn careful.” He continued to entice the young viewers: “Now if you never saw pussy before, you will see it to-night [sic]. Also there is a snake in the act and to-night is a cold night. Those snakes like warm holes,” he warned the curious and excited young on-lookers, “so don’t be surprised what you will see.” According to the officer, after this titillating introduction, Pagan proceeded to, “completely disrobe to the extent of being nude and
then perform various dances” in front of the crowd of teenagers. The officer arrested Pagan and Allen (after he observed the show, of course!) who each pled guilty to “Indecent & Obscene Exposure,” and served sixty days in the county jail—the maximum penalty for the offense. Illicit forms of entertainment like the “Jezebelle Show” brought out-of-town workers into contact with local boys and girls, and subsequently were targeted by city residents and legal authorities, who at times worked together to sensor behavior deemed immoral.

Traveling shows also drew public criticism from Windsor residents, and local media explicitly drew connections between vice, transience, health, and leisure within these spectacles. For example, a 1943 Windsor Daily Star article titled, “Attracted to Windsor,” examined the connection between venereal disease and transient peoples such as carnival workers and prostitutes. It argued that both were a major problem because they brought disease and disrupted otherwise wholesome communities. According to the article, of the prostitutes that traveled to Windsor to take up the sex industry, many were, “unaware of [VD] infections” and some had been only, “partially treated,” making them a risk to local residents. The author further explains that traveling people such as, “the hangers-on and camp-followers of traveling shows” also put a community in danger. According to the article, they, “constitute a grave menace to the cities where they travel. I do not refer to the acrobats and others who must maintain a high level of physical fitness, but to the concessionaires.”

The connection between carnival workers and prostitution was the mobility involved in their occupations. Importantly, this ‘instability’ was

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36 “Attracted to Windsor,” Windsor Daily Star (May 27, 1943), p. 3.
37 “Attracted to Windsor,” Star, p. 3.
portrayed as necessarily linked to immorality. The Star article also demonstrates that the difference between a healthy body and a diseased body was to a great degree a moral one. Issues of morality had strong class undertones, as acrobats were necessarily healthier than the lower-status concessionaires. Certainly the “Jezebel Show” of the Wage Carnival would have fallen under the latter category (despite the skills that were required to perform a burlesque show). This suggests a differentiation between skilled work and unskilled work along moral lines, which was likewise linked to ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ industries. The “hangers-on” and concessionaires working traveling carnival shows attracted people of loose morals from city to city and therefore their movement in and out of the border region sparked concern and controversy in public discussions.

At the national border, gendered concerns over transience were often framed explicitly as a problem of non-citizens preying on local community members. Residents were particularly fearful that transient criminals would use the border as a way of evading arrest, thus making the border cities particularly appealing to dangerous or deviant characters. In this way, the problem of transient outsiders also dovetailed with legal conceptions of citizenship and the state's attempts at ramping up inspection at border crossing-points. One publicized case was that of Leo Thompson, a man charged under the White Slave Trade Act of the United States with trafficking a local Windsor girl into Detroit. Thompson, a Canadian national, had been living in the Detroit area on and off for twelve years and was wanted by federal authorities on both sides of the border for previous encounters with the law. On November 21, 1940, he reportedly abducted a fourteen year old girl from her Windsor home, and brought her to a Detroit hotel where he kept
her locked in a room and, “repeated[ly] assaulted” her.\(^{38}\) He was discovered in the Windsor area by police because he had been seen frequenting the Blue Water Hotel, a place where prostitution and other illicit activities purportedly took place.\(^{39}\) The Thompson case provided local residents with a clear example of the dangers presented by outsiders who came to the city for illicit purposes. Transient strangers like Thompson could use his cross-border mobility as a way to avoid arrest, and unsuspecting local residents would be none-the-wiser. The cooperation between Detroit and Windsor authorities, which ultimately led to his arrest, was likewise praised in the article and reaffirmed the notion that cross-border cooperation was needed to stem the flow of shady characters crossing between the cities.

Local papers sometimes used the term ‘invasion’ to describe the influx of Americans entering Windsor for illicit leisure, further demonstrating that the city’s location along the national border heightened fears over transients. For example, during the war, government bans on the production of alcohol in the U.S. encouraged many Detroiters to travel to Windsor in search of beer, in what a front page *Windsor Star* article termed the “thirsty invasion.” In a 1943 report on beer shortages in Windsor, the article lamented that, “Americans could be spotted driving though all sections of the city on exploratory trips…And even in neighborhood hotels in residential areas, where everybody usually knows everybody else, groups of strangers walked in and everyone knew, after listening to their distinctive dialects, that they were Americans.”\(^{40}\) In this way, American visitors challenged the familiarity of leisure spaces in the city of Windsor, and their verbal markers served as a way of delineating their outsider status within the local pub


\(^{39}\) The Blue Water Hotel shows up several times in LCBO files as a place frequented by prostitutes and other unaccompanied young women. See: LCBO Establishment Case Files, RG-36-8, File: Blue Water, Windsor, B335026, Archives of Ontario.

Several people interviewed by the author expressed their frustration that they had to compete with Americans for the precious beer reserves, and the fact that these outsiders were taking over their public spaces across the city. Unlike earlier images of tramps, hobos, and vagabonds, the transient was not necessarily completely rootless—the specter of hordes of American tourists crossing the national border for illicit forms of leisure and fun, even if they would eventually return home, was enough to spark considerable concern among Windsor residents.

Fear of an American invasion also took on racialized connotations in Windsor as white residents expressed their concerns that the increasing black population in Detroit would spill over into their community. Local papers regularly published stories about racial tensions and violence in American cities, and headlines like, “Negro Marauders Attack Whites” and, “Crackdown on Negro Rioters” were common to read in Windsor papers. Thus, when incidents like the 1950 “jazz riot” took place in Ontario, Windsorites easily viewed these incidents as imports from their troubled American neighbors. Their fear that black Americans would cross the border into Ontario for illicit activities, and subsequently engage in crime sprees and violence, also enabled white Windsorites to ignore the problem of racial segregation and violence in their

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41 This notion also supports Dan Malleck’s argument that Americans represented the ‘other’ within Canadian border cities, and that their participation in the drinking culture on the Canadian side of the border often sparked considerable concern by both the LCBO and local residents. I would argue that, given that it was their dialect that gave the Americans away, there is also an implicit whiteness to this “thirsty invasion.” As this chapter will later show, African American visitors often sparked considerable more concern on the part of white Windsor residents. See: Malleck, “An Innovation from Across the Line: The American Drinker and Liquor Regulation in Two Ontario Border Communities, 1927-1944,” Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 41, no. 1 (Winter 2007), pp. 151-171.


own city. By focusing on transient Detroit gang members who crossed into Windsor to get their kicks, white residents were thus simultaneously expressing their anxieties over their close proximity to growing black neighborhoods in Detroit, and erasing the ways in which racial violence and segregation were very much also ingrained within their own borders.

