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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing Soft Citizenship</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminished Citizenship: Soft Citizenship and the Status Quo</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Protector-Vulnerable-Deviant Dynamic</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling the Field of Cultural Visibility</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genealogical Thinking: Tracing Soft Citizenship through History</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Culture and the American Imaginary</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Citizenship</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Temperance in All Things; a Pre-History of Soft Citizenship</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sober Citizens: Intemperance as Social Problem, Temperance as Solution</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a Temperate Nation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconic Citizenship</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sobriety for the Sake of Families and Children</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriot Performativity</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prototypical Soft Citizenship</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Citizenship and Cultural Censorship</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Soft Citizenship and Shadow Politics: Interpreting Gendered Negotiations of Power through the Politicization of Mass Culture in the early 1900s</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Progressive Era: Creating a Culture of Care</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Public Sphere</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema as Social Problem</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Interpreting Dynamics of National Inclusion and Exclusion in Early Cinema Content: 1895 -1915</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pursuit of Profit and the Commodity Form</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Culture, Capitalism, and Consciousness</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaging National Community: Assimilating the Masses</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Imagining National Community: Screening Familial America ........................................ 103
The Limits of National Belonging: The White Nation and the Black Menace .......... 110
Chapter Four: Contested Citizenship, Catholic Crusaders, and the Code .................. 120
  Catholic Mobilization and the Creation of the Production Code .......................... 123
  Cracks in Hegemony: The American Dream, Broken Promises, and the Big Screen 132
  Catholic Mobilization; the Legion of Decency ............................................ 144
  Cinematic Content Post-Code ........................................................................ 147
  Conjuring the Parent-Citizen in Cinema Censorship Discourse ....................... 151
  Cracks in Religious Hegemony ....................................................................... 159
  A New Era in Cinema Censorship History ..................................................... 163
Chapter Five: Strong Soft Citizenship and the State after the 1970s ...................... 164
  The New Subalterns and Soft Citizenship ..................................................... 168
  The Cultural Landscape: CARA and the New Censorship ............................... 178
  CARA and the Parent-Protector ..................................................................... 184
  The 1990s and the Parent-Citizen .................................................................. 187
Conclusion: Millennial Soft Citizenship --- Shedding Strangeness ....................... 194
  The Move Towards Marriage: Sexual Identity and the State ......................... 197
  A Typical Hollywood Ending ......................................................................... 204
References ........................................................................................................ 211
ABSTRACT


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My thesis is influenced by such scholars as Lee Edelman, Shane Phelan, and Lauren Berlant, who sit at the intersection of queer theory and citizenship studies, my project undertakes a genealogy of contemporary citizenship subjectivity and practice in the United States. I designate my object “soft citizenship,” to separate it from citizenship as defined by the state through civic and electoral practices, and to define a mode of thinking and performing politics characterized by familial-based moralization, child-centricity, sentimentality, and politicized consumption. My use of genealogy is indebted to Michel Foucault and enables a materialist understanding of cultural phenomenon as effects of social forces; for example, my project reveals the process by which the nation began to be imagined through the trope of the heteronormative family, a practice still prevalent today, which reflects the child-centricity and familial-based moralization I attribute to soft citizenship.

Edelman and Berlant, among others, attribute the increased ubiquity of these citizenship characteristics to the rise of the New Right beginning in the late-1960s, but I suggest that classifying this citizenship formation as novel obscures both the historical processes that led to its naturalization and the constellation of variables, economic, cultural, and political, which influenced it’s emergence and subsequent development at historical junctures marked by increased symbolic and material strife in US history. I locate the emergence of soft citizenship in the mid-nineteenth century social purity work of white middle-class Protestant women who appropriated public concerns with morality, demonstrated by the popularity of the temperance movement, to create public and political identities for themselves. As I demonstrate, gender, race, and class ideologies, as
well as white middle-class women’s political disenfranchisement and relative economic empowerment as consumers, influenced the emergence and subsequent development of soft citizenship. The public discourse of morality they forged inaugurated a flexible form that has taken different shapes in the intervening years, but that, as current discourse around marriage equality, family planning, and sex education programs in public schools suggests, has proven both durable and useful.

Cinema censorship is the privileged institutional site of my research since mass culture is a dense transfer point for social values and a historically significant site of social reform agitation. The content moralists demanded censored reflects their moral views on sexuality, including sex acts, family forms, and gender roles; these moral investments reproduced the status quo on race, gender, and class relations, as opposed to providing a substantial critique of social inequalities. The repetition of images and ideas in mass culture, which appeals to a broad audience, naturalizes certain cultural logics and social values.
INTRODUCING SOFT CITIZENSHIP

My dissertation is anchored by a concept that I have developed in order to cohesively analyze interrelated trends that dominate the political present; the concept I introduce is ‘soft citizenship.’ I make use of the term to explore a set of characteristics that various cultural theorists have identified as dominating contemporary US politics – child-centricity, sentimentality, familial-moralization, and the politicization of private acts. I argue that these characteristics and tendencies are guiding logics that shape political thought and action. In addition, I demonstrate that they describe an actual citizenship form that comprises a subjectivity and set of practices with a lengthy history. The project is timely, since, as I will demonstrate, soft citizenship is a dominant logic permeating the political present and influencing the development of US citizenship subjectivity and by extension the enactment of citizenship.

Most scholars associate the political logics and forms that I characterize as soft citizenship with the rise of the New Right in the 1970s, which culminated in Ronald Regan’s ascent to presidency in 1980. For example, Lauren Berlant argues that in this period the religious Right affirmed the hetero-normative family unit as properly national

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1 See for instance; Lauren Berlant’s *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, Roger Lancaster’s *Sex Panics and the Punitive State*, Lee Edelman’s *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, David Harvey’s *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, and Lisa Duggan’s *The Twilight of Inequality*.

2 For historical accounts of the rise of the New Right see: Lisa McGirr’s *Suburban Warriors: The Rise of the New American Right*, William Berman’s *America’s Right Turn: From Nixon to Clinton*, and Sara Diamond’s *Facing the Wrath: Confronting the Right in Dangerous Times*. 
and constructed non-familial sexuality as a threat to the nation creating an us/them binary and policeable parameters around acceptable national subjects. Although I obviously agree with Berlant I see this dynamic as an intrinsic feature of the US nation-building project, whereas she theorizes this period as a moment of rupture. In fact, Berlant reads saving the child from a trauma inducing “adult culture” as a central dynamic that structures contemporary political culture.

Instead of interpreting the 1980s as a point of historical rupture, my project emphasizes genealogical thinking by tracing characteristics prevalent in the political present to their previous articulations. My narrative emphasizes continuity, the recursivity of cultural logics, and their influence on US citizenship subjectivity and political agency. In doing so I intervene and transform the dominant narrative and interpretation of the political present. I focus on historical formations of soft citizenship in order to demonstrate the lengthy process of naturalization across political and cultural spheres that the form developed within prior to its rise to dominance. Although I do not perceive the 1980s as marking a historical rupture with previous cultural logics or forms of imagining and enacting citizenship, I do identify the period as one in which the characteristics that I associate with soft citizenship stepped out of the shadows claiming a dominant role in US politics as well as culture. In this project I trace the emergence of these logics and their

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3 According to Berlant, the rise of family values discourse coincides with the rise of the Reganite Right and uses sexual normativity to police the boundaries of proper citizenship for the sake of children, which justifies regulatory state actions that would otherwise be an affront to “liberty” -- a concept as lofty as the abstract innocent child and as influential as the abstract generalness of home, family, and community. Berlant argues: “in the new, utopian America, mass-mediated political identifications can only be rooted in traditional notions of home, family, and community” (5). For Berlant, it is the ordinariness, the abstracted generalness of home, family, and community that enable mass politics to be framed in these terms and which enables the nation to be imagined through them as universal signs of being and belonging.

4 Ibid especially pages 59, 72, and 76.
development at various junctures in US history prior to their popularization in the 1980s through a case study of cinema censorship history, a site where soft citizenship emerged and developed at various historical junctures.

My genealogy begins with soft citizenship’s pre-history in the temperance movements of the nineteenth century. In this period the logics associated with soft citizenship first appear on the local and later the national political scene, which is illustrated by reform initiatives to create norms around sobriety. Sobriety, as an emerging conduct norm, is then interpreted as a sign of good personal character, which is in turn constructed as a requirement for participation in rational political decision-making, the making of stable family life, and participation in the national community. Importantly, national belonging, political participation, and family status begin to be identified with one another in this period. The politicization of personal conduct and its use as a marker that identifies one as an acceptable member of society anticipates the assimilatory logics at the core of soft citizenship and enables subaltern populations to claim political agency by identifying with conduct norms that reflect national values. I demonstrate that the politicization of personal conduct and construction of national values anchored in personal conduct norms provided disenfranchised Anglo Saxon Protestant women access to the public realm as moral agents who could claim allegiance to and work to defend national values. As my project will show, soft citizenship emerges as a discernible mode of thinking and doing citizenship when disenfranchised Anglo Saxon Protestant women began to participate in the temperance movement and expanded the temperance impulse for assimilatory reform to various projects throughout the Progressive era. In the present,
our obsession with personal conduct circles around sexuality as demonstrated by the proliferation of discourses, laws and policies pertaining to abortion, sexual publicness, and the inclusion of sexual minorities in social institutions from the military to marriage.

My genealogical approach to understanding the present focuses on the process of naturalization by making connections across vast temporal terrain. In addition, my analysis of the emergence and development of soft citizenship reveals assimilatory logics at the center of the US nation-building project. Even more, my project describes the processes by which various groups including drinkers, African Americans, feminists, and sexual minorities are cast as outsiders within the nation at different historical junctures that correspond to shifts in citizenship inclusivity as well as cinema censorship policy.

After discussing the emergence of personal conduct as a politicized social concern in the temperance movement I analyze the politicization of moralization and its infiltration into US culture and politics in subsequent historical periods through an extended case study of cinema censorship reform projects. Cinema censorship projects were warranted by arguing that cinema was a powerful technique of socialization, which influenced the moral development and by extension the conduct of vulnerable populations. The case study enables an analysis of the evolution of soft citizenship as a discernible citizenship subjectivity and set of practices that coalesce in the early 1900s at the intersection of mass and political cultures through cinema censorship projects. First, I analyze the development of soft citizenship by maternal activists during cinema censorship’s first wave between 1895 and 1930. I then consider the appropriation of soft citizenship by culturally disenfranchised Catholic men in cinema censorship’s second
wave, between 1930 and the mid-1960s. This is followed by a consideration of the temporally parallel development of soft citizenship’s third and fourth waves throughout the 1980s and 1990s. I show that Christian conservatives appropriated soft citizenship logics and strategies in the 1970s, a move that provided the form with unprecedented access to the political sphere of state politics and enabled it new degrees of publicity leading to the fourth wave of soft citizenship in the 1990s when the form was appropriated by parents. Finally, my concluding chapter analyzes the state of soft citizenship now through an analysis of the form’s appropriation by fifth wave soft citizenships liberal lesbians and gay men who I also refer to as millennial queers.

**Diminished Citizenship: Soft Citizenship and the Status Quo**

I designate my object “soft citizenship,” to separate it from citizenship as defined by the state through civic and electoral practices, and to emphasize the role of “soft” politics in nation building. As I will demonstrate, the logics of soft citizenship become particularly enticing to culturally and/or politically disenfranchised people when cracks begin to appear in the hegemonic organization of society and they have an opportunity to align themselves with “tradition” and defend the status quo. Soft citizens take this as an opportunity to claim allegiance to national values and constitute themselves as members

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5 Antonio Gramsci’s popular theory, hegemony, argues that there is a possibility for political change when there is a fissure, or a gap, between ideology and reality. For Gramsci, a social group or class exercises dominance in part by force, but more importantly by obtaining the consent of the majority. The proletariat in this analysis has some control over their consciousness and can contest the dominant ideology, which suggests that ideology is not total. In *The Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci uses the word ideology very infrequently. Words and phrases like “conceptions of the world” and systems of thought” are used instead. Ideology, understood as the superstructure, does not simply reflect the base for Gramsci; it is a force compelling repetition of relations of production. See *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. 
of the dominant formation disclaiming their subalternity. In early soft citizenship formations it was subalterns able to claim moral authority and convert moral capital into political capital who were at the forefront of the form’s development. The first wave of soft citizenship was comprised of politically disenfranchised maternal activists and it was culturally disenfranchised Catholic reformists who developed the second wave. However, waves three and four, Christian conservatives and secular parents, respectfully, disengaged the form from its attachment to subalternity. Importantly, they did construct themselves as vulnerable insofar as their values and way of life were under attack. As I will show, fifth wave soft citizens, millennial queers reclaimed soft citizenship for subalterns.

I interpret soft citizenship as a mode of diminished citizenship, as implied by the title of my project, since soft citizenship sentimentalizes the political by focusing on the innocence of children and a fantasy version of national life that pivots around familial visions of the good life. In addition, soft citizenship is an assimilatory mode of practicing political agency that seeks to reproduce status quo social relations, with a difference, the difference invariably being the inclusion of a particular group of almost-normal subalterns into the dominant social formation. The possibility of critically engaged citizenship and a vibrant public sphere diminishes with successive waves of soft citizenship, which brings the logics embedded in the form closer to dominance until they disengage the form from its attachment to subalternity. Importantly, they did construct themselves as vulnerable insofar as their values and way of life were under attack. As I will show, fifth wave soft citizens, millennial queers reclaimed soft citizenship for subalterns.

In Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films William Uricchio and Roberta E. Pearson use the terms ‘social formations,’ marginalized social formations,’ and ‘dominant social formations’ to enable “consideration of such factors as social, cultural, academic, and political capital that, while undoubtedly related to economics, are not necessarily economically expressed” (206). This description of relation formations of power has proven useful to my theorization of soft citizenship since members of the dominant social formation are not necessarily wealthy elites, but are in fact often derived from the middle-class.
become deeply woven into the fabric of our social world. The characteristics I associate with soft citizenship become entrenched in the national imaginary, since it is mass culture that soft citizens claim guardianship over. In addition, as subalterns are incorporated into the dominant social formation they become invested in remaining in power, which diminishes the possibility of radical social transformation. It is the investment in extant values that makes soft citizenship a primarily assimilatory model of citizenship when taken up by subalterns. In order for subalterns to construct themselves as normal national subjects the groups that they construct as morally deficient are simultaneously constructed as potentially dangerous, which reproduces the protector-vulnerable-deviant model just discussed.

