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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

FRANCES PERKINS, Secretary

WOMEN'S BUREAU

MARY ANDERSON, Director



The Nonworking Time of Industrial Women Workers

*Study by Students of the
Hudson Shore Labor School
Under the Direction of Juliet Fisher
July 1940*



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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,
WOMEN'S BUREAU,
Washington, September 17, 1940.

MADAM: I have the honor to transmit to you a brief study on a subject of which there is but slight literature—the nonworking time of industrial women workers. This report was prepared by the students of the Hudson Shore Labor School in the summer of 1940, under the direction of Juliet Fisher.

Respectfully submitted.

MARY ANDERSON, *Director.*

HON. FRANCES PERKINS,
Secretary of Labor.

THE NONWORKING TIME OF INDUSTRIAL WOMEN WORKERS

INTRODUCTION

The shortening of the working day and the working week has long been an important aim of workers and trade-unions. More recently this aim has been met in part by the Federal Government in the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. In general, the concern of organized workers for shorter working hours has been closely connected with the struggle for higher wages and more employment, but increasingly workers have expressed the desire for more leisure time for the enjoyment of their own individual and social pleasures and satisfactions. Within the past few years another interest in non-working-time programs has come from the need of filling the "leisure" time of the unemployed.

The International Labor Office, with some of this new emphasis in view, recently proposed a study of the present use of leisure time by American workers. The project was welcomed by the Hudson Shore Labor School and suggested as part of the program for one of its "units" in the summer of 1940. It was felt that the subject in itself merited study, but it was especially welcomed by the school as an opportunity for workers to study and interpret their own experience.

For a number of years the school has experimented with such a method as a means of promoting understanding of workers' problems. Under the direction of Dr. Amy Hewes, long a teacher in the school, students have been encouraged to pool their experience for study, and this has resulted in a series of student-worker reports. These have dealt with such subjects as *The First Job*, a study in 1922 in which the circumstances surrounding the workers' entrance into industry were investigated. Another, made in 1924, was *Women Workers and Family Support* (Women's Bureau Bull. 49) and measured the burden of family responsibility carried by them. The results of recent economic and legislative changes have been the subjects of other studies. In 1932 the study made was *Women Workers in the Third Year of the Depression* (Women's Bureau Bull. 103). The effects of the N. R. A. were studied similarly in 1934 (*American Federationist*, February 1935) and, in the summer of 1938, the probable effect of the Wage and Hour Act to come into operation in October of that year. It was, therefore, with a conviction that leisure-time activities could best be evaluated through the actual situations with which students have immediate contact that the present study was undertaken.

The 43 women workers whose programs are here reported comprised the entire student body at the Hudson Shore Labor School in 1940.

The majority came from the Atlantic seaboard, but the school included others from Chicago, Denver, Pittsburgh, Richmond, and Washington. They represented a variety of national and cultural backgrounds. Two workers came from Canada, and 7 were Negro workers. Their occupations also were varied. There were dress-makers, shirtmakers, milliners, domestic workers, spinners and weavers, bakery cooks, flat-glass workers, electrical workers, a laundry inspector, a waitress, a beauty-parlor operator, a cork worker, a glove maker, a pocketbook worker, and several others. Thirty-two of them, three-fourths of the total, were members of unions, affiliated either with the American Federation of Labor or with the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

The schedule used included a calendar made out for "an average week" that might have occurred during the preceding fall or winter (1939-40). The information gathered was concerned with the ways in which the workers generally used their nonworking time, a picture supplemented by descriptions of less frequent activities and the annual vacation period. A committee of students drafted the schedules, and all the students in the unit took part in the interviews in which the schedules were filled and assisted in the tabulation and its interpretation.

HOW THEY DIVIDED THEIR TIME

Hours involved in work program.

Four-fifths (34) of the workers had an average workweek of 40 hours or more (see table I). The end of the actual hours spent in the mill or factory did not, however, find the worker free to follow her own inclinations. For some of these workers traveling time to and from the place of employment was of long duration, and many of them felt that for the purposes of this study it should be calculated as part of the working time. Many of the women also found housework waiting to be done when they got home or had certain duties to perform before leaving for work in the morning. When this combination of job, transportation, and housework was added up it made a heavy program for some workers. In the case of 8 of these women it made a workweek of 55 but under 65 hours, for 10 a week of 50 and under 60 hours, and for 10 others a week of 45 and under 55 hours. It should be noted that some of the household duties were performed on Saturday and Sunday, and that 31 of the 43 workers had a 5-day week in the shop. Three of the 8 whose factory hours were 45 or more had additional work hours of 15 and under 20, but the total cannot be determined.