Detroiter Likewise invoked racialized notions of “invasion” in order to distinguished between rooted communities and the influx of undesirable migrants into their neighborhoods. As historian Thomas Sugrue argues, the large migration of Southern blacks into the Detroit area was vehemently opposed by many white residents, who viewed these men and women as unwanted outsiders whose presence would rapidly deteriorate the quality of life in their communities. These migrants were treated as transitory populations, and discussions of slum areas in the city were expressed in particularly racialized terms that reinforced the binary notion that Southern blacks did not belong in their (white) communities.

Indeed, contemporary sociologists who studied the migration of African American Southerners to the city of Detroit, and their subsequent settlement in areas previously known as white neighborhoods, termed this phenomenon “ecological invasion.” The challenging of racial lines through this process was thus described as unnatural, as an infiltration of the rightful order of the “ecological” environment of the neighborhood. In its study of the Twelfth Street neighborhood, the DUL argued that as long as the neighborhood continued to be defined as a “bad” place to live, “the

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44 For example, in 1965 community groups like the South Essex Citizens Advancement Society organized a march on a local model car establishment where they believed a group of local whites had met to plan a series of violent acts that included painting Ku Klux Klan symbols on local buildings and burning gasoline-soaked wooden crosses. The groups argued that these actions were symptoms of the serious racial problems in the Essex County region and wanted to see officials actually acknowledge what they saw as a widespread problem. “Ontario Negro Group Fearful”, *The Ottawa Citizen* (August 11, 1965), p. 1.


46 DUL, “Twelfth Street,” p. 3.
The high rate of transiency will continue, causing the area to remain an intermediate point between the ‘worst’ and the ‘best areas.’ Though the DUL report was relatively sympathetic to the issue of changing neighborhoods, and worked to counter attitudes that linked black communities with crime and vice, their own report suggested that transiency was in fact a key part of the problem of such neighborhoods. As long as people remained unsettled, and moved in and out of the neighborhood, the community would remain subject to perceptions that it was a slum area, one that facilitated neighborhood blight and illegal activities. Thus black Southern migrants who 'invaded' local communities were viewed as the main reasons for the rapid deterioration of Detroit's downtown neighborhoods, and the colored transient came to represent a particularly problematic figure in the border region.

While the carnival worker, the prostitute, and the “jazz rioter” were perceived differently according to the exact social and legal codes they violated, they all also simultaneously invoked fears about transience and the spread of immorality. The movement of these men and women into the border cities challenged beliefs in the rooted community in which active citizens played a key role protecting their families and social institutions. The fear of invasion from outsiders—whether temporarily travelers or long-term migrants—led many middle-class North Americans to openly attempt to protect their communities from this infiltration. In distinguishing between ‘insiders' and 'outsiders', local community members were thus also engaging in a discourse about citizenship and about who belonged in North American cities.

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Healthy People Build Healthy Nations

Representations of the prostitute and the drug addict who traveled from city to city in search of money and drugs came to embody a third theme invoked by reformers: the belief that transient illicit activities had a negative impact on the health of community residents. Notions of health tended to take two interconnected forms, including the physical health of individuals and the social or moral health of communities.48 Within this formulation, good physical health enabled one to make good moral decisions, and poor health was often treated as the symptom of immoral choices. Through choosing to engage in high-risk activities like prostitution and heroin use, reformers asserted that the individual's ability to act as a productive citizen was severely compromised. Not only did they reduce their own physical and moral capacity to lead a normal life, they likewise risked spreading venereal disease and drug addiction among the wider community.

Since reformers and social organizations believed that venereal disease was an inevitable and debilitating result of prostitution, anti-vice activism used conceptions of health and the body as a springboard from which they could address the moral implications of commercial sex. The connection between prostitution, disease, and immorality has a long genealogy in Western societies, and has been well-documented by historians of sexuality.49 This connection continued

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49 For studies on venereal disease and prostitution in North America, see: Allan M. Brandt, No Magic Bullet: a Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1880 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987);
after World War II and took on specific language that tied the healthy body to responsible citizenship. For example, in 1944 the *Windsor Daily Star* published an article warning readers of the dangers of venereal disease, which included the physical well-being of the individuals infected and the supposed infection that would spread to society as a whole, ultimately challenging the security of the Canadian nation. “Venereal Disease: A Challenge to Leadership” began by explaining how medical breakthroughs allowed for scientists to locate the, “sinister, squirming syphilis germ” and to, “rob Venereal Disease of much of its terror.” The article continued on to explain that strong leadership amongst the health sector, families, community groups, and legal authorities was key to fighting the problem of venereal disease on four fronts: health, welfare, legal and moral. “IF the moral fibre of the nation is strengthened…IF the individual character is fortified…IF the sanctity of marriage is upheld…IF; above all, the moral wisdom of the ages is applied in the practical, daily issues of personal, community, and national life,” only then would the community be safe from these dangerous influences. This call-to-arms style of writing urged the reader to be proactive against the moral decay caused by prostitution. It encouraged the average Windsor citizen to, “inform others” and to, “see that conditions in your community are the kind that will give your son and daughter, and your neighbors, the chance to grow up in an atmosphere of decency, wholesomeness, and good health.” It clearly identifies houses of prostitution as the central problem because they enabled “healthy and infected” people to meet, and challenged the sanctity of monogamous marriage.


The article subsequently empowered individuals to police the moral and physical health of their own communities while demarcating licit and illicit forms of sexual and social interactions. The message was clear—stamp out prostitution and “undesirable places” and local communities would be much healthier, happier, and more wholesome. By fighting disease at its roots, this “challenge to leadership” would no longer threaten the strength and security of the nation at large.