**The Protector-Vulnerable-Deviant Dynamic**

Throughout each of its historically specific manifestations several characteristics and strategies can be attributed to soft citizens. Soft citizens claim that they are acting to protect a vulnerable population. The vulnerable population protected by soft citizens is usually conceived of as children, but during soft citizenship’s first two waves infantilized adults were often categorized as vulnerable. Following this logic, soft citizens define themselves and construct their moral authority against the moral deficiencies of another group. The deviant population that they oppose changes throughout the form’s development and has included drinkers, African Americans, feminists, and sexual minorities. The protector-vulnerable-deviant dynamic remains central to soft citizenship’s development at various historical junctures. The American Family Association (AFA), a religious Right organization that describes itself as being “on the frontlines of America’s
“culture war” since 1977, is an illustrative example of the vulnerable-protector-deviant dynamic at the core of soft citizenship.⁷ The AFA is enraged by public displays of queerness, which it constructs as a threat to childhood innocence. The group has found Home Depot “guilty” of sponsoring gay pride parades, which expose “small children to lascivious displays of sexual conduct by homosexuals and cross-dressers.”⁸ In this instance children are conjured forth as the reason for anti-gay activism and stand in for adult discomfort and anxiety. The religious Right opposes making culture and politics child-friendly or irrevocably damaging children, which makes it difficult for adult citizens to demand sexual liberty, including the liberty of sexual publicness. Claiming children as both the reason for their entrance into politics and the aim of their political work creates a child-centric political and social world. Over time this has influenced the ways we think and enact US citizenship; now, to be interpreted as a proper adult citizen one must claim allegiance to the parental, which produces the national public as a familial public. This logic permeates soft citizenship’s various historical developments and becomes a dominant logic structuring US politics by the 1990s.⁹

The effects of child-centricity on politics are explored in Lee Edelman’s No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive. Edelman argues, “… the image of the Child invariably shapes the logic within which the political itself might be thought. That logic compels us, to the extent that we would register as politically responsible, to submit to the framing of political debate” (2). According to Edelman, childcentricity has US
politics on lockdown, one cannot make political demands unless children are the beneficiaries of the appeal and one cannot dare critique a policy or law that seems to invest in adult rights to privacy or publicness instead of the welfare of children. Edelman refers to the political prioritizing of children as “reproductive futurism,” which he claims imposes “an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the “possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations” (2). I wholeheartedly agree with Edelman’s interpretive analysis of the political present, but am interested in revealing the history behind the historical present in order to demonstrate how indebted the US nation building project and the construction of political culture is to a figurative child in whose name repressive state action can easily be justified and in whose name political agency can be altruistically claimed and practiced.

**Controlling the Field of Cultural Visibility**

As self-declared agents of morality and protectors of culture, each new epochal wave of soft citizens claim political and cultural legitimacy by constructing themselves as the moral guardians of the nation, champions of the public good. At stake in this significant component of soft citizenship is what group has the power to narrate the story of “us” by controlling the field of cultural visibility, which is directly related to what issues, ideas, and even people are considered politically viable. Soft citizens clamor for the authority to decide what counts as American and what counts as important enough to be included in the national political agenda. In addition, soft citizens attempt to control
who will be considered a member of the national community and who will be regulated to the periphery of the nation. As a result, the form has deeply influenced citizenship recognition, political participation, social discourse, and how we imagine the national community. As I have suggested, preserving an idealized version of the family is intimately bound to soft citizenship’s development and soft citizens have historically worked to insert the family at the center of national life by controlling mass cultural representations. In the past two decades soft citizens have also worked steadfastly to make the family the center of political life, an observation made by many contemporary social theorists.

My project includes an extended case study of cinema censorship reform through which I theorize the historical development of soft citizenship as a form. Cultural content has been a key site of soft citizenship activism and a sustained analysis of cinema censorship waves helps define the contours of soft citizenship’s historical development. I focus on cinema censorship not because it is the only site of soft citizen empowerment, but because the influence soft citizens have had on the development of mass culture plays a key role in the naturalization and popularization of the logics that I associate with soft citizenship as encoded within mass cultural content. In the early 1900s censorship activism became a site of civic engagement and soft citizens were at the forefront of initiatives to “clean up” culture; in fact, this has been a way for many disenfranchised groups to perform their patriotism and develop a political consciousness as my genealogy will establish. Soft citizens have played a critical role in controlling cinematic content by

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10 See Shane Phelan’s *Sexual Strangers.*
forging reciprocally empowering relationships with the film industry at various stages in cinema censorship’s development. Cinema was and remains a vital part of national life and critical catalyst for the dissemination of versions of the good life that coalesce into hegemonic constructions of what is good for America; since mass culture is a dense transfer point for social values and an important tool for imagining the nation, it should be understood as inherently political.¹¹

**Genealogical Thinking: Tracing Soft Citizenship through History**

Soft citizenship, the term I use to describe a set of characteristics ranging from child-centricity and sentimentality to familial moralization that comprise a unique citizenship subjectivity, is now the dominant citizenship form framing American culture and politics. In order to understand its current ubiquity, genealogical thinking is central to the research trajectory and narrative structure of this dissertation. Historical processes, instances of repetition, and other conditions that enable the naturalization and normalization of ways of being in the world, both psychically (in the case of subjectivity formation) and materially (in the case of observable political practices) are important to my analysis of soft citizenship. Moreover, I explore the recursive nature of logics at the core of culture and politics by analyzing connections and continuities embedded in cultural forms and logics while being attentive to the historical specificity of the matrix through which the form develops.

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¹¹ For a concise overview of the American Dream see Jim Cullen’s *The America Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*. See also Lawrence R Samuel’s *The American Dream: A Cultural History*. Samuel analyzes primary source materials including magazines and newspapers to explore the construction of the American Dream since the term was coined in 1931. He argues that the American Dream is deeply embedded in everyday life practices playing a pivotal role in national identity.
Raymond Williams’ theorization of the temporality of cultural forms provoked my investment in historical mapping. In his influential book, *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams argues that every historical epoch is marked by a dynamic play between dominant, residual, and emergent cultural forms; these forms create an assemblage of temporal modalities that comprise the social landscape at any given historical juncture.¹² For Williams, cultural forms are both historically specific and temporally promiscuous insofar as residual forms are “effectively formed in the past, but [are] still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present” (122). Residual forms, present today, exist alongside emergent cultural forms, described by Williams as the “new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships [that] are continually being created” (123). Emergent forms foreshadow possible futures, which exist in nascent form, taking steps towards full articulation. The third cultural formation Williams describes, the dominant, can be thought of as today’s norms, norms that are informed by the past or residual forms, and waiting to be challenged by emergent forms. All dominant cultural formations were once emergent forms, and their emergence occurred within a constellation of cultural, economic, and political variables that are historically and spatially bound.

To understand emergent cultural forms Williams contends that it is necessary to define them against the dominant and consider their “pre-emergence,” the pre-history of the new formation before it is fully articulated and solidified (126). I locate the

¹² See Raymond Williams’ *Marxism and Literature*. 
emergence of soft citizenship in the temperance activism of white middle-class Protestant women beginning in the mid-1800s; it is in this period that the characteristics I associate with soft citizenship begin to coalesce and it is as a result of Anglo Saxon Protestant women’s expansion of temperance logics throughout the Progressive era that soft citizenship begins to take shape and influence US culture and politics on an increasingly large scale.

The white middle-class women who participated in early temperance initiatives were politically disenfranchised, but racially and economically privileged as consumers of mass culture; these variables were pivotal to the development of soft citizenship as a political subjectivity and mode of agential citizenship that does not require state recognition. First wave soft citizens ambiguous social status at the margins of two social spheres, one political, the other economic, influenced the early development of soft citizenship. For instance, unable to address demands to the state, women instead addressed them to industry; moreover, instead of taking on overtly political issues, these women demanded moral guardianship of culture broadly construed as practices of everyday life and narrowly construed as products of artistic expression, such as magazines and film. Importantly, they justified their involvement in the social sphere by claiming children and infantilized adult populations, particularly new immigrants, as the beneficiaries of their activism, which influenced the types of reform projects that they initiated and their justifications for reform.

13 Although consumer politics is integral to soft citizenships early manifestations it is less critical although still present in its most recent post-1960s formation. For Anglo Saxon Protestant women in the late 1890s through the 1920s and Catholic men in the 1930s consumer-based political strategies were paramount, but this changed by the 1960s as soft citizens increasingly made demands of the state while never completely turning away from industry. In this period different political avenues were available to soft citizens.
White middle-class women’s ability to occupy two positions at once --political disempowerment, coupled with relative economic empowerment--was a result of material conditions as well as ideological constructions of gender at the intersection of race and class that relegated these women to the private sphere of the home and characterized them as pious, pure, submissive, and domestic.¹⁴ Historian John Whiteclay Chambers notes: “By emphasizing their nurturing and morally superior roles as wives and mothers, upper- and middle-class women expanded their sphere to include the application of domestic values to the larger society” (33).¹⁵ The cult of domesticity was an ideological straight jacket some women were able to convert into a soapbox from which they could make demands for social reform in the name of the child, the family, and the home. In this way they claimed a place for themselves in the nation and blurred the line between private and public spheres. Furthermore, the positionality of first wave soft citizens provoked the politicization of consumption as a technique of subaltern politics that contrasted with white middle-class masculine modes of citizenship practice, which addressed demands to the state. I explore the contrast between masculine and feminine modes of politics in my second chapter, but for now it is sufficient to say that the context of soft citizenship’s emergence, which includes the agents of its production, bourgeois maternal activists, influenced the form of its subsequent development, but did not determine the specificity of its materialization in unique historical epics when it was

¹⁴ See “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820 – 1860” by Barbara Welter. According to Welter: “The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors, and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues – piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” (152).
¹⁵ See also John Whiteclay Chambers The Tyranny of Change (31-37).
appropriated by radically different social agents. In other words, the form developed flexibly to fit the needs of populations with different needs.

Following in the wake of the initial wave of white middle-class Protestant women’s bourgeois maternal activism in the late-1800s, the soft citizen became an influential form for juxtapolitical activism to take; it has since been developed by successive waves of populations to become the dominant mode of imagining and enacting citizenship.\(^\text{16}\) As I will demonstrate, each new appropriation of soft citizenship coincides with shifts in US cinema censorship policy as well as with major cultural, economic, and political disruptions in the social status quo. For example, when soft citizenship first emerges in the 1890s, the social meanings of race, gender, and citizenship were hotly contested in cultural and political spheres; anxieties about quickly shifting social relations were embedded in debates about cinema censorship that seek to uphold the racial and gender status quo by defining appropriate gender and race identities and relations through the control of cinematic representations.\(^\text{17}\) The second wave of soft citizenship emerges in the 1930s amidst the Depression and corresponding with the creation and enforcement by Hollywood of the Production Code, a set of justifications for censorship and outlines of content to be censored that explicitly influenced cinema content from the 1930s to the 1960s. In this period, Catholics, socially and culturally constructed as the “other” to hegemonic Protestantism, appropriated the soft citizenship

\(^{16}\) In *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*, Lauren Berlant uses the term *juxtapolitical* to describe women’s culture, which she argues “thrives in *proximity* to the political, occasionally crossing over in political alliance, even more occasionally doing some politics, but most often not, acting as a critical chorus that sees the expression of emotional response and conceptual recalibration as achievement enough (x).

\(^{17}\) In my third chapter I analyze the filmic construction of race and gender norms as a result of reform projects to control cinematic content.
template used by Protestant women and claimed their Americanness through the same moralistic modes of patriot performativity used by bourgeois maternal activists in soft citizenship’s first wave of development, by pledging their allegiance to America through their investment in the national values they claimed were fundamental.

During its first two waves soft citizenship was a subaltern form of envisioning and expressing political agency that did not require recourse to the law, or even the help of the state. Instead soft citizens formed mutually empowering relationships with the film industry. In other words, it is in the “soft” realm of culture that first and second wave soft citizens exercised their moral agency that would eventually have the opportunity to exchange for cultural and political capital.

The third wave of soft citizenship emerged in the 1970s when the religious Right introduced its logics into the properly political sphere of state politics. The 1970s marks a departure from soft citizenship’s previous two incarnations insofar as Christians were not a subaltern population, but they did construct themselves as such by arguing that the liberalization of politics and culture in the 1960s was erasing Christianity from US national and political life. Much as bourgeois maternal activists took advantage of a changing cultural climate to enter the public sphere and shape the content of the sphere, the religious Right manipulated anxieties over rapid-fire social change to their advantage in public discourse. Moreover, although the religious Right did not form an alliance with the film industry, they did form an alliance with big business.\footnote{See for examples: Lisa Duggan \textit{The Twilight of Inequality} and David Harvey \textit{A Brief History of Neoliberalism}.} By aligning themselves with business elites affiliated with the Republican Party, this new wave of soft citizens
was able to bring the moralization, sentimentality, and child-centricity that characterize the form to bear on state politics, radically transforming the form and content of the political public sphere.

The fourth wave of soft citizenship was anticipated and informed by changes in cinema censorship policy during its third wave, from the mid-1960s to the present. In the 1960s the film industry revamped its content regulation strategy creating an age-based rating system that was overseen by parents hired to rate films. As I will demonstrate, by granting parents moral guardianship of mass culture, the film industry helped develop a template for citizenship subjectivity and practice that informs the fourth wave of soft citizenship: the parent-citizen. In the 1990s parents appropriated the logics and rhetoric of soft citizenship to make wide-reaching demands across media industries for that as much of culture as possible be child-friendly. Concerned with a changing cultural and political climate parent-citizens mobilized, appropriated soft citizenship strategies, and used the readily available rhetoric of child-protection and family values popularized by the New Right to think and enact child-friendly cultural policies that constructed adult sexuality as a threat to childhood innocence, which is almost always conceived as a lack of sexual knowledge. As I will demonstrate, the parent-citizen liberalized citizenship logics as deployed by the religious Right making them appealing to a pluralistic society invested in the ideal of inclusivity.

I discuss post-millennial soft citizens, fifth wave soft citizens, in my conclusion. After 2000, previously sexually stigmatized subjects, particularly lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, began to demand citizenship rights and recognition based on their familial
roles, a political turn many queer scholars have coined homonormativity. The success of this final appropriation as of the time of my writing seems promising, as an assimilatory politics of sexual equality is well underway from state-based marriage equality to the recent repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell (DADT). However, fifth wave soft citizen’s demands for inclusion into national life directly confront third wave soft citizen’s construction of gays and lesbians as dangerous sexual deviants creating a battle over the range of family forms the nation is willing to recognize.

19 See especially Michael Warner’s The Trouble with Normal. See also Richard Goldstein’s The Attack Queers: Liberal Society and the Gay Right and That's Revolting: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation edited by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore.