TABLE I.—Average total weekly work program

Number of shop hours worked in week	Total number of workers	Number of workers whose housework and traveling time totaled in the week—					
		Under 5 hours	5, under 10 hours	10, under 15 hours	15, under 20 hours	20, under 25 hours	Indefinite hours
Total.....	43	7	11	9	12	3	1
30, under 35.....	1			1			
35, under 40.....	8	1	1	1	3	2	
40, under 45.....	26	3	9	7	6	1	
45 and over.....	8	3	1		3		1

Hours of nonworking time.

The most important subdivisions of the nonworking time were found to be the time used for classes, recreation, union activity, and shopping. Table II shows the comparative importance of these various types of activity in the workers' lives in an average week. Recreation, which included such things as movies, "dates," sports, club activities, parties, and other forms of amusement, took the greatest number of hours of the nonworking period for most workers. Two-thirds of the workers (29) spent 20 or more hours a week in some form of recreation, 12 of these devoting 30 hours or more to having a good time.

Three-fifths of the workers (26) were engaged in some form of union activity during this average week, the majority of them giving to it between 1 and 10 hours. One worker who devoted 20 hours to union work had only 8 hours for recreation, but another who gave 22 hours managed to squeeze in 15 hours of recreation. Only 4 union members did not list any weekly union activity.

A majority of these students at the Hudson Shore Labor School had already participated in various kinds of classes in the year before they came to the school. About half (21) of the students spent from 1 to 3 hours a week in classes, 3 spent 4 or 5 hours, and 7 spent more than 5.

TABLE II.—Time spent in various activities in the average week

Number of hours a week	Number of workers engaged in—		Number of hours a week	Number of workers engaged in—	
	Union activity	Recreation		Classes	Shopping
Total.....	43	43	Total.....	43	43
None.....	17		None.....	12	2
Under 5.....	9		1.....	1	4
5, under 10.....	7	3	2.....	11	12
10, under 15.....	6	2	3.....	9	6
15, under 20.....	2	9	4.....	2	14
20, under 25.....	2	9	5.....	1	
25, under 30.....		8	Over 5.....	7	2
30 and over.....		12	Indefinite.....		3

THE KINDS OF THINGS THEY DID

Types and extent of recreation.

In general, these 43 workers did not differ markedly in the ways in which they found their recreation, though the emphasis varied somewhat. Twenty-one went to the movies once a week, 2 went twice a week (see table III), and a good many others went to the movies as part of a "date." Five workers did not include a movie in their weekly program.

As a means of recreation, "dates" and visiting ranked next to the movies in popularity. About half the women enjoyed these pastimes, many of them more than once a week, "dates" being the more frequent. Visiting friends and relatives was done once a week by 10 women, twice or more by 12. For 16 of the workers, social and industrial clubs, usually sponsored by the Y. W. C. A. or church, furnished recreation at least once a week; for 9 of them, more than once a week. Sports did not occur very frequently in the average week's program, partly, perhaps, because the week was selected from the fall and winter months.

Eleven workers carried on other recreational activities, such as automobile riding, knitting, bridge-playing. One girl worked with puppets once a week, another attended camp meetings every Saturday night, and another worked twice a week on a newspaper published by the Y. W. C. A. Only 28 workers of the 43 considered reading important enough to enter it on the weekly schedule at least once, and often it was combined with listening to the radio and with conversation.

TABLE III.—Kinds of recreational activity and number of times engaged in during the average week

Kinds of recreational activity	Total number of cases (43 workers)	Number of workers who engaged in specified activity during week—				
		Once	Twice	3 times	Over 3 times	Indefinite times
Movies.....	23	21	2			
Visiting.....	22	10	11	1		
"Dates".....	22	7	7	6	2	
Clubs.....	16	7	5	3		
Sports.....	10	7	1	2	1	
Dancing.....	8	8				
Parties.....	3	3				
Music; theater.....	2	2				
Reading.....	28					28
Other.....	11	7	2			2

¹ Most workers engaged in several kinds of activity.

Organized recreation.

About three-quarters of these workers found some part of their recreation under the auspices of an organization—generally the Y. W. C. A. or the union (see table IV). Club activities and participation in sports were most usually carried on in this fashion. It is of interest that the two Canadian workers found a large proportion of their recreation through the Workers' Education Association, to which the United States has nothing quite comparable. Only one worker indicated membership in an organized nationality group, and only one participated in athletics provided by her factory. The recreation found individually or with a few friends was, however, the most important, since movies, visiting, and "dates" generally are of this individual character.