Sociological studies of prostitution, particularly in the later postwar period, sometimes took less overtly moral tones when assessing its impact on neighborhoods, and yet even these seemingly neutral discussions about the risks involved in prostitution nonetheless still worked to reinforce the connection between social mores, community health, and urban spaces. Racialized perceptions that poor communities were the source of disease helped to reinforce the notion that the growing black neighborhoods in the city of Detroit were a direct cause of much of the city's health problems. One study conducted by the United Community Services of Metropolitan Detroit (UCSD) documented trends in venereal disease in Detroit during the 1960s, arguing that diseases like gonorrhea and syphilis were rising at alarming rates in the city's core. The study found, for example, that the number of syphilis cases in the city of Detroit was 54.1 per 100,000 in 1966, compared to a rate of 12.9 for the entire state.\(^\text{51}\) While the UCSD report noted that the causes were multifaceted—ranging from the rise of a promiscuous teen culture, expanding expendable income among all social groups, broken families, and the increase in school drop-outs—their assertion that downtown Detroit was ground zero in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases also had very clear racial implications. Since African American women

performed a large majority of the sex work in these neighborhoods, pinpointing the core as the main source of VD placed the blame squarely on black prostitutes.

Contemporary studies and discussions of vice treated prostitution and drug use as interrelated issues, with both directly linked to similar types of disease and health problems. Authorities blamed women in particular for the spread of diseases, and the drug-addicted prostitute became a key trope invoked in discussions of community health. Not only did the prostitute blatantly violate sexual mores, she also demonstrated the physical dangers that could ensue when one became enslaved to illegal substances. In 1953, a sociologist studying drug users in Detroit found that of the 76 drug users from Detroit interviewed by researchers, “active venereal disease or a history of it” was prevalent in both men and women. The researchers found this somewhat perplexing, since narcotics were often purported to destroy men’s sex drives. The study reconciled their findings by assuming that the men likely engaged in promiscuous and high-risk sexual activities prior to their drug use, since drug use was a symptom of moral and social problems rather than the cause of it. As they argued, “sexual promiscuity is another manifestation of the basic emotional instability existing in these persons.” It was easier for researchers to explain the high prevalence of venereal disease among female addicts (nine out of twelve interviewed had a history of venereal disease) since female addicts were regularly assumed to sell sex for drugs in order to maintain their addiction.52 For both men and women, their weakened moral states caused by heroin addiction also made them uniquely susceptible to a wide array of health problems. Activities like drug use and prostitution were defined as high-risk, and were perceived to function together as part of larger sociological problems growing in the

52 City of Detroit, Report of the Mayor’s Committee for the Rehabilitation of Narcotic Addicts (Detroit: 1953), p.35.
inner cities. In this way, moral health and physical decline worked hand in hand to threatened one’s ability to function as a productive citizen.

**Family, Juvenile Delinquency, and Saving the Next Generation**

In attempting to curb unhealthy vice activities that emerged in blighted neighborhoods, contemporaries focused on the role of the family in inner-city neighborhoods, seeing them as the first line of defense within marginal communities. Notions of a well-ordered nuclear family ran counter to images of transients, who supposedly disputed normative community patterns and who were likely to engage in immoral and dangerous behavior. Historians have documented the postwar obsession with the nuclear family in great detail, arguing that that it emerged as a way to reaffirm community morals during a time of rapid social, economic, and global political changes, including Cold War hysteria. Elaine Tyler May's work highlights the symbiotic relationship between Cold War politics and this familialist ideology, noting the contradictions inherent in the domestic revival, which was torn between notions of freedom and democracy on the one hand, and anxiety and conformity on the other.53 Discussions on the family exhibited inherent tensions between upholding a mythical pre-war patriarchal family and an effort to expand the wartime slogans of democracy and freedom to the home.54 While one’s experience necessarily varied according to class, gender, race, ethnicity, and place, many middle class North Americans clung

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to the notion of the stable, nuclear family as a grounding principal around which to rebuild their personal lives and their society as a whole.\textsuperscript{55}

According to contemporary observers, one of the most troubling developments in inner-city neighborhoods was the increase in matriarchal households, which disrupted normative gender patterns by challenging the authority of the male-headed household. This criticism was most often levied against African American mothers and grandmothers, who were purported to take on more aggressive roles within their families. In the early 1960s, the Detroit Mayor’s Committee for Community Action for Detroit Youth conducted a study to determine the causes of crime and delinquency among young people in the city and how best to eliminate the problem. According to the working papers of the committee, “the development of personalities among lower class Negro children [was] largely determined by broken homes and the influence of maternal authority. The matriarchal pattern is found in homes that are not necessarily broken, but where the father is no longer important because of his inability to provide for his family.”\textsuperscript{56} The report determined that children internalize, “middle class aspirations” for properly ordered nuclear families through the school system, which was controlled by whites, but the reality they saw at home differed dramatically from what they were taught. It was in fact most often mothers who were the breadwinners, as work geared toward women, such as domestic and retail positions, was often more readily available than industrial positions. Due to their frustration with their inability to fulfill their proper male role, men would often leave their family. In cases where the father remained with his family, the children saw a weakened male figure, which worked as a

\textsuperscript{55} Mona Gleason, \textit{Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar Canada}. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 11

disincentive for young black boys imagining their future careers. Therefore, according to the study, black male youths were more likely to turn to the illicit economy and non-normative gendered patterns of interaction within their communities.57

The Detroit Mayor’s Committee also argued that normative gender roles and familial patterns were disrupted in the families of white Southern migrants who settled in Detroit. As migrants from rural areas of Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Arkansas, Georgia and Alabama, they had to adjust to not only life in the north, but also life in the city. According to the report, in the South the dominant focus of life for, “these mountain people” had been the family. “With strong family and kinship ties, they tend to restrict social relations to their own kin when they come to the City,” often leaving them feeling alienated within the urban setting. As with African American families, the substantial shift in work and leisure patterns also tended to lead to the development of matriarchal households. The researchers argued that traditionally the “Southern hillbilly” was the disciplinarian and the mother was the source of love and affection.58 This shifted with their move to Detroit. “With the father’s work away from home, he will have less contact with his children, particularly the boys, with a consequent reduction in his authority over them. The mother increasingly takes over this role of order-giving and discipline...” The father continues to try to maintain authority, but the children view his actions as arbitrary and unjustified and tend to rebel against discipline.59