20 In is relevant to note that Jasbir Puar, author of Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times, claims that the assimilation of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and trans* individuals normalizes them at the expense of newly emerging others. Moreover, for Puar it is people presumably Muslim of middle eastern descent who are constructed as dangerous. She argues that the US nation is embracing LGBT citizens in order to differentiate itself from Islam, which is constructed as violently homophobic. I do not think that LGBT individuals are being fully embraced by the dominant social formation, as noted there is major antagonism between emerging fifth wave and third and fourth wave soft citizenship formations. Moreover, I do not think that the people most likely to take a simplistic anti-Muslim position have any interest in demonstrating US pluralism and freedom by embracing sexual minorities to be different that Muslims. For another reading of the vulnerable-protector-deviant dynamic that I claim is embedded in soft citizenship see Sex Panic and the Punitive State by Roger Lancaster. Lancaster argues that sex panics justify punishment-oriented governance and are based not so much on the protection of real children, but instead on “the preservation of adult fantasies of childhood as a time of sexual innocence” (2). Sexual purity is here as elsewhere an idealized state of innocence represented by the untouched psychic and physical state of childhood; moreover innocence and vulnerability are linked to who deserves the state’s protection (Lancaster 68). Moreover, the child, as embodiment of innocence and vulnerability conjures forth a parental adult, Lancaster writes: “In the gloomy anxious world of overzealous child protection, it has become the responsibility of adults to anticipate even remote threats to children’s safety and to take preventative measures. And where childhood is essentially reconceived as vulnerability, with children as a special class in need of protection, this is true not only when it comes to sex” (Lancaster 9). The vulnerable-child/protective-adult dynamic insinuates its way into political culture creating a state of hypervigilance and suspicion. The assumption that the state must protect the innocent and vulnerable child requires a threat that is figured, according to Lancaster, as a “sexual predator.” He argues: “The sexual predator is a cultural figure whose meaning is readily transferred to other figures” (2). He writes: “Today virtually anyone can assert his belonging to the national moral community by taking up the logics of the sex panic, by lashing out against the sexual monster” (94). It is by claiming allegiance to the moral crusade that recognition as one of “us” is continued through refusal of markers of deviancy.
Mass Culture and the American Imaginary
One of my founding theoretical assumptions is that mass culture is deeply political; control of its content in the US linked as much to moral reformers as capitalists, and plays a pivotal role in how we imagine the national community. Ideas circulated in mass culture influence political culture by shaping the field of visibility and by extension thinkability. By ‘field of visibility’ I mean the images and ideas that collectively form our evolving national symbolic. Stuart Hall claims that we create “shared meanings” in culture and that cultural meanings are important because they “organize and regulate social practices, influence our conduct and consequently have real, practical effects” (xix). Cinema censorship literally keeps images and ideas off the big screen and moral reformers have played a pivotal role in regulating mass culture, particularly cinema, which has been considered an influential source of socialization by reformists, politicians, citizens, educators, and social scientists. The control of mass cultural content by elite groups of moralists and capitalists working together to shape behavioral norms and construct and parameters around acceptable Americanness is a political project, a

21 See Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread of Nationalism. Anderson locates the emergence of nationalism historically in the late-1800s and considers print capitalism and by extension the mass reproduction of print materials as pre-requisites for the rise of nationalism. Anderson is particularly interested in the idea of simultaneity, the recognition that people who may never meet share similar experiences in a bounded space, which was enabled by the mass consumption of print materials like newspapers (25-26, 36). Print culture enabled simultaneity of experience and recognition of oneself as a part of a nation. For specific theorizations of the relationship between film and nation building see Philip Schlesinger’s “The Sociological Scope of ‘National Culture’.” Schlesinger argues, “the moving image is constitutive of the national collectivity” (24). Moreover, films draw boundaries around the collective, both internal to the state and external to the state. See Michael Billig’s Banal Nationalism for an analysis of how national identity is constituted through everyday life practices. See also “The American Dream of Family in Film: From Decline to Comeback,” by Emanuel Levy describes the sociological function of cinema as a “major source of information about a variety of social roles, including family roles” (187). Levy describes the film industry as a cultural institution that produces images that “signify social values and meanings through their narratives, plots, and characters” (188).

22 See Representations edited by Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon.
project that demonstrates the importance of culture in shaping how we envision an enact
Americanness. I am particularly interested in the construction of the nation through the
trope of the family in mass cultural representational practices, because this enables the
naturalization of logics central to soft citizenship including child-centricity, familial
moralization, and sentimentality

Upon its debut cinema became an object of moral debate that pivoted around its
moral content: policing cinematic content became a means for producing a collective
awareness of national values and a collectivized nation. In Policing Cinema, Lee
Grieveson notes that at the turn of the twentieth century, when film debuted and soft
citizenship took its nascent form, there was a “rush to define and police moral norms
[that] was increasingly directed at the realm of culture” (22). Moreover, he writes, “the
contestation over individual films and over cinema more generally clearly became one of
the principle forums for the discussion of moral norms in the period” (22). Although
cinema is a site of moral contestation, as demonstrated by debates about cinematic
content, it is also a site of consensus building insofar as it is a powerful visual-scape that
overdetermines identification with national and familial ideals without completely
foreclosing the possibility of critique and disidentification. At issue is who gets to control
this powerful visual-scape, and different populations have never had an equal say in the
debate. Instead groups who could already claim degrees of privilege were able to control
mass cultural representations. I address this point throughout my dissertation by tracing

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23 See Lee Grieveson’s’ Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early Twentieth Century America.
24 Ibid.
cinema censorship waves and the development of soft citizenship through engagements with cinema censorship reform projects.

**Soft Citizenship**  
In this project I aim to provide an explanatory framework for understanding the political present by introducing the term soft citizenship to describe a flexible formation of citizenship subjectivity and practice. The following chapters are arranged chronologically in order to establish the importance of history in the development of soft citizenship. I am interested in soft citizens as a group of people who justify their participation in public life, specifically politics, through claims of moral superiority and altruistic aims of child-protection. Soft citizens want the innocence they ascribe to children, which is why they obscure their blatant appeals for power behind claims of child protection. Power is never innocent and in constructing a child-safe society soft citizens have often shown the adults that they construct as a danger little mercy.

I cannot imagine a politics ‘above the fray.’ My concluding chapter considers the appropriation of soft citizenship by gays and lesbians who argue that they have the right to protect their families and children and need access to marriage and protections against work and housing discrimination to be good protectors. The battle rages, but assimilation minded gays and lesbians have not constructed an enemy. Perhaps that is the missing link to the success of an assimilatory gay and lesbian agenda. The vulnerable-protector-danger dynamic that soft citizenship hinges on has successfully propelled previous waves of subalterns into proper political subjectionhood. But, my project is not about the future of politics it is about the past that haunts the present.
CHAPTER ONE: TEMPERANCE IN ALL THINGS; A PRE-HISTORY OF SOFT CITIZENSHIP

This chapter analyses the pre-history of soft citizenship through an interpretive narrative of the temperance movement. The temperance movement initiated shifts in the social significance of personal conduct by politicizing alcohol consumption, which created a political and cultural climate that emphasized temperate behaviors, including sobriety, as imperative for national stability. Temperance logics connect self-control and moderation to visions of the good life that these behaviors were supposed to enable, such as a steady job and stable family both of which were considered foundations for a strong nation. In discourses popularized in the period strong will and ethical conduct correlate with financial and familial success and failure to succeed in work and home life are related to individual moral failings. Importantly shared morals anchored in restraining desire were used to create a dividing line between good and bad members of the social body.

In this chapter I demonstrate that through temperance activism and discourse America began to be imagined as a nation and Americans as a specific type of people with shared values and goals that pivot around self control, as strong work ethic, and family life. The work of nation building is intimately bound to defining populations and creating a template for citizen acceptability by which we recognize others as like us without knowing them intimately; by constructing the terms of Americanness around
temperance reformists created windows of opportunity for certain subaltern populations to construct themselves as temperate and by extension properly American. In *Nations and Nationalism* Ernest Gellner writes:

> Two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, nations maketh man; nations are the artifacts of men’s convictions and loyalties and solidarities. {…} It is their recognition of each other as fellows of this kind which turns them into a nation, and not the other shared attributes, whatever they might be, which separate that category from non-members (7).

The role recognition plays in nation building cannot be understated; recognizing someone as similar to one’s self in the one way constructed as pivotal to Americanness in the nineteenth century, sobriety, enabled other differences to be transcended towards imagining camaraderie through an instance of similarity. Imagining national belonging as conformity to values and universality of goals takes certain values and goals for granted as universal while excluded ideas and groups of people from being recognized as part of the national community. In fact, groups unable to claim membership are often demonized and constituted as a threat as in the case of drunkards. The inclusion/exclusion model of national belonging that allows for some subalterns to assimilate into the dominant social formation pushes others to the periphery of national life and political culture. However, defining national belonging through shared conduct and values enables fluidity of identification and recognition.

The following brief history of the temperance movement is meant to establish the appearance of logics and strategies, the prehistory, which influenced the materialization and subsequent development of soft citizenship. The history of temperance presented

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25 See Ernest Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism.*
herein is not exhaustive, instead it is meant to elucidate emerging trends in politics and culture that eventually come to saturate the political and cultural landscape during the Progressive era when temperance in all things became the rallying cry of women reformers, my first wave soft citizens.

Sober Citizens: Intemperance as Social Problem, Temperance as Solution

Physician Benjamin Rush published *An Inquiry into the Effects of Spirituous Liquors on the Human Body and Mind* in 1784, a scientific study about the negative influences of alcohol consumption that anticipated and in some instances inspired the development of temperance associations throughout the 1800s.\(^26\) One such association is the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance (MSSI). MSSI was founded by a small group of wealthy Northerners in 1813 with the intention of improving “the morals of the unruly poor”.\(^27\) Importantly, temperance should be understood, at least in this iteration, as a civilizing project. Groups like the MSSI worked to indoctrinate the masses with middle-class values of temperance sealing their hegemonic position within the nation by incorporating potential threats into the dominant social formation when

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27 Alcohol consumption was not randomly chosen as a nodal point through which to construct national values and citizenship ideals. See Jed Dannenbaum’s *Drink and Disorder*. Dannenbaum notes that in the early 1800s many Americans drank only alcoholic beverages because they could not afford tea or coffee and milk or water were often contaminated (2). The consumption habits of Americans in the eighteenth century were radically different than those that mark our own era, a history thoroughly documented in W.J. Rorabaugh’s 1979 publication *The Alcoholic Republic*. Rorabaugh’s text is a social history of drinking in the US in the early and mid-1800s that explores the activity as a practice of everyday life transformed under the moralizing gaze of the Second Great Awakening. See Joyce Appleby’s “The Personal Roots of the First American Temperance Movement” published in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (1997). See also Robert Hampel’s “Diversity in Early Temperance Reform: Another Look at the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance, 1813-1825” published in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* (1982).
possible and stigmatizing behaviors that contradicted hegemonic values like sobriety when incorporation was not an option. It is here that the vulnerable-protector-deviant dynamic intrinsic to the insider-outsider construction of national belonging.

The elite membership base of the MSSI reflected the composition of temperance associations across the nation; most participants were financially successful merchants, lawyer, politicians, or prominent ministers. It was the well to do that would come to the aid of the ne’er-do-wells by politicizing and normalizing a highly classed Anglo Saxon Protestant form of respectability based on self-restraint. The central strategy of temperance activists at this stage in the temperance movement was to set an example of sobriety and by setting an example influence the behaviors of many in conformity to the temperance activists’ own conduct. Moreover, the logics embedded within the MSSI’s temperance work, its oppositional construction of intemperance and temperance, its investment in controlling the cultural climate by stigmatizing intemperance, and its construction of personal conduct as a social problem in need of intervention and regulation, demonstrate nascent political and cultural tendencies that were recursively drawn upon in the constitution of soft citizenship by Anglo Saxon Protestant women who become increasingly active in the temperance movement by the 1870s.

Much like later temperance activists, members of MSSI saw intemperance as both a symbol and a cause of moral decay responsible for “shoddy work, broken families,

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29 Ibid. Hampel refers to influence as a “mimetic, reform-by-example strategy” through which temperance activists become a model of sobriety to inspire the weaker willed (461, 465).
ruined health, crime and punishment.” The MSSI’s 1813 Constitution makes this connection explicit: “By this lamentable excess, many individuals are ruined, many families are wretched, the public morals are corrupted, and society is deeply injured” (3). In addition, by causally linking the act of alcohol consumption with a variety of social problems the elite members of temperance associations construct those who do consume excessive amounts of alcohol, the “unruly masses” as a threat to the nation, which enabled them to claim the nation as the terrain of the elite who were politically, economically, and morally stable and duty bound to take up the task of “… erect[ing] a barrier against that wide spreading flood which so fearfully threatens the dearest interests of individuals’, of families, and of the Commonwealth.”

The MSSI’s constitution also demonstrates that local activist initiatives were beginning to be conceived as participating in a larger reform project, one that although articulated in various localities was synchronistically connected and imagined as such as early as 1813, which is significant since it established the formation of a hegemonic value system at the center of national life. The document notes that “five or six other Societies of a similar kind, respectable in numbers and character, and of very encouraging promise” had begun to emerge throughout the US including organizations in Connecticut and New York. The development of autonomous temperance societies was exciting to members of MSSI because the organization was “designed to hold the place of a parent

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30 Ibid, especially page 463.
32 Ibid, especially page 7.
33 Ibid, especially page 7.
Institution, and to operate in a systematic connexion [sic] with auxillary [sic] societies.”

The MSSI saw temperance as gaining momentum and envisioned a loose network of organizations that would strategize independently to facilitate the best way to promote temperance in their localities. The MSSI’s recognition of other organizations similar to their own demonstrates a nascent form of shared temperance consciousness that would soon develop into a shared national consciousness anchored in the values of temperance.35

Members of MSSI envision other temperance activists as men, like themselves, invested in the laudable task of suppressing intemperance; the mission could not “fail to commend itself to every virtuous and reflecting mind.”36 Here, we see the MSSI imagining a community of like-minded people who would work to the same ends as themselves, albeit in separate localities. Moreover, not to agree with the laudable task undertaken by activists was to be positioned as lacking intelligence and virtue. One who lacks intelligence and virtue does not have the best interests of the public in mind, but is instead selfish, and likely already broken by excessive drink. The politically and economically empowered members of MSSI and similar organizations constructed a moral absolute and opposed themselves to the unruly immoral and intemperate masses. The oppositional construction of a reasoning public that shares one’s own opinions and an unreasoning mass comprised of those who disagree is recursively appealed to by various waves of soft citizens in order to foreclose the possibility of critique. Members of MSSI

35 See Benedict Anderson Imagined Communities. I engage with theories of nation building in detail in my third chapter.
foreclose political debate by arguing that the intemperate masses are simply not capable of it; to be worthy of publicness one must already conform to emerging values that are constructed as universally shared. Excluding ideas and issues from political debate diminishes critical citizenship possibilities by taking for granted values that should be objects of discussion.

**Creating a Temperate Nation**

Although a variety of localized temperance initiatives, like the MSSI, appeared throughout the early 1800s temperance did not gain national attention until 1826 when Lyman Beecher, a well-known Presbyterian minister, founded the American Temperance Society (ATS). The ATS coordinated local temperance based activities throughout the US becoming the “parent Institution” that the MSSI hoped it would one day be. Within a decade, the ATS had over 1 million members. The sizable membership demonstrates, if not a national consensus, certainly a national awareness of temperance campaigns. Moreover, although locality remanded important to how most people experienced the temperance movement, the ATS began to create and disseminate materials at the national level enabling temperance to evolve into a mass movement that utilized mass technologies to create a climate that embraced temperance.