TABLE IV.—Kinds of organized recreation and auspices under which they were carried on

Kinds of organized recreation	Total number of instances	Number of instances under the auspices of—				
		Y. W. C. A.	Union	Church	City (board of education)	Other
Total.....	46	16	15	5	3	7
Clubs.....	18	10		3		5
Sports.....	18	5	7	1	3	2
Parties.....	3		2	1		
Dancing.....	7	1	6			

Classes.

All the classes in which 31 workers participated in the winter preceding this study were under the auspices of an organization, for the most part the Y. W. C. A., the union, and the city board of education (see table V). The most popular subject was current events, which often seemed to emphasize economic and social subjects, followed by economics and dramatics, with equal numbers. English, which included parliamentary procedure and public speaking, ranked next. The category "other" included classes in photography, sculpture, music, languages, career planning, culinary hints, and psychology.

One worker attended forums on topics of current interest 9 hours each week at the Jewish People's Institute in her city and was a member of a group that listened every Thursday night to the radio program "Town Hall of the Air" and discussed the debates afterward. Another worker attended a class in economics sponsored by her union and was chosen union representative to attend the weekly classes in economics and union problems held by the Affiliated Schools in New York.

The majority of these workers apparently took advantage of whatever classes their unions had to offer. Only five indicated classes given by their union in which they did not participate. Four of them were attending other classes and did not have time to study additional subjects. The fifth had finished the course in public speaking offered by her union.

TABLE V.—Kinds of classes and auspices under which they were carried on

Kinds of classes	Total number of classes (31 workers)	Number of classes under the auspices of—					
		Y. W. C. A.	Union	City (board of education)	Church	W. P. A.	Other
Total.....	50	15	13	11	3	2	6
Current events.....	9	6			2	1	
Economics.....	7	1	1	2	1	1	1
Dramatics.....	7	3	3	1			
English.....	6	1	5				1
Commercial.....	4			3			
Union tactics.....	2		2				
Sports.....	2		2				
Other.....	13	4		5			4

Union activity.

For some of these workers the weekly figure for union activity did not really represent the amount of time given to this work, which tends to be greater at some periods than at others. For example, one individual listed 7 hours of union activity a week, which included an executive board meeting and a shop meeting. In addition she had a membership meeting every third Friday and shop stewards' meetings and committee meetings twice a month. Another worker who listed only 2 hours of union work a week was a member of the grievance committee in her factory, which met with the employer at least once a month and sometimes more often. A third worker who also gave only 2 hours a week regularly to her union gave whole weeks to organizing and house-to-house visiting in times of strike or lock-out. In general,

the union activity included shop and union meetings, executive board meetings, and organizing work.

Mention should be made of several persons who did not belong to a union but devoted a great deal of time to organizational activity. One worker belonged to the Women's Auxiliary of the United Transport and Service Employees of America, the Women's Trade Union League, the Negro Youth Federation, and attended meetings of all three of these organizations each week. Another, a member of the executive board of the American Youth Congress, also attended weekly meetings of the Christian Youth Council, of the Y. W. C. A. Industrial Club, and the Metropolitan Y. W. C. A. Council of New York.

The students were asked also to indicate activities which they carried on less frequently than once a week but several times during the year. More than half (25) attended concerts during the year—3 of these went as frequently as once a month, 6 went from 4 to 6 times a year, while 14 attended perhaps 1 or 2 concerts a year. Plays, often amateur productions, were attended by 32 workers during the year, varying from 1 play a year to 1 a month. Several attended the theater only during the summer.

ANNUAL VACATIONS

Annual vacations with pay have only recently begun to be extended to the workers in mills and factories. Of the 43 students at the Hudson Shore Labor School somewhat less than one-third (14) were given such vacations, 5 getting 2 weeks, the others only 1. In all but 3 instances the worker received a paid vacation of at least 1 week if she had been with the company for 1 or more years; in several cases a 2-weeks' vacation was given after 5 years of employment. In 3 cases (2 domestic workers and 1 bakery worker) a week's paid vacation was given through individual arrangement with the employer. Only 8 of these 14 workers were union members, but in each case the paid vacation was part of the collective agreement with the employer. Six had no choice as to the time of vacation.