58 James Gregory’s work demonstrates that white Southern migrants were also marginalized in northern cities and the image of the “Southern hillbilly” became a common stereotype of poor southern whites. Gregory, TheSouthern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
Though the apparent causes of the rise in mother-centered homes differed for white and black residents in Detroit, in both cases community groups and social organizations viewed this development as equally devastating to urban communities. The Detroit Mayor’s Committee argued that, in addition to diminishing the desire for gainful employment among young boys, the dominance of female-led households caused two interrelated issues: the development of homosexual tendencies, and hyper-masculinity that often turned into violence against women. It argued that, “because of the dominance by women and lack of adequate males as models, we are not surprised that a clinical psychologist, listening to the tapes of our interviews suspected a good amount of latent homosexuality among the males.” The authors provide no additional evidence to support this claim, but rather rely on the expertise of a psychologist who never actually met the boys. Apparently, just by listening to the way they talked and the views they expressed in their taped interviews, the unnamed psychologist could detect ‘deviant’ sexual and character traits linked to homosexuality. Alternatively, this perceived crisis of gender identity also took the form of violent heterosexuality. According to the study, the male interviewees regularly, “talk about pimps beating up prostitutes, fathers hitting mothers, and so on. Sexual behavior for the boys has more elements of aggression related to it than elements of affect. Teachers wonder why the boys come to school and ‘just sit.’ They find it irritating. But what could be more obvious passive-aggressive response—again directed at a woman?” The committee concluded that, “the style of life, then, is perceived to be female-centered and aggression against women by males would seem to indicate that such a matriarchy is not a preferred and valued cultural phenomenon at all, but rather a mode of adjustment to the blocked opportunity for males.”

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The Detroit Mayor’s Committee reveals several key ideologies that permeated discourses of domesticity and family. First and foremost, the committee demonstrates the social significance of the patriarchal family order and identifies the female household head as a key factor in a youth’s turn towards delinquency. According to the report, one’s decision to join the illicit economy was made out of both a lack of proper male role-models in the family and as a rebellious act against the improper authority role played by the mother. The fear that female breadwinners led to weakened father-figures was further linked to deviant forms of sexual and gendered interactions, encouraging young boys to either pursue homosexual relationships or to act violently in their relationships with women. These conclusions led the study to reject the possibility that matriarchal families could be a “preferred” family structure, instead viewing it as a phenomenon that developed due to the limited opportunities for men in industrial cities like Detroit—it represented a lack of opportunity, rather than a positive choice made by residents in the downtown neighborhoods.\(^1\) Further, this line of thought also placed much of the blame of delinquency on African American women, who in their attempts to take care of their families by taking the breadwinner role, were supposedly subverting proper gender roles and creating an environment where young boys in particular grew up without a sense of a well-ordered household. The racialized image of the aggressive black matriarch was a prime example of the consequences of the increase in poor, single-parent households in urban centers.

\(^1\) Judith E. Smith's examination of postwar literary representations of motherhood demonstrates that domestic duties and nurturing roles were regularly portrayed as the central role of women in the postwar years. Through these roles, women acted as the backbone of democracy and the guarantor of the republic's survival. Unlike the women examined by the Mayor's Committee, these were not “controlling, infantilizing figures” nor were they feminists who moved from the private to public life. Instead, “they provided female nurture; their stories lionize[d] domestic commitments and domestic strength.” These cultural representations of women served to reinforce the notion that women's proper place was in the home, and that a 'good' mother was one that best provided the full-time care that only middle class women could afford. See: Smith, *Visions of Belonging: Family Stories, Poplar Culture, and Postwar Democracy, 1940-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 4.
Ultimately, contemporaries argued that a major result of family breakdown was juvenile delinquency, and concerns over teenage prostitution and drug addiction became central to wider discussions of vice in the Detroit-Windsor region. In fact, as early as 1946, public concerns over delinquent youths filled the local and national newspapers, helping to fuel wider debates on the issue. The 1955 Special Senate Committee in Canada was undertaken, in part, due to media reports that drug addiction had spread to the country’s youth, a claim which witnesses before the committee vehemently denied. The sensational issue of juvenile delinquency brought people together from a broad array of backgrounds, including psychologists, sociologists, lawmakers, politicians, social organizations, and parents, and dominated national debates over the emerging youth culture of the period. Expert discourses increasingly influenced popular culture of the 1950s, and middle class North Americans adopted the language of ‘normalcy’ to distinguish between healthy and antisocial children. Adults feared that exposure to the ‘new’ youth culture, characterized by an increased disposable income among teens, changing sexual codes that pushed back the average age of marriage, and an increasing reliance on socialization outside of the home, could have harmful influence on otherwise healthy teens. For many adults, the


64 Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*, p. 81.

65 Disposable income meant teens became a key marketing group within an increasingly consumer-driven economy. Although consumerism was increasing in postwar Canadian society, it was occurring on a smaller scale than that found in the United States. For historical accounts of the development of consumerism in Canada and the US, See: Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in Postwar Canada*
preoccupations of youth — new music, new fashions, new dances, fast cars, and fast food — signified trouble.  

The sexual implications of juvenile delinquency in particular drew much attention from parent groups, community leaders, and the media, and specific occurrences of sexual deviance were used as the jumping off point for larger anti-vice campaigns in the border cities. In 1944, the Minister of Health, Dr. John Howe, announced the start of an intense campaign aimed at ridding Windsor of its houses of prostitution and other places that facilitated commercial sex in the city. According to a *Windsor Star* article, this campaign grew out of the, “civic indignation” that ensued after, “two teen-aged boys were found in a Windsor disorderly house.” The article claimed that, “the problem common to all centers of war industry in Canada and the United States was brought to a head here by the frank testimony given by the boys, one 15 and the other 16 years old, who were picked up by the city police morality squad in a raid.” The author of the article seemed particularly concerned that, “the youngsters made no attempt to conceal the purpose of their visit to the raided house.” Significantly, while it was the issue of teenagers engaging in prostitution that sparked the widespread public controversy and support for the campaign against prostitution, statements released by the Dr. Howe demonstrate the way concerns over juvenile delinquents became linked to broader issues of morality, health, and community. “Prostitution” according to the Minister, “comes directly under the scope of the health department’s work because it spreads disease and cannot be made sanitary. In addition, it

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corrupts morals and bankrupts families, and provides a haven for petty criminals and is always associated in one way or another, with alcoholism and the drug traffic.”