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37 In its ascent to the national stage temperance took an evangelical turn. In “Temperance, alcohol, and the American evangelical: a reassessment” Jessica Warner notes: “America’s interest intemperance was piqued by the religious revivals of the Second Great Awakening. Most of the foot soldiers of the American temperance movement did come from the various evangelical denominations, as did their most iconic leaders—Lyman Beecher, Neal Dow, Frances Willard and Ernest Cherrington; and while Prohibition has come and gone, abstinence remains a way of life for many American evangelicals”.

38 See Holly Berkley Fletcher’s *Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century*, especially page 8.
Temperance was promoted through print culture that had a national circulation, which established the movement as a player in the project of nation building through the creation a shared culture of temperance. Lyman Beecher, for example, would deliver powerful sermons in local settings, but these sermons would then be bound and published for circulation beyond the locality of their original delivery, as in the case of the popular *Six Sermons on Intemperance*. This collection includes the sermon “The Nature and Occasion of Intemperance” in which Beecher constructs an intemperate population as a threat to the nation much as the MSSI did the previous decade:

> Intemperance is the sin of our land, and, with our boundless prosperity, is coming in upon us like a flood; and if anything shall defeat the hopes of the world, which hang upon our experiment of civil liberty, it is that river of fire, which is rolling through the land, destroying the vital air, and extending around an atmosphere of death.

In this speech Beecher constructs intemperance as a destructive force represented through the metaphors of fire and flood as capable of defeating “the hopes of the world.” According to Beecher the “hopes of the world” are directed to the success of American democracy, the grand political experiment, which is also implicitly connected to “boundless” economic prosperity, a rhetorical flourish that defines the market as intrinsic

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39 See Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread of Nationalism*. Anderson locates the emergence of nationalism historically in the late-1800s and considers print capitalism and by extension the mass reproduction of print materials as pre-requisites for the rise of nationalism. Anderson is particularly interested in the idea of simultaneity, the recognition that people who may never meet share similar experiences in a bounded space, which was enabled by the mass consumption of print materials like newspapers (25-26, 36). Print culture enabled simultaneity of experience and recognition of oneself as a part of a nation.

40 *Six Sermons on Intemperance* was published in Boston by T. R. Marvin in 1828.

41 Ibid.
to the US nation. Alcohol consumption is represented as a “river of fire” that will suck up the air, destroying the nation’s pure atmosphere and replacing it with a singed landscape that will exchange the dreams of the nation with a living death.

For Beecher, the nation is only as righteous as its citizenry, and a drunken citizenry will be the death of the nation-state. In this sermon, which is similar in tone and content to others collected in Six Sermons on Intemperance, sobriety is constructed as a pre-requisite for proper citizenship and a civilizing discourse is produced by drawing a line between proper and deviant members of the social body in a nation building project that produces temperance as a national imperative and justifies the use of regulatory measures to solve what is a social problem. In addition, intemperate members of society are constructed as responsible temperate citizens dangerous ‘other,’ a threat to the nation that emanates from within the nation.

Within an increasingly norm driven society invested in population management for the sake of the nation, moral panics such as that represented in Beecher’s text seek to identify a norm and compel the population to conform to it under threat of demonization and stigmatization that constructs the intemperate citizen as a folk devil with the power to destroy the nation. The position of ‘folk devil’ is variously inhabited throughout US

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42 In Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History, James Morone explains the evangelical turn that Temperance took in this period: "With preachers announcing that the millennium lay at hand, men and women began to swear off hard spirits; the yearning for perfection drew them until they were pledging total abstinence" (284).

43 Stanley Cohen coined the term “moral panic” in his formative text Folk Devils and Moral Panics. He writes: “Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interest; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible” (1). This definition of
history as national normativity is constructed in different ways. For example, sobriety is no longer the marker of ideal citizenship, but at the historical juncture described in this chapter it played a key role in creating and policing boundaries around Americanness. Along with constructing intemperate citizens as an internal threat to national stability, moral panics produce ideal citizens, like Beecher, moral arbiters and watchdogs, who are willing and able to enact and police normative modes of behavioral conduct. The dynamic embedded within the oppositional logics at the core of temperance is part of the project from its early manifestations. Members of the MSSI defined themselves against “confirmed drunkards” who were beyond redemption, unable to be saved or assimilated into society.

At stake in early local instances of temperance reform and temperance reform at the national level post-1826 is who gets to imagine the nation, who has the power to control national representations and representational practices, and what this leaves out, demonizes, or pushes to the periphery of the nation. The community being imagined as national and the citizenship criterion of sobriety conjured forth in the temperance movement is undertaken by Anglo Saxon Protestant moralizers concerned that their hegemonic control of national culture and politics would be contested by invasive foreigners and the working class. The urge to consolidate national norms occurs when a

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moral panics is echoed in Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda’s *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance.* They write: *The moral panic* is a scare about a threat or supposed threat from deviants or “folk devils,” a category of people who, presumably, engage in evil practices and are blamed for menacing a society’s culture, way of life, and cultural values. The word “scare” implies that the concern over, fear of, or hostility toward the folk devil is *out of proportion* to the actual threat that is claimed” (2). Furthermore, Gilbert Herdt describes moral panics as “processes of representing and demonizing scapegoats in popular culture and media, commonly identified with the dread of “folk devils,” or subalterns, undermining cherished sociality and morality” (7). The problem with moral panics, for Herdt, is that they perpetuate structural violence and reproduce modes of peripheral citizenship.
threat to hegemony is immanent. Temperance was used to symbolically distinguish Anglo Saxon Protestant “natives” from new immigrants in a struggle to maintain hegemony and secure the power to define the nation and its values.\(^{44}\) According to social theorist Joseph Gusfield: “Issues of moral reform are … one way through which a cultural group acts to preserve, defend, or enhance the dominance and prestige of its own style of living within the total society.”\(^{45}\) Temperance was a national conduct standard bound to Anglo Saxon Protestants ideals including self-control, a strong work ethic, and a stable family life.

**Iconic Citizenship**

Nation building requires normative ideals, a consummate embodiment of patriotism and citizenship; the ideal form members of the nation should aspire to emulate. As a result, iconic citizenship is developed, and in this early stage of the game, iconic citizenship is represented as the self-made man. The masculine ideal of autonomous rational citizenship at the center of nineteenth and twentieth century models of iconic citizenship is superseded by soft citizenships a family-centered model of thinking and doing citizenship throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Holly Berkley Fletcher describes the icon of the pre-Civil War temperance movement as an individual capable of self-control and self-denial, a consummate citizen and capitalist as well as a family man able to provide for his wife and children.\(^{46}\) She argues that many middle-class adherents considered temperance a defense strategy against poverty, which

\(^{44}\) Joseph Gusfield’s *Symbolic Crusade*, page 6.
\(^{45}\) Ibid, page 3.
\(^{46}\) See Holly Berkley Fletcher’s *Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century*. 
for middle-class men, represented individual failure and betrayal to the community.\textsuperscript{47} Temperance became linked to an emerging American-style of success that pivoted around family stability and market virility both of which were connected to citizenship viability.

The ideal citizen’s foil is the drunkard, a conceptual straightjacket applied flexibly to Catholics and other new immigrants as well as the working poor.\textsuperscript{48} Fletcher notes that the intemperate were “often described in feminine terms that underscored the conflation of failure and dependence with a loss of manhood.”\textsuperscript{49} In addition, the conflation of intemperance with femininity and dependence constructed the intemperate as incapable of meeting the standard of ideal citizenship on several fronts. Alcohol dependency compromised the independent male ideal by rendering the manhood of certain populations, specifically the working-class and new immigrants, as out-of-control and vulnerable unlike the temperate masculinity of Anglo Saxon Protestant men who comprised the professional class and were the members of temperance groups.

Joseph Gusfield describes the socio-cultural function of the drunkard trope: “It was one of the ways society could distinguish the industrious from the ne’er-do-well; the steady worker from the unreliable drifter; the good credit risk from the bad gamble; the native American from the immigrant.”\textsuperscript{50} External behavior became a mirror reflecting internal character, which was used to gauge national belonging, work ethic, and financial

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, page 9.
\textsuperscript{48} According to Gusfield temperance was used to symbolically distinguish Anglo Saxon Protestant “natives” from new immigrants in a struggle to maintain hegemony and secure the power to define the nation and its values (6). See Joseph Gusfield’s Symbolic Crusade.
\textsuperscript{49} Holly Berkley Fletcher’s Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century, page 14.
\textsuperscript{50} Joseph Gusfield’s Symbolic Crusade, page 6.
savvy. In other words, intemperance marred the character of the drinker who became a type of person, a type unworthy of citizenship, employment, or family, because he lacked will.

**Sobriety for the Sake of Families and Children**

Intemperance was constructed as a social problem by voluntary organizations since families, and women and children, were innocent of wrongdoing, but negatively influenced by the actions of intemperate men who failed to provide the financial support necessary for a stable family. Voluntary institutions sought to protect the family, from the danger within the family, the intemperate man who was a bad husband and father. Children were represented as the innocent victims of intemperate men in numerous temperance songs, poems, and posters.\(^{51}\) The poem “Advice to a Drunken Father,” published in 1840, addresses the drinker in his familial role.\(^{52}\) The unnamed author opposed the drunk to a wise man and repeatedly associates the drunkard with death. He first writes that the drunkard’s wife “will lead a hard life” and will lie down at night with a “living corpse tied to her body.” The drunk as failed husband is a burden to his wife, not a provider; he is a dead weight that must be carried. The poet goes on to write that the drunkard’s children and wife “would be better off were you dead.” The theme of failed masculinity connected to failure to perform highly gendered familial roles is another theme expressed throughout temperance culture and it serves as a justification for

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\(^{51}\) Children and families were often constructed as the innocent victims of intemperate failed men in Temperance campaigns. See for instance popular posters from the period: “Cheating Children,” “Children and the Liquor Problem,” and “The Developing Children of the Nation.”

\(^{52}\) See “Advice to a Drunken Father” published by an unknown author between 1840 and 1860. Poem is available at: http://library.brown.edu/cds/catalog/catalog.php?verb=render&colid=7&id=1091480171156250
volunteer and state interventions into the private realm of the home in order to protect women and children from their failed protectors.\textsuperscript{53}

Maternal activists appropriate the child-protection rhetoric that appears in the pleas for sobriety throughout temperance literature when they begin to take an increasingly active and public role in temperance by the 1870s. In addition, subsequent waves of soft citizens have united around their roles as protectors of innocence, specifically childhood innocence, and defenders of the vulnerable, on whose behalf they are empowered to make political demands. Early constructions of the private family as a public concern linked to the moral failings of individual men set the stage for imagining the nation through the metaphor of family as opposed to imagining the nation through the iconic citizen – a self-made man, which lays the foundation for soft citizenship’s rise to dominance. Moreover, the vulnerability of the family, which becomes increasingly part of temperance culture, sets the stage for the 1970s ascent of familial politics, which recursively appeal to many of the ideas that take nascent form in the temperance movement.

\textsuperscript{53} See also “Father’s a Drunkard, and Mother is Dead” a song composed by EA Parkhurst and published in 1866 by John F Ellis and “Father is Drinking Again” a song composed by Bert G. Bickmore and published by George W Richardson in 1879. Both compositions are written from the point of view of a child abandoned by their drunkard fathers. As the social sciences emerged in the US, statistics and scientific studies were used to support pro-temperance arguments. A poster entitled “Children in Misery” created by the Scientific Temperance Federation and published in 1913 by American Issue Publishing Company, the Anti-Saloon League’s publishing company posits that the drinking habits of parents are responsible for three out of four cases of childhood misery. Even more, a 1916 publication of the Anti-Saloon League’s Safety and Efficiency Department, “Cheating Children” explicitly connects parental drinking to “defective children.” Referring to scientific studies the announcement connects parental drinking to instances of “epilepsy, idiocy, and feeble-mindedness” in the children of drinkers. All of these examples and many more are available through Brown University Library Center for Digital Scholarship at: http://library.brown.edu/cds/temperance/about.html
I do not want to give the impression that the lines demarcating the protector-vulnerable-deviant triadic model of power at the core of soft citizenship, a model that emerges through temperance movement initiatives, is clean, or that groups such as drunkards who are deemed dangerous may not also be constructed as vulnerable, in fact as victims. For instance, Ebenezer Bowman’s “Alphabet of Intemperance” refers to alcohol as “the curse of mankind.” According to the author:

It poisons the body, and ruins the mind;  
It’s the base of all brandies, of whiskeys, and gins,  
Of ciders and wines, and numerous sins.  

In Bowman’s poem, first published in 1800, alcohol is the threat and mankind the vulnerable victims. In this early example of temperance literature, alcohol is the culprit behind the poor man’s poor decisions. Bowman writes that H is for “House, which more might possess/If they’d banish the cup, their sole cause of distress.” Here Bowman contends that more men would own homes if it were not for their drinking habits. However, even when the drunkard is painted in a sympathetic or at least morally neutral light, he remains weak and emasculated as a result of his weakness. In other words he is not a viable citizen.

**Patriot Performativity**

Following temperance’s growing national popularity in the 1830s and 1840s, “drinking and abstinence became symbols of social status” that affirmed the prestige of a moral lifestyle used to differentiate middle-class Protestant natives from new immigrants.

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in a panicked response to an influx of non-Protestant immigrants. In this context, sober citizenship becomes iconic. Even more, a mode of patriot performativity that intersects with family, labor, and citizenship emerges and certain subalterns can constitute themselves as viable citizens by approximating dominant conduct norms. I use the concept of patriot performativity to describe a process by which variously empowered groups embrace and exact extant norms of conduct in order to demonstrate their Americanness thereby constituting themselves as American patriots.

Subaltern populations, particularly the working poor and white women, appropriated temperance logics in order to perform their patriotism and claim allegiance to the nation through its values. In other words, the inclusion/exclusion model of national belonging pushed some groups to the periphery while enabling opportunities for certain subaltern groups to assimilate into the dominant social formation. The appropriation of bourgeois conduct norms by subalterns is best demonstrated by the Washingtonian movement. The Washingtonian movement began in Baltimore and was composed of white working-class drinkers who capitulated to the dominant norm of sobriety by practicing temperance in an attempt at self-improvement. Within three years of the organization’s formation they had a half million members. The working-class impulse towards self-reform via sobriety demonstrates that a process of internalization was underway, by which the masses, at least those with bourgeois aspirations, recognized and

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55 Joseph Gusfield’s *Symbolic Crusade*, pages 4 and 5.
56 See Joyce Appleby’s “The Personal Roots of the First American Temperance Movement”, especially page 143 and Jed Dannenbaum’s *Drink and Disorder: Temperance Reform in Cincinnati from the Washingtonian Revival to the WCTU*, especially page 33.
accepted the criteria for imaginary membership in the nation, and used them to perform their patriotism through conformity to dominant norms.