Of the remaining 29 workers who did not receive an annual vacation with pay, only 10 had no vacation of any kind in the year preceding the study; the others either took a vacation without pay or were given an enforced one by plant shut-downs in slack seasons. Of the total number of workers studied, only 3 participated in a vacation savings plan. One used a savings-bank plan; the second, a plan operated by the Federal Credit Union, a union undertaking; and the third used a plan "operated by the timekeeper, planned for the girls' own good, purely voluntary—may deposit any amount desired."

There seemed to be no difference in the way in which workers with paid vacations and those without spent their vacation time. The largest group, 12 in number, went to a resort or on an automobile trip, 5 visited New York and the World's Fair. Several visited relatives, and a few stayed at home. Three workers used Unity House, belonging to the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union—the only instance of the use of union facilities for the vacation. Others went to Y. W. C. A. camps. The two Canadian workers spent some time at the Workers' Education Association Summer School. Two workers used their vacations for organizational work for their union.

Twenty-two workers listed the total cost of vacations, which apparently was borne by the individuals concerned. Several others noted that their vacation expenses had been met by various organizations or by relatives. The cost of vacations varied from \$7 for a week at a lake with a girls' club to \$100 for 2 weeks at the New York World's Fair. Six workers' vacations cost \$15—the most usual amount reported.

CONCLUSIONS

The shorter workweek prevailing today has given the use of so-called leisure time new importance. The 2-day week end, now enjoyed by many workers, has brought an opportunity to go further afield in search of recreation or education and makes more practicable a planned program of non-working-time activities. One result of the study was the students' realization of possibilities in better planning of the use of leisure time.

It is chiefly in her nonworking time that the individual worker finds the opportunity for self-expression and development of her creative powers. The activities she engages in then affect her health and social relations; they include most of her efforts to build her trade-union and other workers' organizations; they have a contribution to her role in a democratic society. This study by the workers of their actual experiences persuaded many of them that the subject of non-working-time activities should be given more serious study than it has yet received.

Appendix.—CASE HISTORIES OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

No. 1: I work in a ladies' blouse factory in Connecticut. I work 35 hours a week. I don't like my work. When I sit at that machine hour after hour I feel that I am not making good use of that time. My mind is not occupied. But I find that working 7 hours a day, getting through at 4 o'clock, and having no work on Saturdays is very convenient. Because I had to leave school at 15 to go to work, I have been trying to make up my education during my leisure time by reading, belonging to a current-events class at the Y. W. C. A., and attending evening classes provided by the city board of education, 2 nights a week. These classes give me an opportunity to get my high-school diploma, and later I expect to take an evening course in college. My union has not provided any workers' education, but I expect to get a class started when I get home.

I have a girl-scout troop once a week. On Wednesday night I go to an Italian girls' club. It really started out to be a recreation club. We did everything from games to basketball, swimming, hiking, and bicycling. Last summer we went to a lake for 7 days. This last year we started an educational program combined with the recreational one. We started having speakers once a month. One was the executive secretary of the Visiting Nurses Association, and she in turn took us to her building and guided us through it. We even arranged to have Dr. B. of New York speak to us on marriage. A member of the club spoke to us on child psychology. We went to plays in New York and to the opera once. The girls were a little uneasy about changing from one kind of thing to another. I don't know what they are doing while I am away.

Most of the girls at the Italian club are personal friends of mine and we play cards together and visit together—mostly on Friday night and Saturday. I have only a few friends in town whom I like to visit. I live more than a mile away from town. When I go to town there is a woman I go to see who has a book store, and we talk for hours and I enjoy it very much. I also have a friend who owns a beauty parlor and we also talk for hours. I very rarely go to the movies—only about once a month. I don't care for the radio much except for music. I never listen to skits. I visit with my girl friend when I have nothing else to do. On Sunday afternoon I always try to take a walk, especially when I have been reading for a long time. I like biographies. I also like psychology. It appeals to me and sometimes I see something interesting at the library and pick it up. That is how I got interested in child psychology.

No. 2: I have worked in the laundry industry in Brooklyn since 1931. When I was in high school I worked there during the summer and when I came out I went in there and worked full time. I work 43 hours a week, on 4 days from 7:30 to 6, on Friday until 4, and I have Saturdays off. During my lunch hour I sell stockings, cosmetics,

and underwear to the girls in the shop. I sell it to them on time and they pay me on Saturday.

I continued to work and to go to school in the evening college course at Brooklyn College, which takes about 6 years to get a degree; but after I joined the union I could not go to classes as many nights as before. The boss did not allow me as many privileges. He used to allow me to get out an hour early in order to get to my classes. We did not have a minimum wage either before I joined the union, and so I had to work extra hours on Saturday in order to make up for the hours I took off to go to school. He said I did not have any reason to join the union because I was doing all right without it. But I didn't see it that way.