So even though it was the issue of youthful customers that drew the attention of the Minister and the Canadian government more generally, they situated these concerns within broader discussions about health, the family, and moral decline as a result of the wartime environment. Again, prostitution was linked explicitly with drug use, and according to the minister, the two problems went hand in hand.

Campaigns against prostitution like those proposed by Dr. Howe were echoed by countless social organizations and community groups. One vocal supporter was the Women’s Local Council of Windsor. Established in 1934 under the name Border Cities Local Council of Women, its objective was to provide women with a stronger voice in community policy-making and other activities. Among their focuses were the issues of postwar readjustment and social services within the cities, placing the issue of juvenile delinquency and crime firmly in their sights. Minutes from Council meetings demonstrate that they were interested in a wide range of related issues, including safety in public parks and city spaces, safe and sanitary housing, safety on public transportation, and so on.

For members of the Council these issues were linked directly to sexuality and delinquency among young people, and one of their main concerns was the perceived increase in what they termed “sex perverts” in the border region. The term ‘sex pervert’ was used to describe a range of sexual perversions and reflected the increasing medicalization of sexuality. The term

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70 See, for example, Minutes, Women’s Local Council of Windsor Records (Sept. 30, 1946), Windsor Municipal Archives, MS 19 I-1/3; p. 2.
was often used in reference to homosexuality, reinforcing the supposedly clear link between non-heterosexual relationships and perversion. Researcher Patrick Brode traces a sex crime panic in Windsor that immediately followed the close of the war, one that helped set the context for broader discussions about youth and sexual deviance in the border city. Over the course of 1946, several men were stabbed in public spaces in the city, causing residents, with the aid of the media, to become increasingly suspicious of men hanging in public places after dark, especially men from other cities and towns. The fact that these men were reported to be homosexual added to the hysteria over the crimes taking place, and news reports invoked the fear that homosexuals could be hanging around undetected and using public spaces for illicit sexual behavior. It was the parents’ responsibility to protect their children from strangers in areas like public parks and other places where they might run into such individuals. Windsor parents worried that contact with these individuals would lead to delinquent behavior, particularly homosexuality (and in the case of the 1946 panic, possibly even death!). Just as matriarchal families could lead to homosexuality among young boys, so too could a lack of supervision on the part of parents.

The Windsor Local Council of Women organized several meetings with city officials and other organizations in order to deal with the safety of young people and suggested several solutions to the moral and physical dangers faced by local teens. In 1946, members of the council proposed a detailed resolution to promote public safety in city parks, which led to the swearing in of Parks Caretakers as Constables that year. They continued to press this issue over the next several years. According to the Report of the Annual Meeting on January 26, 1948, in response

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71 Brode’s work provides a detailed account of the moral panic that ensued, and the legal case that eventually unfolded once a suspect was apprehended. See: Brode, The Slasher Killings: A Canadian Sex-Crime Panic, 1945-1946 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009).

72 Minutes, Women’s Local Council of Windsor Records (Sept. 30, 1946), Windsor Municipal Archives, MS 19 I-1/3; p. 2.
to growing concern that, “delinquency and crime were getting out of control,” especially among children, the Vice-President of the council pushed the Mayor to call a, “broadly representative conference of the religious, social, educational, and recreational bodies, the law and law enforcement agencies, the press and radio, to consider and deal with a serious problem.” The Women’s Local Council were able to bring together a wide range of powers in the city in order to mobilize a campaign aimed as stamping out undesirable people from their public city spaces. Focusing on youth proved to be a powerful tool to draw in media, government, and public support for their cause, and the specter of juvenile delinquency enabled various groups to police public and private spaces within the city.

Groups like the Women’s Local Council of Windsor were instrumental at bringing these issues to the public's attention, and media reports from the period note a clear concern on the part of many city residents. Local residents voiced several interrelated concerns, including that belief that their position along the national border made their city particularly vulnerable. The fear of transients was front and center in borderlanders' minds, and they often worried that menacing figures would harm their children if they failed to take proactive steps to protect them. As one Windsor Star article explained, “Windsor is a bad spot for sex perverts because in addition to the local rash of perverts, there are the ones who cross the river from Detroit seeking greener pastures on this side.” The problem, as the author saw it, was poor parenting: “So few people seem to grasp the seriousness of this wave of sex crime. Many parents dismiss it all by saying that any young girl looking for trouble can fine it easily. But, that is not the answer. Sex perverts attack women who neither make advances nor are looking for anyone to make advances on them.

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73 Annual Report, Women’s Local Council of Windsor Records (January 26, 1948), Windsor Municipal Archives, MS 19 I-1/3; p. 2,p. 2.
The perverts simply grab any woman who comes along, and murder all too often results.” The author’s warning was dire and clear: any woman or girl could become the next victim of the Detroit “sex pervert,” and the community needed to remain vigilant in order to prevent further sexual assaults and murders in the border city.

Detroiter were similarly concerned with a perceived rise in youth crime, drug use, and prostitution, and reformers argued that these problems were directly caused by urban poverty, transience, disease, and family breakdown in urban neighborhoods. The 1963 Detroit Mayor’s Committee on juvenile delinquency approached the issue from the perspective that these were interrelated issues, and in order to understand the root causes of teenage deviance, one had to understand how local youth experienced these issues firsthand. It argued that, “in no small measure this alienation and estrangement is a matter of restricted opportunities to perform conforming behavior. Unemployment, overcrowding in housing, law enforcement that can be overzealous or too lax, social services that often do not reach the people, the little space and opportunity for recreation, low health standards—all these phenomenon restrict opportunity. All of them aid the development of alienation.” For the Mayor’s Committee, one had to understand the compounding effect of all of these social developments in order to curb the incidences of juvenile delinquency among the city’s teenagers.