Whereas dominant representations of temperance constructed the drinker as a deviant with no will and little chance at redemption, the Washingtonian movement constructed drinkers as “victims of drink” and excessive alcohol consumption as an addiction much as Bowman’s poem described the intemperate.57 The Washingtonian movement had a communitarian impulse. If an individual decided to stop drinking alcohol, members of the movement would provide clothing, food, and shelter to help the reformed alcoholic build a new life miming familial care.58 Applying familial modes of care in the larger community as the Washingtonians did foreshadows the emergence of soft citizenship and the project of mothering the nation undertaken by maternal activists. As Holly Fletcher writes: “The Washingtonian’s manhood was decidedly sentimental, emotional, and affectionate. It was communal more than competitive. These men related to each other outside the realms of the political, the commercial, or even the intellectual, as they were more interested in the telling of personal narratives than the construction of convincing arguments.”59 The version of masculinity espoused by working class members of the Washingtonian Movement starkly opposed the version of rational and authoritative masculinity the characterized the iconic version of citizenship and masculinity until this period. Meetings had the appearance of religious revivals, a

58 Holly Berkley Fletcher’s Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century, page 2.
conversion experience, and played into feminized modes of melodramatic spectacle.
Although the working-class appropriated middle-class ideals, the meaning of temperance changed through the act of appropriation.

**Prototypical Soft Citizenship**

The next step in the emergence of soft citizenship is the increased active participation of women in the temperance movement after the civil war, which culminated in the formation of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in the 1870s. Although women were members of the American Temperance Society (ATS) from its inception in 1826, composing between 35 and 65 percent of its members, their role was limited to helpmate: signing temperance pledges written by men, attending meetings led by men, and setting a good example as mothers and wives. The early position of women within the temperance movement reproduces logics of Republican Motherhood, a concept that emerged in the late-1700s to describe women’s role as educators of the next generation of citizens. For example, as a critical socializing force for future citizens women were called upon to set a moral example at home and persuade individual men to practice temperance for the sake of their dependent children and wives. Unlike Republican Motherhood, however, which remained rooted in the private sphere of the home, these proto-typical soft citizens used their private maternal roles to gain access to the public sphere as maternal activists.

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60 See Holly Berkley Fletcher’s *Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century*, especially pages 16 and 18.
Social investment in morality provides women an access point into the public sphere; the temperance movement politicized the personal and embedded morality at the center of emerging national culture. Since women were considered quintessential moral authorities the turn toward religious moralization in politics along with the increased interest in families and children of men who comprised the dominant social formation were foundational to the development of soft citizenship. Gendered ideologies that relegated women to the home paradoxically provided women with a justification for leaving the home and entering the public sphere as moral agents once the family was politicized as an object of public concern and national significance.62

Women were drawn to temperance since, unlike suffrage, which challenged gender norms, temperance did not subvert the cult of true womanhood, but helped buttress it by appealing to gender ideology to justify increased publicness.63 Barbara Welter has argued that in this period, white middle-class women had to negotiate “the cult of domesticity” or true womanhood, a set of cultural ideals employed to police middle-class white women’s social acceptability and moral value. According to Welter: “The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors, and her society could be divided into four cardinal virtues - piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.”64 In other words, the cult of domesticity subjects women to morality policing while simultaneously legitimating them as moral

64 Ibid.
agents within the private realm of the home. While clamoring for new degrees of publicness, maternal activists blurred the line between private and public by vying for a position as moral guardians of the nation - an extension of their familial role as guardians of familial morality in the home. Historian Sheila Rothman connects the form women’s activism took to the cult of true womanhood writing: “… virtuous womanhood set clear guidelines for action by benevolent-minded women. The agenda now reflected … a determination to transform institutions and organizations in the spirit of feminine virtues, and to protect and preserve the purity and respectability of all women…” (63).

The impulse to guard virtue produced a protectionist dynamic that pivoted around suspicion of various threats, which were constructed as social problems. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) extended the reform impulse of temperance beyond the issue of alcohol consumption under the leadership of Francis Willard, who presided over the WCTU from 1879 to 1898. The group’s reform agenda expanded to include nearly twenty different interrelated reform measures—from suffrage to child labor laws to the regulation of culture—all of which added up to a totalizing system of social purity fit for preserving the innocence of the child and which anticipated the

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65 It is widely accepted that in the context of disenfranchisement white middle-class women negotiated the intersecting race, class, and gender ideologies that were used to police the boundaries around respectable womanhood to their social advantage. See for example: Leigh Ann Wheeler’s Against Obscenity: Reform and the Politics of Womanhood in America, 1873 -1935, Andrea Friedman’s Prurient Interests: Gender, Democracy, and Obscenity in New York City, 1909 – 1945, and Alison M. Parker’s Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873 -1933.
nation-wide interest in reform that enabled the successes of the Progressive era shortly after Willard’s retirement.67

Soft Citizenship and Cultural Censorship

Anti-obscenity campaigns were one of the many projects that the WCTU undertook under Willard’s leadership. Mass culture was a new site of emergence for reform activism that sought to embed Anglo Saxon Protestant morals at the center of US culture.68 By the 1870s, mass-produced reading material had decreased in cost and increased in volume. In addition, content deemed immoral by reformers, including criminal and sexual behavior were increasingly common. In response to the proliferation of content that they considered scandalous the WCTU created a Department for the Suppression of Impure Literature in 1883.69 Members of the WCTU wished to instill middle-class values at the center of culture, because it was readily available to children who were vulnerable to explicit content and deserving of motherly protection.70

The Police Gazette, which began publication in 1845 and reached its circulation peak at the turn of the twentieth century is an illustrative example of the type of cultural

67 See Alison Parker’s Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933 (1997), especially pages 5-6.
68 See Holly Fletcher’s Gender and the American Temperance Movement in the Nineteenth Century. Fletcher notes: “Willard devised the “Home Protection” program. A blending of feminism and domesticity, it envisioned a social, gendered revolution that would take place as good Christian women transformed all parts of their society to “make the whole world homelike.” Home protection couched arguments for women’s political and social equality in the language of female moral authority and victimhood – ideas that had deep, antebellum roots in the temperance movement and ones the Crusade dramatized” (107).
69 The obsession of moralists with culture was a relatively new phenomenon in the US. Prior to the Comstock Law of 1873, which prohibited the distribution of “obscene” material through the US mail there was little censorship. A notable exception is the 1842 Tariff Act, which prohibited “obscene” content from entering the US from abroad. But, the Comstock Law represents a major change in the national surveillance and regulation of “obscene” material (Parker 1, 2, and 6).
content that the WCTU found obscene and sought to censor. The *Police Gazette* was a tabloid-like publication that covered criminal acts. Intrinsic to the WCTU’s construction of the magazine as a social problem is the idea that cultural consumers might be transformed by content modeling their behaviors after criminal and violent representations found within the pages of the cultural product. In her detailed history of the WCTU historian Alison Parker notes: “The department argued that detailed reports of crime would turn young readers into juvenile delinquents; that sports, especially boxing and prizefighting, led to brutality and racial hostilities; and that the sexual objectification of women lessened their powers as models of purity for men and children, both at home and in the public sphere.” Mass culture was constructed as a social problem that required reform because it was thought that it could transform consumers. It was seen as a socializing force that needed to be controlled.

The reform impulse to assimilate the masses into the American nation as imagined by reformers pivoted around the possibility of transformation; if exposed to uplifting culture, children and other vulnerable groups could be uplifted, if exposed to tantalizing and immoral content they would be seduced into a life of debauchery. The socialization of children was considered the most pressing task facing the nation at the turn of the century since the population was becoming increasingly heterogeneous as a result of immigration and the interrelated trends of urbanization and industrialization were loosening the control religion, family, and community had on the social

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72 See Alison Parker’s *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship, 1873-1933*, page 60.
development of youth. Women’s work in the temperance movement provided them with the opportunity to practice politics and construct political identities that would cohere into the form that I refer to hereinafter as soft citizenship. The temperance movement set the stage for the construction of personal conduct as a nationally significant public affair that justified the expansion of governance into the private sphere of the home. By blurring the line between private and public spheres white middle-class women were justified in becoming increasingly actively involved in public affairs to the extent that they were concerned with personal affairs. Moreover, childcentricity is a critical component of maternal activists’ work. Women reformers justified their appearance in the public sphere by claiming that children were the beneficiaries of their reform initiatives. In other words, women did not argue that they wanted power or even desired political agency, but instead that they hoped to extend their reach beyond the home in order to preserve the innocence of children.

Importantly, women were able to claim a critical role in the development of early cinematic content through their anti-obscenity activism, which will be the subject of my next chapter. Even more, the norms and values that they embedded in mass culture, as well as their construction of cinema as a major socializing force, both have residual effects on how cinema is understood and regulated. As my next several chapters will demonstrate, cinema was and remains a critical site of soft citizenship’s historical development, because of the power to socialize vulnerable populations that soft citizens attribute to the

73 For detailed historical accounts see Andrea Friedman’s Prurient Interests and Steven Mintz’s Moralists and Modernizers.
cultural form, which is anticipated in early WCTU arguments about print culture, a concern magnified once cinema makes its US debut at the turn of the twentieth century.
CHAPTER TWO: SOFT CITIZENSHIP AND SHADOW POLITICS: 
INTERPRETING GENDERED NEGOTIATIONS OF POWER THROUGH THE 
POLITICIZATION OF MASS CULTURE IN THE EARLY 1900S

This chapter focuses on the formation of first wave soft citizenship by means of the organized maternal activism of Anglo Saxon Protestant women reformers in the early 1900s. As I demonstrate, the maternal activism that constitutes first wave soft citizenship brings together various logics that begin to emerge in the temperance movement including a politics of the personal that places a moral hierarchy at the center of the US nation-building project. In the words of one scholar pre-civil war reform efforts, including temperance, demonstrate that in the 1800s “moral issues translated into practical political action.”

An already existing cultural climate in which moral agitators played a formative role in defining politics informed the state’s investment in national morality and the development of moral character. In addition, moral claims were

74 See Steven Mintz’s Moralists and Modernizers: America’s Pre-Civil War Reform” (xii). Mintz note that prior to the Civil War the US was seeking solutions to “poverty, crime, illiteracy, and mental illness” creating a national landscape in which dominant members of society sought to uplift those whose lives were a blemish on the nation’s progress. He writes: “Inspired by the Declaration of independence, the Enlightenment faith in reason, and, above all, religious ideals, many early-nineteenth-century Americans joined together to curb drinking, reform prostitutes, spread the Christian gospel, and established experimental communities to serve as models for society” (xiii). Progressive reform initiatives are an extension of an already existing reform impulse that permeated US society. See also, Joseph Jewell’s Race, Reform, and the Making of a Middle-Class: The American Missionary Association and Black Atlanta, 1870 – 1900. Jewell is interested in how race and class identity became conflated as a result of reform projects in the nineteenth-century that sought to ‘civilize’ African American’s in order to incorporate them into the nation. Importantly, most Progressive era initiatives that emerge in the 1900s do not take African Americans as objects of reform instead focusing on new immigrants and poor whites.
increasingly employed to justify state interventions into private lives and private business.

In this chapter I am particularly interested in establishing the gendered, raced, and classed structures of opportunity that influenced the activism of maternal activists since these variables have shaped the development of soft citizenship even as the form has been appropriated by differently positioned groups throughout its historical development. Gender, race, and class influenced the types of issues maternal activists politicized, their justifications for entering the public sphere, and their political strategies. In this period, maternal activists sought to influence social life by extending their familial roles into the public realm. They altruistically argued that children were the beneficiaries of their activism. Importantly, women could do this only because the family, children, and morality were already objects of debate and reform in the early 1900s. Historian Steven Mintz describes the politics of care emerging in the period noting that crime, disease, and ignorance provoked reformers to build prisons, schools, and asylums throughout the nineteenth century and described these institutions as “crucibles of character” created to “rectify the failure of individual families, educate children, rehabilitate criminals, and provide refuges for society’s outcasts.”

The historical work that I began in the last chapter establishes a precedent of politicizing morality and personal conduct that creates an opportunity for women, particularly white middle-class women, to extend the task of mothering beyond the confines of the home.

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75 See Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era Edited by Noralee Frankel and Nancy Schrom Dye (1991).
76 See Steven Mintz’s Moralists and Modernizers: America’s Pre-Civil War Reform (xiv).
As this chapter demonstrates, since women lacked a voice before the state, represented by a vote, they used their class position to create a gendered model of political practice that paralleled that of male reformers. In regards to cinema censorship activism, first wave soft citizens created a consumer-industry relationship that empowered both participating groups while politicizing consumption. The film industry catered to the demands of maternal activists, which politicized cultural production and empowered maternal activists while benefiting from the relationship by practicing what we would now refer to as ‘corporate responsibility’ in order to appear invested in the public good.

I call the arena of discursive contestation and compromise metaphorically formed as a result of the reciprocally empowering relationship between the film industry and first wave soft citizens the “shadow public sphere” to differentiate it from the official public sphere and emphasize the gendered negotiation of power occurring through the politicization of culture in the early 1900s. As I demonstrate through an engagement with Jürgen Habermas’s theorization of the development of the bourgeois public sphere in Europe and corresponding development of the bourgeoisie, women’s reform work and the development of a shadow public sphere helped create their gendered, raced, and classed political identity, which I refer to as soft citizenship. Soft citizenship is an interpretive framework that I use throughout my project to describe a specific form of political subjectivity and practice that is never reducible to an identity. The term is used to describe the historical development of peripheral citizenship at the intersection of mass
culture and politics as well as to elucidate the recursive appeal of these logics at historical junctures characterized by cracks in hegemony.

This chapter also begins my genealogical mapping of soft citizenship’s development through cinema censorship activism. In this period there was no universal moral code applied to film content, instead voluntary organizations worked to evaluate films based on community standards, or as was the case in many states, local censorship laws prevailed. However, many considered cinema a “crucible of character” much like Mintz describes asylums and schools. Reformers hoped that by controlling mass culture they could control national values and the moral development of vulnerable citizens, particularly children, but also new immigrants and the poor. Once reform groups secured the attention of the film industry, which they did through consumption-based strategies including boycotts and buyouts, they were able to aid the film industry in developing a system of self-regulation and ward of the threat of government regulation. As a result of this relationship, reform groups, particularly women’s reform groups, played a pivotal role in the development of early cinematic content, which in turn played a key role in the development of soft citizenship and the dissemination of Anglo Saxon Protestant values through national culture.

**The Progressive Era: Creating a Culture of Care**

The Progressive Era began in the 1890s coinciding with cinema’s US debut and dissolved as the US entered World War I. Progressive era reform projects extend the assimilatory impulse characteristic of the temperance movement’s ‘uplift’ trajectory to a

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77 Several histories of the Progressive movement have been particularly useful including John Whiteclay Chambers’ *The Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era, 1890 – 1920* and Michael McGerr’s *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Era in America.*
variety of initiatives meant to improve the lives of new immigrants and the working poor in a historical moment when both populations were increasing exponentially. More than 12 million immigrants arrived in the US between 1870 and 1900 and another 9 million arrived between 1900 and 1910. Moreover, prior to 1900 most immigrants entering the US came from Britain, Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia whereas after 1900 immigrant populations came from a variety of countries including Italy, Russia, Poland, and Greece. In urbanizing areas including Chicago, New York, and Boston recent immigrants made up the largest demographic since they were drawn to cities where the need for manual laborers was greatest. The rise in immigration coincided with and contributed to the increase in urbanization; the rise in urban populations increased from 20 percent in 1860 to 40 percent in 1900. Overcrowded tenements, poor labor conditions, and unregulated food industries led to a variety of very real health and safety concerns, many of which reform work sought to address.