I started in high school in February 1935, and have been going all the time since except for half a term. I did a very foolish thing and wasted a lot of time. I had read a lot of books in some of the artistic subjects and was going to major in philosophy. Then I changed my mind and wanted to go into law, but last year I finally decided that I wanted to study labor and economics. I took a course in anthropology. I liked it very much and I had an excellent teacher who made out a program for me to follow.

When I wasn't allowed to get out early from work I had to cut evening school down to 3 nights a week. Before that I had been going 5 nights but not the same hours every night—6:30 to 10:30 on 3 nights, the other nights I had to go only an hour. Now on the nights that I don't go to school I go to the union to do some work. I have an executive board meeting on one night and my joint board meeting is on the other night.

On Saturday morning another girl and I have little children come in for tutoring. We usually have about four or five. There are a lot of children, some are children of union members and some are not. We help them get through their classes in grade school and high school. We had one Chinese, one Jewish girl, and three colored girls.

I am secretary of our local and on Saturday I am at the union office from about 3:30 to 5, and then I usually go out with people around the office. We go somewhere for dinner and then usually go to Harlem. I get home about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, and then I spend most of Sunday sleeping. Sometimes I go to the movies on Sunday.

I get a vacation each summer. Usually I spend it at Asbury Park but I often take out other weeks when I am working for my final examination.

No. 3: I am a winder in a textile mill in Massachusetts. I have a 40-hour week with no work on Saturday. I go to work at 7 and am finished at 4. In my work at the mill I stand up the whole 8 hours, and after that I don't feel like doing anything. I have an hour for lunch and I eat at home, and it takes all my hour to go home and eat and get back to work. Once a week after work and after supper (I always have to help with household duties after supper) I go to a meeting of the executive board of the union. That meeting usually takes up most of the night. I am the recording secretary. Sometimes we have a general union meeting on Saturday.

Once or twice a week I go to the movies, generally on a date. I have no money of my own because I give it all to the house, and so I never go to the movies when I have to spend my own money. Between

times I read and listen to the radio. I read fiction and nonfiction—mostly best sellers in fiction. I get most of the books from the library and a few from a 2-cent-a-day rental library.

If the union meeting is in the morning on Saturday, it will last anywhere from 10 to 2, and then I go home or else get something to eat and go shopping with friends. We get back about 6 o'clock, have supper between 6 and 7, and generally on Saturday nights I have a date. Sometimes we go to the movies, once in a while we go into Boston, but a great part of the time we visit mutual friends and sit around and talk and have something to eat. It's nothing very exciting. I wish we had some place to go.

I wish we had some classes. There are night classes in Boston, but the expense would be considerable going in and out, and you know when you come out of work you are rather tired. When I graduated from high school I was rather interested in writing. I had an English teacher who was interested in my writing in school and helped me a lot, and if I had been able to do it I would have liked to take a course in short-story writing. But I had to go to work right away. I had two younger brothers and the family needed my money.

I have never had a vacation since I have been working, outside of the enforced ones in slack season, but sometimes these are 3 months long. There is not very much to do at this time. I stay around home and help my mother with the housework and sometimes go out and help a friend with her housework.

No. 4: I assemble lamps in an electrical-equipment factory in Connecticut. I work 40 hours a week, with Saturdays off. I start work at 7 and finish at 3.30, with half an hour off for lunch. When I'm through I have a good time. I like to do everything. I like all kinds of sports, but swimming is my favorite. When there is no swimming I go ice skating. I spend quite a lot of time at the Y. W. C. A., where we have a basketball floor and a roller-skating rink. We also have classes there, such as public speaking, drama, and current events.

The Y. W. C. A. has a camp, and on Saturdays I go up there if a gang is going. I like to dance, and I go out on dates about three times a week. I stay home about two nights a week in order to get some sleep. On dates we go roller-skating, or to the movies, or to dine-and-dance places. On Sunday I stay in bed until 11 and then I spend some time cleaning up my room and getting my clothes ready for work the following week. Then I read the paper and usually go riding around with my brother. Then it's about time for dinner. And practically every Sunday evening I go roller-skating.

I get a 2-weeks vacation with pay. Last year I went to Philadelphia and stayed with my cousin. I spent a week there and then I spent 10 days (I took a few extra days off) on Long Island with a girl friend. We went down to Jones Beach and saw the sights and generally had a good time.