Narratives about how teenage delinquency led to narcotics addiction drew on the multiple tropes of disease, urban decline, and family breakdown, suggesting again that the problem had to be addressed on multiple fronts. For example, a handbook published for teachers by Detroit Public Schools provided a detailed account of how young boys became addicted to narcotics and

how to watch for the signs of addiction. According to the booklet, young boys tended to start by sniffing or snorting powders and progressed to intravenous drug use, aided in part by the drug peddler who gave them drugs for little or no money in order to get them hooked. “Many boys frequently use the same needle without sterilizing it…Their favorite meeting places…are rooftops, basements, school, and movie lavatories, and in their own homes if they have the opportunity there…During the course of the addiction there is a progressive narrowing of interests. They give up their interests in school, in sports, in their friends.” Eventually, according to the handbook, the boys who became physically addicted to drugs turned to a life of crime in order to pay for their habits. They also often ended up selling drugs to other boys, helping to perpetuate the cycle of delinquency.\(^76\) Significantly, the publication emphasized the fact that boys that did not have proper supervision at home were at higher risk of turning to delinquent behavior, which often put them at risk because of unsanitary practices like needle-sharing. It included a quote from one young addict who claimed that, “I just didn’t care after my parents were divorced, and started to take heroin to forget my feelings.”\(^77\) Similar to the Mayor’s Committee assessment, the Detroit Public Schools handbook emphasized the effects of alienation on teens’ decisions to try narcotics. Teens that were not properly supervised by loving parents were, in this narrative, much more likely to turn to drug use in order to help alleviate the pain that resulted from their family problems. Without the watchful eyes of both parents, they were free to engage in illegal drug use in both local hangouts and even their own homes.

Just as unsupervised boys were likely to turn to illicit and delinquent activities, poor parental supervision of young girls left them susceptible to the corrupting influences of

76 Detroit Public Schools, Instructions Regarding Narcotics (Detroit: Detroit Public Schools, 1952), pp. 33-34.
77 DPS, Instructions Regarding Narcotics, p. 43.
delinquent teenage boys. These narratives echoed the gender division found in discussions of transience, where girls are purported to be susceptible to the corrupting influences of young men. They also reinforce the fact that deviance and delinquency among young women was explicitly linked to sexuality—the ultimate violation of gender norms being sexual promiscuity and public expressions of illicit sexuality. A report by the Juvenile Delinquency Study Committee in Lansing, Michigan explicitly claimed that young women who were allowed to hang out on city streets after dark were likely to turn to prostitution and other forms of delinquency, and called for the close control of their movement throughout the city after dark. According to the report, any observer could find countless, “saddle shoe, sweater girls standing in dimly lighted, recessed store and shop entrances ‘necking’ with the youthful service man or civilian as late as 1 or 2 o’clock in the morning.” These conditions, “whoever is at fault, place the problem in the hands of the police. Present conduct of these children, police know, is many times the first step toward delinquency.” As a result, the report proposed a curfew for children under seventeen that would prohibit them from being in the street between the hours of 10 pm and 6 am, the hours synonymous with the street-walker. In this way, delinquency was not only a family problem, but also a legal one that needed to be properly dealt with by law enforcement officials. When parents failed to provide adequate supervision and moral training, police officers and the courts had to step in to curb the immoral actions of young girls, reinforcing the notion that the state rightfully had the power to control and manage the sexual lives of young women.

A key ingredient that shaped Detroit debates about juvenile delinquency was the issue of race and gang violence among the city’s youth. Again the uneven experience of the border in the

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region often left Detroit looking internally, blaming the social problems of the city’s youth on the influx of Southerners and particularly the “ecological invasion” of Southern African Americans. Through the course of the interviews with local Detroit teens, the researchers of the Detroit Mayor’s Committee were shocked at the level of violence articulated by the interviewees. When asked to, “Tell me about your neighborhood,” the researchers found that the vast majority of both girls and boys commented on the high level of violence and fighting in their neighborhoods. Many of the respondents voiced frustration with this, but also a normalizing tendency, through expressions like, “This is the world, man, and that’s where it’s at.” Further, the interviewees often noted the high level of interracial fighting among young people, and expressed the opinion that white and black groups were not supposed to mingle to any great degree. Records of the Detroit Police Department’s Youth Bureau further demonstrate the high level of interracial violence and the frustration and fear held by many community members. The police often received calls from local community members, who reported when interracial clashes broke out on city streets. Significantly, this violence often began at leisure spaces and other sites where teenagers attempted to hang out, demonstrating that young people used leisure activities as ways to both test and reinforce racial boundaries along the border. In fact, the largest local interracial clash during this period, the 1943 race riot, began on a beach at Belle Isle when fighting between

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81 Numerous letters and copies of inter-office memorandums were sent from the Detroit Police Department to Commissioner Donald Leonard in the year 1953 and 1954. They are by no means exhaustive, but the extensive list of gang-related activities available in this file suggests that it was an issue of key concern to both local residents and enforcement officials. See: Donald S. Leonard Papers, Box 20, Folder: Racial Gang Activities (2), Bentley Historical Library
groups of black and white boys erupted over a struggle to define the color line on the public beach.  

Several historians have studied the effects of racial segregation on youth culture in American cities. A topic less explored is the way in which these interracial leisure interactions transcended the national border and were often reinforced in public discussions of teenage delinquency in Ontario. Public discourses about vice in the Windsor region similarly reveal how Canadians attempted to grapple with the ‘American’ race problem when it threatened to enter their borders. The Windsor Star published several articles about delinquent youths crossing the border over from Detroit and harassing local teens. These reports often provided racialized descriptions of the American ruffians, who were purported to take pleasure in the violent encounters with young Canadian boys. For example, a 1943 article entitled, “Zoot-Suiters Held After Terrorized Local Youth,” claimed that, “Four zoot-suited Detroiters captured at 2 a.m. today by Windsor police near the approaches to the Ambassador Bridge, were charged with common assault in county police court this morning after an orgy of horseplay and zoot-suit

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terror tactics which left a wake of battered youths behind them in the resort section of Kingsville late last night and early this morning.” After throwing the son of the Kingville Police Chief off the city’s dock, the Americans returned to the Kingsville Casino, where they had danced earlier in the night. There they ran into local boys, who begged them to put down their hoses and have a, “fair fist fight.” Apparently the Detroiteres refused, and claimed, “This is how we fight. This is how we handled those colored guys in Detroit!” Though this quote suggests that the Detroit boys were themselves white, the headline presents them as “Zoot Suit” terrorists, an image that drew on contemporary tropes of urban African American and Mexican American youths. The quote also presents an image of rough Detroiters who were unwilling to have a fair fight with the Ontario boys—this was the violent style of fighting they learned on the racially-charged streets of Detroit. The fact that the boys almost made it to the Ambassador Bridge when they were picked up by authorities further suggests that that they were going to cross back into Detroit (and out of Ontario legal jurisdiction) in order to evade arrest. At their arraignment, Magistrate J.A. Hanrahan reminded the youth that they were merely guests of their Canadian neighbors, and acted in a way unbecoming of those who held American citizenship: “As guests of this country,” he scolded, “you violated the hospitality that was extended to you, by boorish rowdyism in which you displayed cowardly conduct similar to what we have come to expect from groups of youths in another country—but not the youths who are privileged to live in the United States.”