Although throughout the project I am critical of Progressive era initiatives that take people as the objects of reform, I do not wish to downplay the important justice oriented policies and practices that emerged during the Progressive era. However, I am critical of the normalizing ethos at the center of Progressive era reform initiates, which go beyond

80 Ibid., p. 17.
81 In *Banned in Kansas: Motion Picture Censorship, 1915-1966* historian Gerald Butters describes Progressive era reformers as seekers of justice who thought that “order must be imposed by the government and social agencies to reform the glaring injustices of modern industrial American society” (10). See also Theodore Roosevelt’s *Progressive Principles: Selections from Addresses Made During the Presidential Campaign of 1912*. In the speech titles “Final Triumph of the Battle” Roosevelt emphasizes the social justice impulse of Progressive era reform: “We who fight sanely for the rights of people, for industrial justice and social reform, are also fighting for material well-being; for justice is the hand-maiden of prosperity; and without justice their can be no lasting prosperity” (301).
demanding a standard level of health and safety to creating a standard for personal conduct and morality that justified interventions into the lives of the working poor, new immigrants, and children while taking for granted the superiority of Anglo Saxon Protestant values. Progressive reform initiatives were assimilatory insofar as they sought to incorporate acceptable (e.g. upliftable) members of the social body into the dominant social formation. In other words, Progressive era reform initiatives participated in a pre-existing nation-building project that opened pathways of incorporation to certain subaltern populations while pushing groups deemed unacceptable to the periphery of national life. Moreover, Progressive era reform initiatives had normalizing effects that create a moral hierarchy and police people based on conformity to moral guidelines that emanate from the upper echelons of society. The constitution of national normativity that is an product of this process enables the reproduction of social inequalities since national belonging is constructed through the adequate performance of national normativity. In addition, moral ineptitude is used to justify a range of historically specific ‘otherings’ from racialization to queering that justify excluding groups from national belonging and full citizenship. In other words, in order to construct an “us” reformers demonized a “them” by constructing conduct norms and values that did not comply with middle-class standards as a threat to children, families, and the nation exemplifying the protector-vulnerable-deviant dynamic central to soft citizenship.82

82 Importantly, as my next chapter will demonstrate, women, often constructed as protectors of vulnerable populations off-screen were represented as vulnerable on-screen, a point I return to in chapter three through analysis of early cinematic content.
It is not coincidental that Anglo Saxon Protestant women’s maternal politics emerged at the same time as a culture of care that provoked protectionist reform projects was permeating the national political and cultural scene. The nation’s investment in child welfare was a precondition for women to enter the public sphere, even as they continued to be relegated to its shadows. Children provoked an unprecedented amount of reform initiatives during the Progressive era including laws against child labor, increased access to healthcare for mothers and children, and the creation of Kindergartens. The state’s investment in child welfare inflated the importance of women, particularly white middle-class women, who became advocates for child welfare and were often benefactors of the professionalization of care as expanded work opportunities from teaching and social work to nursing became increasingly available.

The professionalization of care and politicization of child welfare provoked an expanded interest in developing knowledge about children and their welfare. A knowledge-power apparatus emerged to legitimate state and reformer investments in the moral development and conduct management of children leading to the creation of professionalized experts and expertise. In 1912 Children’s Charities, a child welfare organization located in Chicago directed by J.L. Clark, began publishing *The Child: Monthly Journal of Child Welfare*. The journal’s first issue features a brief article

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83 In *Woman’s Proper Place*, Sheila Rothman claims that the child came to be imagined as a national resource, which was demonstrated by public initiatives to care for children: “Children required the attentive care of mothers, then teachers, hence the appropriateness of laws prohibiting child labor, establishing kindergartens, and making school attendance compulsory. Children’s health had to be carefully monitored, hence the need for maternal and child clinics . . .” (98).

entitled “The Reason for The Child,” which establishes the journal’s objectives and warrants the editorial board’s reasoning for “inflicting yet another publication on an already “over-journalized” humanity.”85 The article notes that at the time of publication there were “approximately 115,000 men and women actively engaged in children’s work.”86 Even more, the article claims that although over 100 thousand “serious minded people” are invested in working on behalf of children “there has been no journal or organ of national circulation dealing solely with the cause of the child.”87 The project of child protection was constructed as a national imperative that soon became a national pastime.

In time, the nation’s investment in child welfare, in and of itself a laudable project, led to a childcentric cultural climate that is responsible for the idea that culture and society should be child friendly; an idea that is expressed in cinema censorship logics. A lengthy quote by David Starr Jordan, founding president of Stanford University, educator, and activist reflects the era’s investment in children as a worthy cause of reform:

There is nothing in all the world as important as children, nothing so interesting. If ever you wish to go in for some form of philanthropy, if ever you wish to be of any real use in the world, do something for children. If ever you wish to be wise, study children. If the great army of philanthropists ever exterminates sin and pestilence, ever work out our race salvation, it will be because a little child has led.88

Jordan’s sentiments are illustrative of a cultural climate that constructed children as a national resource that needed to be loved, nurtured, and managed, but the idea that adult’s needed to manage children was coupled with the idea that children could ‘save’ adults by

86 Ibid., 4
87 Ibid., 5
88 Ibid., 20
giving them purpose and hope. To be useful the philanthropist must tend to the needs of children, to be wise the philanthropist muse study children, and to have hope one must believe in the sanctity of children who will lead us to a better world in the future.

Cinema became an important object of debate about morality because it was conceived as an educational tool, a ‘crucible of character,’ which is how reformists justified their control of it. A moral adult population had to siphon dangerous content from the celluloid images that made their way to the big screen as part of the Progressive era child-protection reform tide. The narrative construction of cinema as a social problem that could be recouped as a social force for the betterment of the nation permeated the popular press throughout the early 1900s. For example, in December 1912, William Sheafe Chase published a letter to the editor in *The New York Times* appealing to public-spirited citizens to give children of New York City “the splendid Christmas present of moral and law abiding motion picture shows.”\(^89\) According to Chase: “The children ought to have pictures that show men building bridges rather than robbing banks; that lay stress on virtue rather than villinary, crime, deception or treachery.”\(^90\) Positive cinematic content could inspire children, and allow a path of assimilation into society as an educational and socializing force. Chase asserts: “The motion pictures should teach respect for elders and not contempt for teachers and officers of the law. The fun around

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90 See William Sheafe Chase’s “Bad Motion Pictures” published in *The New York Times* December 14, 1912. In addition, a *New York Times* article, “Censorship for Children”, published by an anonymous author in January 1920, engages a metaphor of the body to explain why children must be shielded from “false and ugly” content. The author writes: “The limitations of children must be taken into consideration when photoplays are presented to them. This does not mean that a child must be fed only milk and mush, but that it must be given food as strong as, and no stronger than, it can digest.”
should not be such as to arouse children to thoughtless and cruel mischief.”

Chase constructs cinema’s audience, comprised of vulnerable children, as a danger to children and argues that state action is required to regulate cinematic content. Chase makes an appeal to citizens to direct a demand to the state for official state censorship enforced by the police department and used Chicago’s 1907 ordinance as evidence of precedent. A culture of care began to permeate the US and it is in this atmosphere that Anglo Saxon Protestant women began to organize for social change creating a gendered public sphere that continues to influence US politics and culture.

**Gendered Public Sphere**

Gendered ideologies, particularly the cult of true womanhood, which I discussed in my previous chapter, limited women’s ability to speak publically and act politically like men. As a result, a gendered shadow public sphere that paralleled the development of America’s official public sphere emerged. Gender dynamics were an integral part of the development of both the official public sphere, a site of deliberation whose male participants made demands to the state, and the shadow public sphere, a site of deliberation whose female participants made demands to industry. As I will show, the shadow public sphere develops along a trajectory similar to that of the official public sphere as theorized by Jürgen Habermas. Firstly, maternal activists needed to justify their political participation since they were disempowered within the existing political system, which led to the development of the shadow public sphere and eventual transformations in the official public sphere. Secondly, had to construct issues of

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92 Jürgen Habermas *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.*
importance to them as nationally significant in order to claim a national audience and legitimate their activism. Thirdly, soft citizens constructed their views as universal and themselves as representing a universal maternal womanhood. Finally, cultural texts and the formation of a reading community around them facilitated the development of shared consciousness and group organization. Before exploring these developments within the realm of soft citizenship and the shadow public sphere I briefly outline Habermas’s theorization of the bourgeoisie public sphere as it developed in Europe to elucidate the interconnections between the development of gendered public and public spheres in the US.

According to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere is an historical phenomenon that emerged in eighteenth century Europe. The bourgeoisie debated the state’s agenda and placed demands on state representatives, which had previously been the prerogative of a very small group of aristocratic men granted the ability to rule through bloodlines. The emerging bourgeoisie justified their participation in state politics by appealing to their economic role and its influence on the nation thereby constructing themselves as political actors with a stake in the state’s political agenda, since economic activity was increasingly entangled with state policy and state supervision. The bourgeoisie constructed the market as a nationally significant political concern in order to demand the state’s audience.

93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., pp. 5-14.
95 Ibid., p. 20.
Unlike the naturalized exclusions of rule within an aristocracy, the bourgeois public sphere was theoretically open to all individuals capable of using reason to discuss issues of public concern and forge consensus, which was then represented as public opinion and brought to bear on state actors. Although theoretically open to all, since it could be extended historically, at its inception participation in the public sphere was, in practice, limited to educated white middle-class men, the emerging bourgeois, who had a vested interest in the relationship between the state and the market. As a result consensus building was undertaken by men sharing a similar economic position who represented their will as universal and had the authority to do so since groups positioned differently including women, minorities, and the working class, could not access the public sphere.

Yet another echo of the bourgeois public sphere embedded in the shadow public sphere is the importance of culture, particularly the published word, which enabled the bourgeois to unite as a reading public and forge a collective identification with shared goals and experiences. Habermas notes that the literary public sphere enabled the emerging middle-class to forge an intersubjective understanding of their common interests. Moreover, the dialogues that emerged around shared cultural objects “provided the training ground for a critical public reflection still preoccupied with itself – a process of self-clarification of private people focusing on the genuine experience of novel privateness.” He writes:

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96 Ibid., 1.
97 Ibid., 22, 24.
98 Ibid., 22-24.
99 Ibid., 29.
The process in which the state-governed public sphere was appropriated by the public of private people making use of their reason and was established as a sphere of critique of public authority was one of functionally converting the public sphere in the world of letters already equipped with institutions of the public and with forums for discussion.\textsuperscript{100}

The intersubjectivity forged through discussion of literary culture worked as an apparatus of subjectification enabling, while also limiting, the formation of subjectivity and identification with a class representing membership in the social body.

Nancy Fraser introduces the idea of counter-publics in a critique of Habermas’s description of the bourgeois public sphere.\textsuperscript{101} Fraser’s theorization of counterpublics informs my reading of the shadow public sphere, which I theorize as a discursive arena that emerges temporally parallel to the bourgeois public sphere. According to Fraser, there have been counter-publics that contested the exclusivity of the bourgeois public sphere since its inception. She writes:

\begin{quote}
… subordinated social groups- women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians- have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics. I propose to call these subaltern counterpublics in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs.\textsuperscript{102}
\end{quote}

Importantly for my project, soft citizens tend to share the same interests and needs as their Anglo Saxon Protestant male counterparts as they benefit from race and class privilege and can partake in the advantages of white masculinity. To the extent that the bourgeois maternal activists that I discuss here are subordinated to their male counterparts they comprise an alternative public, but instead of interpreting this formation

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{101} See “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy” in Habermas and the Public Sphere.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 123.
as a counter-public I see it as an auxillary public. In other words, the shadow public
sphere is not antagonistic to the official public sphere, but instead supports it and at times
influences its content.

Although soft citizenship arises in the context of disenfranchisement, Anglo
Saxon Protestant women were increasingly provided access to public arenas as a result of
the expansion of a culture of care. Even more, after the Civil War, women began to form
literary clubs with the goal of self-improvement through learning. These clubs were
similar in function to the literary publics constituted through discussions of cultural texts
in salons and coffee houses of eighteenth century Europe described by Habermas as a
precursor to the public sphere. The intersubjectivity forged by white middle-class women
through their real relationships with other women in clubs and imagined relationships
with women more generally, was soon politicized as these voluntary associations became
interested in participating in social work. Mary Wood, a member of the General
Federation of Women’s Clubs, published a description of the organizations function in
1912:

The club movement, in its early days a literary movement, is fast
becoming a great civic force; and the club is very rare indeed today in
which the subject of civic betterment is not discussed. An examination of
the yearbooks of thousands of women’s clubs reveals the fact that the
women of the country are studying civic conditions everywhere.104

103 See for example Sheila Rothman’s Woman’s Proper Place, especially 64-74. See also Lee Anne
Wheeler “From Reading Shakespeare to Reforming Burlesque: The Minneapolis Woman’s Club and the
Women’s Welfare League, 1902 – 1920” in Michigan Historical Review.
104 The History of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs for the First Twenty-Two Years of Its
Organization by Mary Wood, page 310.
The subject of “civic betterment” permeated book clubs changing the topic of conversation and leading to civic-minded organization, which soon established first wave soft citizenship.

Discussions about social welfare were framed by the gendered, particularly the familial, experiences of women. Nancy Dye notes:

Gender consciousness suffused progressive women’s thinking about themselves and American society and shaped their conception of reform. Consciousness of gender difference, rooted in middle-class women’s belief in the universality of domesticity and maternity as female experience, initially impelled and justified women’s entry into social reform and politics, gave women reformers a powerful sense of collective identity, and provided the basis for a female critique of modern American social values.¹⁰⁵

Soft citizenship remained tethered to the raced, gendered, and classed worldview of maternal reformers whose politics were both enabled and limited by intersecting social identities that positioned them outside of the official public sphere, which was reserved for men. As Ann Douglas argues, “middle-class literary women lacked power of any crudely tangible kind, and they were careful not to lay claim to it. Instead they wished to exert influence…” itself a gendered mode of power.¹⁰⁶ In this period women worked in the shadows of the state and created an auxiliary public sphere in order to influence various policies from health and food safety to child welfare. They organized under a maternal banner and asserted that they were acting in the interest of vulnerable populations such as children, immigrant and poor women, and families. Douglas describes the power women possessed as “compensatory power,” a consolation prize for

¹⁰⁵ See Nancy Dye’s “Introduction,” in Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era, page 5.
being denied access to the economy as producers and the political realm as full citizens. She writes: “Compensatory power is the power granted to a group too significant to be entirely ignored yet deemed in some sense inferior to those who hold the real power; it’s the logic by which the nineteenth century “lady” was welcomed as a mother and teacher of children but not as a voting member of the nation….”