85 “Zoot-Suiters Held After Terrorized Local Youth” Windsor Daily Star (July 10, 1943), p. 3.
In other words, the young men were not only in violation of local law, but also of actions morally unbecoming of border city residents.

These young zoot-suiters were precisely the type of individuals reformers feared. They engaged in fighting and violence in illicit leisure establishments; they broke local laws; and they eventually fled the scene of their crimes in an attempt to disappear in the streets of Detroit. It is not incidental that Magistrate Hanrahan—the very judge who seven years later would plunge Windsor into a firestorm of anti-vice investigation—invoked the concept of citizenship when sentencing the boys. Their violent and disrespectful actions were in direct contradiction to the society reformers attempted to create, and their actions were the ultimate expression of what would happen if North Americans did not vigilantly enforce the moral line between productive citizens and immoral outsiders.

**Conclusion**

Though the early postwar years are often remembered as a time of prosperity and material abundance, it was also a time of great uncertainty, which saw a rising gap between the rich and poor, particularly in industrial urban centers like the Detroit-Windsor region. Discussions about vice in the urban borderland reflected this tension, as local residents, social organizations, city planners, activists, and the media all grappled with how to best eliminate the signs of the emerging inequalities. Since contemporaries considered vice to be both a cause and symptom of the urban problem, it consequently became central to various agendas aimed at reshaping urban spaces. Vice industries became one of the most obvious targets of these campaigns, since activities like prostitution and drug use came to symbolize all that was wrong with the postwar
city. Attempts at moral regulation brought a broad group of actors together across the border cities who, despite differing political positions, were united towards similar ends. The resultant anti-vice movements were one approach to addressing sin in the cities, and reformers joined together in nation-building projects designed to demarcate the lines between productive citizens and unwanted outsiders.

The moral programs enacted in the 1940s and 1950s spanned the national border and similar narratives developed on both sides. Detroiters and Windsorites alike worried about the influx of newcomers to the region, and about transient individuals corrupting otherwise healthy communities. They formed social agencies and activist groups aimed at addressing the issues of poverty and crime in the downtown neighborhoods and mobilized a wide array of legal, expert, and lay forces to deal with these issues. There were also, however, instances where these attempts at moral regulation failed, and where vice activities helped to highlight some of the social divides embedded in the relationships between Detroit and Windsor residents. The transient nature of illicit economies meant participants were often drawn across the border in both directions, and identifiable markers of difference (such as dialect, or skin color) could serve to perpetuate notions that outsiders from the neighboring nation were infiltrating otherwise cohesive border communities. For many white Windsor residents in particular, their location next to Detroit was often a source of anxiety and frustration as much as it was a source of excitement, pride, and community-building. While Detroiters seemed much more concerned with the influx of Southerners from their own country, they were also aware of the challenges brought about by the city’s place along the national border. Black middle class residents of Detroit were likely as concerned about the Windsor “jazz riot” as the Canadian organizers of the Emancipation Day
celebration. Indeed, rumors about race riots and violent black gangs only fueled many whites' perceptions that black Americans would ruin their neighborhoods by bringing vice and crime with them. In this sense, moral regulation aimed at eliminating vice demonstrated the congruent ideological perspectives of many Detroit and Windsor residents, but also, the failure of this regulation to operating as a totalizing project. Vice participants many have been subject to intensified regulation through multiple social and legal barriers, but ultimately, these activities continued to thrive, and to push back against normalizing discourse that attempted to erase their existence within the border cities.
In 1986, Mayor Coleman Young announced the Belle Isle International Project, a proposal that would bring as many as twelve casinos to the small island on the Detroit River. The project was designed to attract tourists and additional revenue into the struggling city, whose economy had been in a virtual free-fall since the late-postwar period.\textsuperscript{1} By the 1980s, poverty and crime rates were soaring in Detroit, and the Mayor was looking for any solution that would bring capital into the downtown core.\textsuperscript{2} The project's promoter, Patrick Meehan, claimed that such a venture would draw as many as twenty-five million tourists annually. If approved at the November council, they were set to break ground on its first 1,000-room casino hotel in January of 1987. The grandiose plans called for walkways and trams to link Windsor and Detroit, and monorails to speed Bell Isle's gamblers to and from downtown Windsor. The project was a sure thing, Meehan boasted: “Casino gambling as Belle Isle is going to happen. You can absolutely be sure of that. It's on the way.”\textsuperscript{3}

It would be an understatement to say that Windsor residents were less enthusiastic about the plan. Indeed many residents openly criticized the move, arguing it would severely damage the safe and prosperous Canadian tourism industry. Already frustrated by the twelve strip-clubs and open prostitution that drew Americans across the river, local residence believed that the Belle Isle International Project would greatly expand their vice problems. As one \textit{Windsor Star} editorial explained, “The tourists that we want to come to Windsor and Essex County are those

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  \item By the 1980s, Detroit's economy was so depressed, its assessed valuation was lower than it had been in 1960. Joe T. Darden, et al., \textit{Detroit: Race and Uneven Development} (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), p. 22.
\end{itemize}
who would enjoy our riverfront, parks, and shopping. We do not need nor desire the type of tourists who want to check out the latest strip joint or to see what he can pick up on the street for a one night stand at the cheapest rate.” If this project were to pass, the editorial warned, “The morality of our city will definitely be at its lowest ever and any recovery will be very long-term if possible at all.”

Windsor did not need to foster the growth of more “Miami-style vices”; it already had more than its share.