Although I agree with Douglas, it is important to note that moral capital was eventually exchangeable for political capital and soft citizens were eventually able to influence the form and content of the official public sphere.

Sentimentalism, guided maternal reformers who were emotional allies with the working class and the deserving poor whose lives they aimed to improve by helping them mold their behaviors and change their values to conform to those of the middle-class. The desire for uplift that centers the assimilatory goals of Progressive reform does not wish to withhold the material accoutrements of middle-class respectability from the masses, but it fails to see the impossibility of a universal middle-class life style. One could say it plays dumb to do good. As Douglas writes: “Sentimentalism provides a way to protest a power to which one has already in part, capitulated. It is a form of dragging ones heels. It always borders on dishonesty but is a dishonesty for which there is no known substitute in a capitalist country.”

Women’s civic action seems as if it is not self-serving because children, new immigrants, and the working poor are their beneficiaries, but reform enables the reproduction of status quo relations that keep maternal activists solidly middle-class, allowing them to enjoy the finer things in life. This benefits the advocates

107 Ibid., xiii.
108 Ibid., 12.
more than it benefits those for whom they advocate since reform can only have limited effects on those that need radical change to see dramatic improvements in their life situations, but politicizing care provided women with unprecedented political and professional opportunities and continues to influence how we imagine and practice citizenship.

**Cinema as Social Problem**

Throughout my project I track the development of soft citizenship through moral reform initiatives to control cinematic content for several reasons. First, through each wave of soft citizenship’s development moral reforms have sought to control mass culture. Second, mass culture is a dense transfer point for ideas and values, which makes it intrinsically political. Finally, mass culture plays an important role in the nation-building project. In his critical study of cinema *Policing Cinema*, Lee Grieveson notes that at the turn of the twentieth century, when film debuted and soft citizenship took its embryonic form, there was a “rush to define and police moral norms [that] was increasingly directed at the realm of culture.” Moreover, he writes, “the contestation over individual films and over cinema more generally clearly became one of the principle forums for the discussion of moral norms in the period.” Through discussions of cinematic content, the production of warrants justifying cinemas regulation, and squabbles over how best to regulate the medium, moral ideals were figured as national and given political significance. Early efforts to control cinema were undertaken by the state, but civic-minded women reformers soon took on the project.

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109 Lee Grieveson’s *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth-Century America.*

110 Ibid., 22.
The state established its investment in a moral populace through its own cinema censorship reforms, prior to the emergence of voluntary associations and industry self-regulation. As early as 1907, the Chicago City Council passed a censorship ordinance allowing the superintendent of police to deny permits to films deemed obscene; this and similar ordinances demonstrate that moralization had become a logic the state was more than comfortable appealing to as a justification for repressive action that consolidated value based norms. Official censorship initiatives did not go unchallenged by exhibitors; in fact soon after the ordinance was passed it was contested in a case, *Block v. Chicago*, which went before the state Supreme Court. Whereas in the nineteenth century the state shied away from actively pursuing moralizing agendas the normalization of moralization that occurred as a result of the nationalization of temperance logics made these logics readily available to state representatives.

In this period the protector-vulnerable-deviant dynamic that appears throughout soft citizenship’s historically specific waves was beginning to emerge. Film scholar Garth Jowett cites Chief Justice James H. Cartwright, one of the judges in the case: "‘The audiences include those classes whose age, education and situation in life specifically entitle them to protection against an evil influence of obscene and immoral representations’." In this instance, the construction of consumer vulnerability is used to warrant the expansion of state regulation into the realm of cinematic content. Moreover, Cartwright’s justification for upholding Chicago’s ordinance demonstrates that state representatives perceived the state as responsible for the moral socialization of

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the social body – not just children, but infantilized adult populations as well.
Differentiating “sophisticated” adults from the infantilized masses is intrinsic to
censorship logics. In Cartwright’s justification, those who could not self-manage were
*entitled* to be shielded from immoral content, implies a parallel logic of duty and
responsibly; the state is obligated to regulate cultural content to protect a nascent “right”
to innocence and purity shared by both children and infantilized adult populations. In this
example, the state appropriates a familial dynamic of care, which grounds soft
citizenship. Another example can be found in a 1910 article published in *Playground*, a
periodical about the motion picture industry, John Collier, co-founder of the National
Board of Review of Motion Pictures. Collier differentiates the audience of theater from
that of motion pictures: “The audience of the regular theater is composed of the leisure
class, the man out for a good time away from his family, the sophisticated element of the
community. The audience of a motion picture show is the immigrant, the wage earner,
and the child. The formative and impressionable elements of our people.”¹¹² I do not
mean to suggest that the state begins to act as soft citizens, instead the state’s investment
in the care of society’s most vulnerable members contributes to the emergence of soft
citizenship by giving women, as mothers, an excuse to enter the public sphere.

Another example of a local censorship reform measure reflecting nascent national
logics of parentalism occurred in New York City in 1908.¹¹³ New York City’s mayor,
George B. McClellan, yielded to the demands religious leaders who were offended by

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¹¹³ See also Larry May’s *Screening Out the Past* especially 42-59, Andrea Friedman’s *Prurient Interests*
especially 25 -36, and Gerald Butters’ *Banned in Kansas* 16 -19.
unseemly cinematic content and revoked all theater licenses in the city; this amounted to over 600 closures. Exhibitors were able to overturn the action within days, but the dramatic action taken by McClellan made the film industry take note and led to the creation of two institutional bodies, the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC) in late 1908 and the National Board of Censorship (NBC) in March 1909, which sought to change the film industry’s public image by representing industry interests as those of the general public. The film industry did not reject regulation, but sought to benefit from it by using moral content to court a middle-class audience, a group that comprised a large part of cinema’s audience and that was at the forefront of initiatives to censor cinema. The film industry acquiesced to reform driven arguments about the importance of regulating cinema and agreed to comply with National Board of Censorship (NBC) recommendations. By doing so they began to form a reciprocal relationship with moralists that sought to construct state censorship initiatives superfluous.

114 See Robert Sklar’s Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies; especially p. 30. Many state-based censorship initiatives at the level of exhibition followed Chicago and New York City’s citywide project. Pennsylvania legalized cinema censorship in 1911, followed by Ohio in 1913, Kansas in 1914, Maryland in 1916, and New York and Virginia in 1922. Similar to city-based censorship initiatives found in New York City and Chicago, these states set up boards to review films before providing licenses. These statewide initiatives demonstrate the limited success of the National Board of Censorship to convince a large audience of the effectiveness of their voluntary measures.

115 See Lee Grieveson Policing Cinema especially 78 -120 116 The New York Times, October 1, 1910. News coverage of the NBC immediately following its formation was almost always positive. A 1909, “Browning now given in Motion Pictures,” article notes that “popular opinion has been expressing itself through the Board of Censors” resulting in the industry reforming content and replacing sensationalistic films with films inspired by classical texts. In October of 1910 Walter Storey, general secretary for the NBC, wrote a letter to the editor praising the co-operative relationship the organization had with the industry. In this period, the film industry was courting middle-class attendance in earnest and Storey notes: “...the audience of motion picture shows is in the main an audience of wage-earners and of families whose standards are not base and whose craving for education is genuine and deep.” According to Storey, it is a morally sound audience that differentiates cinema from other forms of mass entertainment. See for example: “Limits of Censorship.” Although coverage of the NBC’s role in content regulation is positive, several articles note the poor conditions of theaters themselves. See for examples - “Motion Picture Shows.” The New York Times,
The film industry embraced the NBC, a voluntary organization began by members of the People’s Institute, a civic organization, because they had produced a lengthy and favorable overview of cinema exhibition conditions in 1908, which helped legitimate film as a respectable form of entertainment, a force for good what was acceptable for a middle-class audience.\textsuperscript{117} The executive secretary of the People’s Institute, John Collier, saw his task as representing the public interest and mediated between the public and the industry to ensure morally uplifting content; the film industry, playing its part, conflated its interests with those of the (middle-class familial) public negating justifications for state censorship.\textsuperscript{118} In this early phase of film censorship, we can witness the intersection of economic, cultural, political, and familial interests creating common ground and forging allegiance through claims to protect the moral development of an abstract child; they contended that this shared goal is good for business, politics, and the family and creates a sense of the nation as universally invested in “our” children.

March 17, 1911. Overcrowding, the presence of unaccompanied minors, poor lighting, ventilation, and limited fire exits are items of complaint. Interestingly the writer notes, “the menace of these conditions to young girls, are matters of complaint.” See also, “Urges One Control of Picture Shows.” The New York Times, March, 23, 1911. The author approves of the NBC’s regulation of content, but claims that a single institutional body, which he attributes to the cause of poor safety conditions, does not regulate safety conditions. A call to centralize the regulation of exhibition sites is recommended. The success of the NBC in regulating film content is again praised in “Censors Destroyed Evil Picture Films.” The New York Times, May 14, 1911.

By 1911 the cooperative relationship between the NBC and the film industry, celebrated by the NBC, was being critiqued by women’s groups. Film’s were viewed by members of many different moral reform organizations including the Woman’s Municipal League, which withdrew support of the NBC in 1911, contending that “the time has come when a board, which is not subsidized by the film manufacturers, should be named to pass on the films to be exhibited in this city, one which can require the manufactures to destroy the films which it condemns.” See for example - Say Motion Picture Censorship is Lax.” The New York Times, November 8, 1911.

\textsuperscript{117} See “Moral Coercion, or The National Board of Censorship Ponders the Vice Films” by Shelley Stamp - The NBC, renamed the National Board of Review in 1916, granted a certificate of approval to films deemed appropriate for diverse audiences. The Board was comprised of volunteers active in the Progressive community and all major manufacturers agreed to participate in the voluntary system of review before a film’s exhibition. The NBC is significant; it created a template for the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributers Association (MPDA) that followed its collapse and regulates cinema to this day.

\textsuperscript{118} See Garth Jowett’s "A Capacity for Evil": The 1915 Supreme Court Mutual Decision,” p. 24).
Both the Chicago and New York City examples that I have discussed represent local initiatives to regulate culture and set the stage for later national initiatives to censor culture. Since exhibition and distribution were regulated at the state or city levels of government, political leaders used their existing authority over the regulation of commerce to control cinema. Of course, at times jurisdiction and the limits of state power pushed cinema reform projects onto the national stage. For example, the first content regulation case heard before the US Supreme Court, Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio, reflects many of the logics reflected in the Chicago example at the national level. The case itself began as a local matter, but it was eventually given a national audience before the Supreme Court. In 1913, Ohio created a board to screen films before granting licenses; this is similar to the Chicago ordinance brought before the Illinois Supreme Court since the board only provided licenses to films “of a moral, educational or amusing, and harmless character.” Mutual Film Corporation, a major interstate film exchange conglomerate based in Detroit, challenged the constitutionality of the law in court by arguing that since exhibitors could only show censored film, state based censorship laws adversely affected distributors’ bottom-line; it argued that this placed an unfair burden on interstate commerce and was in violation of First Amendment free speech guarantees. Cases like Mutual establish that cinema content was highly contested in the early 1900s and that debates about regulating cinema intersected with debates about the limits of state governance. I suggest that soft citizens

120 Garth Jowett’s “‘A Capacity for Evil’: The 1915 Supreme Court Mutual Decision, page 25.
participate in an informal mode of governance that allows the extension of familial models of care into areas outside of the home in ways that would have eventually be critiqued as obtrusive and unconstitutional if undertaken by the state. However, in this period the state was at the forefront of attempts to censor film.

The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Ohio demonstrating that the state representatives were more than comfortable interfering in private business when the socialization of vulnerable populations was compromised. Garth Jowett analyzes the Supreme Court’s decision to deny film First Amendment protection by noting Supreme Court Justice McKenna’s opinion of film: “they may be used for evil. {…} Their power of amusement and, it may be, education, the audiences they assemble, not of women alone nor men alone, but together, not of adults only, but of children, make them the more insidious in corruption by a pretense of worthy purpose.”121 The logics embedded in McKenna’s justification of censorship are similar to those appealed to by Justice Cartwright in his justification for supporting Chicago’s licensing ordinance in Chicago v. Block. According to Jowett: “they were unwilling to leave the general public unprotected from what they saw as a powerful unregulated social force.”122 Again, constructing cinema as a social problem warranted state intervention in order to defend the vulnerable.

As I have demonstrated, the early 1900s was characterized by a culture of care in which social control was warranted by appealing to the vulnerability of society’s weakest members, most notably children, but also women, the working poor, and new immigrants. Progressive era reformers who could access masculine modes of power

121 Ibid., 27.
122 Ibid., 28.
through the state embedded a politics of care into state policies and practices such as local censorship schemes. The majority of censorship initiatives that I have discussed to this point relied on existing state-based institutions for the authority to censor content by regulating the exhibition site with the exception. The National Board of Censors (NBC) is a notable exception; a voluntary organization, the NBC worked with the film industry anticipating and informing the moves women’s reform groups would make to garner create a mutually beneficial relationship with the film industry in local and later national contexts.

The Woman’s Club of Minneapolis founded by Alice Ames Winter along with other members of Minneapolis’s elite in 1907 integrated gendered political strategies into their work; these strategies are characteristic of soft citizenship and demonstrate the ways historical circumstance determined gendered activist strategies. Film historian Leigh Ann Wheeler describes the gendered strategies the Women’s Club of Minneapolis employed:

The men, including an attorney and a school administrator, consulted with state and city officials, enlisted the support of local religious leaders, and drafted a sweeping motion picture bill that imposed safety standards and inspections, prohibited “immoral” and “suggestive” films {…} and provided for an official board of censorship to monitor every film entering the state. The Welfare League, meanwhile, mobilized a petition and letter writing campaign…

Men working with Women’s Clubs used “masculine” strategies tapping into their relationship to the state in ways women could not; women undertook feminized strategies of involvement that mimicked moral suasion, a technique used by women since they became active in the temperance movement. Even with the aid of men, the Women’s

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123 See Lee Anne Wheeler’s Against Obscenity: Reform and the Politics of Womanhood in America, 1873 – 1935, page 34.
Club was not successful at convincing legislatures to censor. Failure to be taken seriously by state representatives compelled women to create different strategies.