In the end, though Young's Belle Isle International Project failed to gain City Council approval, critics were not be able to stave off legal gambling in the region for much longer. By the late-1990s, both Windsor and Detroit had caved-in to the pragmatic needs of their cities. Despite Mayor Denis Archer's insistence in 1993 that Detroit did not, “need gambling or the problems it can bring,” in 1998 he tabled a plan to legalize gambling in the city's limits. This time, with few other prospects for economic growth, City Council approved plans to build three casinos in the city's core. That same year, Caesar's Windsor also opened for business, eager to capitalize on cross-border dollars. Though opposition was often fierce, the border cities' need to attract dollars into their cities outweighed the moral arguments against such ventures. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the motor city was banking on the Motor City Casino, hoping it could help fill the void in tourism and industry that had long since faded with the retreat of the auto industries. Similarly in Windsor, “the old-time, blue-collar factory town adjusting to shifting economies,” was relying on the influx of Americans to bring tourist dollars back into their city. “Tijuana North,” as the American media dubbed it, depended on the work of men and women who kept their casinos running, their strip clubs full, and their escort services booming.

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The ultimate irony in the story of vice in the Detroit-Windsor region is that, despite the long history of blaming illicit industries for much of the local urban decay and crime, city officials and boosters eventually turned to legalized vice as the key to their economic recovery. Mayor Coleman Young, whose memoir details his early admiration for illicit forms of money-making in the Prohibition years, became one of the vocal proponents of legalized vice in the city. In this way, his memories of the economically-vibrant communities of the 1920s seem to have shaped his decisions as mayor later on in life. If illegal forms of vice had proved profitable for black communities in earlier decades, perhaps the struggling black metropolis could profit off of legalized versions in the late-twentieth-century. Ultimately, African American voters listened to moral warnings issued by the city's vocal clergy and voted down Young's proposals on illegal gambling. Nonetheless, he had succeeded in reopening debates about the nature of city renewal approaches, the practical advantages of illicit industries, and their place in working-class neighborhoods struggling to survive.

In many ways, then, postwar vice economies foreshadowed some of the economic and social plights that residents of these industrial cities would face by the twenty-first century. Long before city officials fought to legalize vice, illicit industries provided working-class men and women with ways to earn alternative forms of income in precarious labor markets. In the late-1940s and 1950s, increasingly subject to urban poverty and deteriorating housing conditions, thousands of men and women turned to illegal enterprises as a way to make ends meet. Illicit economies further provided social outlets and alternative networks that helped some members of

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the working class feel that they were part of a close community in the downtown cores. In this way, the men and women who worked in illicit economies were able to build their own community ties that countered the middle-class, suburban lifestyle so strongly promoted in the early postwar years.

Certainly, though, illicit economies were not a cure-all for participants. The development of vice in particular neighborhoods served to define these areas marginal and rampant with crime. This took on racialized forms in Detroit, and African American men and women often bore the brunt of the blame for crime and vice. Subsequently they were subject to punitive housing policies and intensified policing practices. Further, the rate at which heroin users and sellers were arrested often made it difficult for them to stay integrated in working-class communities in the long term, and by the early 1960s, many were deeply involved in addict subcultures that alienated them from their previous community ties. Though vice provided important forms of income for men and women, it also made life increasingly difficult.

Lines between licit and illicit activities were determined by a wide range of social actors and signaled a division in moral values in the postwar years. As cities underwent rapid social and economic changes, vice took on conflicting meanings for local residents. For some, prostitution and drug selling were legitimate forms of labor and leisure. For others—including many middle-class reformers, law enforcement officials, and legislators—they were symptoms of the ills plaguing urban centers. This push and pull to define these activities demonstrates that the lines between 'licit' and 'illicit' are often fuzzy and ever-changing. Defining morality was a dynamic process and provides unique insight into the competing social interests that developed in the industrial borderland.
In significant ways, competing moral debates about illicit industries were also about defining citizenship, and were built around notions that there were desirable and undesirable members of society. Moral reformers defined productive citizenship around the supposedly white, middle-class values of prosperity, productivity, and consumption. This reinforced the binary categories of suburban/urban, middle/underclass, and black/white, and vice economies became the ultimate example of the dangers that developed when these lines were blurred. In the postwar years, this took place within a Cold War framework in which undermining the legitimate economy was viewed as a clear threat to the capitalist order. In this way, violating normative sex and consumption patterns was not only damaging to local communities, it was in turn also a threat to the health and well-being of the Canadian and American nations. While debates over the meaning of vice took place in particular localized ways, then, it also had broader implications for a wide range of postwar nation-building projects.

The study of vice economies also provides unique insight into the relationship between Canadians and Americans living in close proximity to their nation's borders in the mid-twentieth century. The struggle between fostering a close cross-border community, and maintaining distinct lines between local residents, has long shaped the relationship between Detroit and Windsor. Though often touted as the friendliest border in the world, this did not come easily nor unproblematically. Indeed, one of the central tenants of the borderlands relationship was asymmetry, and lines of difference were reinforced on multiple levels. The power differentials between the cities of Detroit and Windsor, their uneven economic power, disparate legal regimes, ethnic and racial difference, and national identity all worked in multiple, and often contradictory ways, to create the complex 'border spirit' the shaped local communities. There may have been unprecedented cross-border travel and economic exchange in the postwar period, but this was not
experienced by all residents of the border cities. The very contradictions inherent in the border's dual roles as both a barrier and a crossing point assured that there was never one clear and inclusive borderlands identity.

The struggle to define the borderlands relationship in the Detroit-Windsor region predated the postwar period, and, as debates over legalized gambling at the end of the twentieth century indicate, also continued well beyond it. These debates continue to take on moralizing tones that indicate the tension between fostering a cross-border community and building a barrier to stop unwanted elements from crossing between the nations. As the controversy over legalized gambling demonstrates, debates over citizenship and belonging are still framed along the lines of licit and illicit, as Detroit and Windsor residents struggle to resuscitate their local economies and their decidedly negative international images. Today's legalized vice industries, while bringing much-needed revenue into the local economies, also share some of the dangerous tendencies that illegal forms of vice had in the postwar years. The suburban/urban divides have become even more stark in the region, and a privileging of white, suburban workers at casinos and other illicit businesses continues to make it difficult for city residents to profit off of these large ventures.  

The question remains whether legalizing forms of vice will be able to help solve any of the economic or social problems facing the cities of Detroit and Windsor. It is, however, clear that the local economy continues to be shaped by its long history of cross-border vice, and that illicit forms of money-making and leisure will continue to spark heated debates over the future of the Detroit-Windsor borderland and the meaning of citizenship on the margins.

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