Women inadvertently undertook unpaid labor for the industry, detailing what mothers wanted to see produced and providing free marketing for films it approved. As Wheeler notes, “Rather than continuing to entreat government institutions to supervise or censor theaters, they began to capitalize on their assets by exerting pressure through their own regulatory apparatus - a voluntary censorship board.”\(^{124}\) The Women’s Club of Minneapolis’s Motion Picture League monitored films, endorsing films with moral content and boycotting those they deemed obscene. Theater managers began to solicit the Motion Picture League’s endorsement knowing that the League’s approval marked a film with respectability, which increased sales by expanding the middle-class audience.\(^{125}\)

The Women’s Club of Minneapolis did not have uncontested control of the local anti-obscenity scene. In 1914, Catherine Cooke Gilman moved to Minneapolis from NY and joined the Welfare League.\(^{126}\) Robbins Gilman, Catherine Cooke Gilman’s husband, was affiliated with the NY-based National Board of Censorship (NBC) when he lived there and he maintained this connection while working with the Welfare League in Minneapolis, which was presided over by his wife. The NBC, already working with the Women’s Cooperative Alliance contacted the Women’s Welfare League in 1915, urging the League to attach their work to the NBC by upholding their content standards; this would lead to some standardization of content regulation. According to Wheeler, “Men

\(^{124}\) Leigh Ann Wheeler’s Against Obscenity, page 36.
\(^{125}\) For a detailed historicization see Leigh Ann Wheeler’s Against Obscenity. See also Twin Cities Picture Show: A Century of Moviegoing by Dave Kenney.
\(^{126}\) See “Catherine Cooke Gilman and the Minneapolis Better Movie Movement” by Cynthia Hanson in Minnesota History Summer 1989.
founded and led the National Board of Censorship, but women – primarily mid-western women – operated most of the local organizations that made the increasingly elaborate system work” (37). Working with the NBC in order to standardize content anticipates the industry’s move towards self-regulation in the 1930s.

Gilman helped organize “better film committees” or voluntary censorship boards to screen films and verify that they did not contain scenes that inspired offense from sexuality to drunkenness. By 1921 (one-year later), many theaters agreed to cooperate with better films committees. The voluntary censorship boards created by women are similar to those created by states and municipalities across the US; the point is not that state and voluntary organizations were radically different, but instead that they existed in a “shadow” realm, outside of the official public sphere.

Although women were granted the vote until the 1920s, many women’s clubs continued to use consumer, as opposed to ballot-based, strategies to clean up cinema. By constructing themselves as moral experts through an appeal to their role as mothers, the Motion Picture League, an arm of the Welfare League, was able to apply consumer pressure to industry representatives. The industry was more receptive to the demands of women’s social groups than the state since women were empowered as consumers even as they were disenfranchised as members of the nation. Women’s economic empowerment as consumers stood in stark opposition to their political disenfranchisement. Their ability to mobilize existent organizations to social welfare

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127 See Leigh Ann Wheeler’s Against Obscenity, p. 37.
128 Ibid., 52
129 Ibid., 54
130 Ibid., 55
131 Ibid., p. 36.
reform by creating strong bonds with industry is central to the development of the shadow public sphere and this wave of soft citizenship. Moreover, these feminized techniques are appropriated by new waves of soft citizens, because history proves they work. Political strategies forged in the context of women’s disenfranchisement were repeated because they worked. Performing politics through politicized commodity consumption, for example, boycotts and buycotts, has a lengthy history in the US, and continues into the present.\textsuperscript{132}

While films were censored at the local level the most far reaching standardized censorship initiatives were those undertaken by voluntary organizations working loosely with the NBC. Some women’s groups including the powerful Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), discussed in my previous chapter, continued to support federal regulation. In 1916, the WCTU expanded its censorship efforts and were joined by other groups comprised of mostly middle-class white Protestants.\textsuperscript{133} These groups understood that the film industry’s goal was to make money and they refused to attend theaters that played movies they deemed immoral. This strategy proved successful and by the early 1920s, middle-class movie attendance was down.

In order to create a better public image, the film industry responded in 1921 by creating the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), a trade organization that would protect the studios’ interests and censor films by developing and

\textsuperscript{132} For examples see \textit{Consumer Society in American History: A Reader} edited by Lawrence Glickman.
\textsuperscript{133} Other groups involved include the General Federation of Women’s Clubs and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers (Parker 143).
enforcing universal standards. In what is perhaps the clearest example of industry co-operation with social purity activists, Hays attempted to convince Alice Ames Winter of the Women’s Club of Minneapolis to take an anti-official censorship, pro-voluntary content regulation strategy and to work with the industry to ensure moral content. Reciprocating Hays’ attention, Winter invited him to address the audience of local women’s clubs a the 1922 General Federation convention and he used the opportunity to remind women of the success they had historically had with consumer-driven reform arguing that public opinion was best expressed through box office receipts. The reciprocal relationship between women reformers and industry was crystallized in Hays and Winter’s relationship.

Minneapolis’ clubwomen understood the social, political, and economic contexts that limited their ability to make political demands to the state, but they also understood the economic and cultural conditions that enabled them to make demands to industry. Concerned with the moral socialization of children, as well as their health and overall well-being, this early wave of soft citizens created successful strategies to meet their reform goals.

Censorship activism in Minneapolis is representative of local initiatives taking place throughout the country. In this period there was no universal moral code applied to film content, instead voluntary organizations worked to evaluate films based on

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136 See Leigh Ann Wheeler Against Obscenity.
community standards, or as was the case in many states, local censorship laws prevailed. The practice of film exhibitors seeking endorsements from women’s clubs was not confined to Minneapolis: Ohio’s Cleveland Cinema Club, Pittsburgh’s Women’s Civic Club of Duquesne, and the Indiana Endorsers of Photoplays all followed this strategy of cooperation that arguably began when the film industry teamed up with the NBC to represent their interests as synonymous with the states. The popularity of co-operation as a political strategy based on consumer principles demonstrates that consumer-based political strategies were becoming a natural mode of political praxis for disenfranchised members of the polity.

My next chapter elaborates on several themes introduced in this chapter, particularly cinema as a technique of nation building. However, whereas this chapter focuses on the practice of censorship through a reading of cinema as a product of social relations, the following chapter looks at cinematic content and the ‘back-story’ of the film industry itself. I develop the argument that cinema is a technique of nation building and that middle-class familial norms were ‘nationalized’ and naturalized as a result of the relationship between maternal activists and the film industry. Moreover, I consider the racial dynamics at play in the US nation-building project in order to highlight the exclusion-inclusion dynamic at the center of nation building. I demonstrate that early cinematic content is representative of national culture and is an example of culture that represents the nation, which influences how Americanness is envisioned and enacted with reference to Anglo Saxon Protestant values.

137 See Leigh Ann Wheeler’s Against Obscenity, p. 37.
In this chapter I depart from an analysis of the development of soft citizenship as citizenship subjectivity and corresponding set of citizenship practices in order to analyze the process by which soft citizenship logics became embedded in and embodied through mass culture. Early cinema inserted normative models of familial and capitalistic success at the center of mass national culture, which led to the massification of middle-class values. In addition, the ubiquitous representation of middle-class familial norms in cinema enabled the development of the family as a trope through which the nation is imagined as a community of strangers united through desire for and participation in private families. Normalizing familialism provided a metaphorical and performative locus for uniting Americans across differences; it shaped the modes by which people envisioned themselves as political agents and performed their citizenship. Controlling cinematic content is one of soft citizenship’s grandest achievements, since controlling the field of cultural visibility allowed soft hegemony to be maintained supporting status quo ideals and relations.

Since models of ideal familialism are neither desirable nor available to a variety of populations based on an array of variables ranging from sexuality to race and class, using the family as a focal point through which national belonging is performatively constituted produces a inclusion/exclusion dynamic at the center of US nation building.
Importantly, the ability to approximate a raced and classed familial ideal that reproduces gender and sexual norms influenced how the national community was defined. In fact, as this chapter demonstrates, early cinematic content bound Americanness to whiteness by constructing African Americans, particularly African American men, as a threatening menace to white womanhood, white families, and the white nation; alternatively, ‘good’ African Americans were portrayed as subservient “helpers” devoted to the upkeep of the white American family.

Early cinema articulates a tension between Progressive era logics of assimilation and inclusion and parallel logics of exclusion that are often justified through constructions of racial, sexual, and class difference as parameters around which national community membership are erected and policed. The Progressive era impulse towards uplift was tempered by acquiescence to existing racist ideologies as noted by historian John Whiteclay Chambers:

The dominant national view in America at the turn of the century was that all other peoples were inferior to the white race and indeed to peoples of western European descent. Anglo-American whites denied African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians their rights as citizens through a combination of legal restraints, physical segregation, and violent intimidation.138

As this chapter will demonstrate, the racial dimension of citizenship, particularly the exclusion of minorities, was often justified by constructing minorities as a threat to white women and the white family. Echoing the vulnerable-protector-deviant dynamic logic I identify with soft citizenship in everyday life and filmic representations white men

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justified the mistreatment of minorities by representing black men as a threat to white women, white families, and the white nation, all of which white men were duty bound to protect. African Americans were not considered assimilatable and were not objects of reform like new immigrants and the working white poor. Eric Nicholas Olund convincingly argues that African Americans were not envisioned as part of the “masses” that Progressive era reformers hoped to uplift. Olund argues: “The abjection of African Americans … was an important epistemological move on the part of reformers as they sought to understand and direct the agency of cinema to produce their vision of white American citizens.” White America was defined in contrast to black America and a national community was erected around the exclusion of naturalized ‘others’ in this instance black Americans. African Americans were offered no path to inclusion into the dominant social formation through normative familial participation within filmic representation, a point I develop through close readings of several of DW Griffith’s films. Since cinema provided a means of representing the nation on a mass scale it played a key role in influencing images of the nation and interpretations of practices and people.

Constructing African Americans, specifically men, but sometimes women, as threats to national stability within cinema established an interpretive framework through which shifting race relations could be stabilized, at least on the big screen, by reproducing racist ideologies. This in turn reinforced exiting racist ideologies and justified the continued mistreatment of African Americans including practical

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140 Ibid., 17.
disenfranchisement. As I show, whiteness is constructed as vulnerable at the bodily, familial, and national level, which justifies interpersonal, symbolic, and institutional acts of racism through the ‘queering’ of blackness; its construction as menacing, threatening, strange – radically other to white normativity.\(^\text{141}\)

Imagining the nation through the trope of the family enabled certain groups of subalterns access points into the nation demonstrating the assimilatory impulse at the core of US nation building practices. For instance, white immigrants and the working white poor could identify with Americanness and performatively demonstrate their investment in an American familial way of life thus constituting themselves as members of the nation through their conformity to familial and middle-class norms or at least by demonstrating the desire for a white middle-class version on the good life.\(^\text{142}\) Moreover, the inclusion-exclusion dynamic at play in the construction of normative national ideals served the interests of dominant groups invested in status quo relations by uniting disparate groups of white citizens through familialism while producing various threats that further united a white nation.

The Pursuit of Profit and the Commodity Form

In this section I consider the commodity element of cinema in order to explain the film industry’s interest in creating a relationship with reformers. I then connect the

\(^{141}\) The inclusion/exclusion dynamic that anchors assimilatory nation building strategies constructs some differences to be transcended while other differences are constructed as insurmountable. By the 1960s gays and lesbians emerge as a menace to the heterosexual nation and in the early twenty-first century “queers” are constructed as a threat to the familial nation. Nation building requires the construction and policing of imaginary borders around the very real social body.

\(^{142}\) In chapter one I discussed the Washingtonian Movement and the appropriation of middle-class Anglo Saxon Protestant conduct norms of temperance by the working-class as a form of self-improvement. The moralization and politicization of personal conduct as it relates to US nation building creates an exclusion-inclusion dynamic enabling some groups the ability to ascend into the dominant social formation.
relationship forged between industry and reformers, as both agitators and audience, to the project of US nation building. By 1908 the film industry had begun to conceptualize middle-class families as the ‘audience-ideal’ and this section established why this move was made and its influence on cinematic content. I argue that content producers had little investment in content; it was a means to make money. As a result, the industry was not resistant to forming a relationship with reformers who desired to use cinema as a technique of nation building that reinforced middle-class Anglo Saxon Protestant moral hegemony. This section established that cinema was in fact a mass medium up to the task of creating a national community by massifying cultural values and ideals that emanated from middle-class Anglo Saxon Protestants on a grand scale.

In 1883 American inventor and entrepreneur Thomas Edison founded the Black Maria, a production studio, to create film content for his newly patented kinetoscope, a peephole viewer that allowed individuals standing over a podium shaped device to view moving pictures through a peephole. Edison profited by selling these devices and produced content for the machine in order to increase sales.\footnote{143} In the studio’s first year of operation it was responsible for seventy-five films.\footnote{144} Edison invited actors, dancers, and comics into his studio to perform in front of his cumbersome 500-pound camera. As a result, early cinematic content produced in the Black Maria was similar to entertainment found at fairs, vaudeville halls, and even “legitimate” theaters. For example, in

\footnote{143}{See “Film Projection and Variety Shows” by Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer, “The Machine” by AB Fulton, and “The History of the Kinetoscope” by Gordon Hendricks both anthologized in Tino Balio’s The American Film Industry.}
\footnote{144}{For accounts of the early cinematic form see Steven Ross’s Working-Class Hollywood especially 16-27, Larry May’s Screening Out the Past, especially 22-42, Garth Jowett’s Film: The Democratic Art, especially 26-34. See especially: Movie history: A Survey by Douglas Gomery and Clara Pafort-Overduin page 14.}
Serpentine Dances several costumed women dance in front of the camera and in Shadow (The Strong Man) a scantily clad man displays his muscular build.145

Meanwhile, in France, Augste and Louis Lumière, invented a lightweight camera, weighing only 16 pounds.146 Of course, this camera was infinitely more mobile than Edison’s and promoted the development of new types of cinematic content to be produced outside of the confines of a studio. The Lumière brothers’ camera facilitated the emergence of actualities, brief snapshots of everyday life often shot on streets, in factories, even in homes. Examples of early films by the Lumière brothers include Exiting the Factory, a film in which a large group of women and men pour out of a factory and onto a street. Another example is Baby’s Lunch, a familial scene that depicts a man, woman, and baby sharing a meal; the man feeds his baby while the woman drinks tea.147 Viewing images of everyday life captured on film, including laborers leaving work and filing onto busy streets and intimate scenes of family life, became folded into the everyday life practices of cinema’s viewing audience. Viewers were exposed to experiences that in many instances looked similar to their own, and in other instances, represented ‘model’ lives worthy of emulation.

145 See also: The Kiss, a close up of a couple kissing. Glenroy Brothers (Comic Boxing), in which scrawny men obviously pretend to fight. Cockfighting in which men watch cock fight (one has money in hand – betting.
146 See Movie History: A Survey by Douglas Gomery and Clara Pafort-Overduin, especially 13-16.
147 Ibid 13-16. For other examples of early films by the Lumière Brothers see: The Sprinkler Sprinkled in which a man holds a sprinkler and another sneaks up behind him to turn the sprinkler on; man that gets wet chases other man and wets him. Promenade of Ostriches, Paris Botanical Garden in which people in carriages, on horseback, camels and elephants parade down a street. Demolition of a Wall in which four men at work tearing own a wall and then breaking the concrete slab into small bits. Snowball Fight in which many adults in snowball fight acting like children. New York: Broadway at Union Square in which a busy NYC street is depicted. Arrival of a Train in which men stand and await the arrival of a train; men exit and enter. For examples by Thomas Edison see The Barber Shop, in which two men talk as another man shaves a third client. Seminary Girls in which five girls in long night dressed have a pillow fight older woman comes in and breaks it up.
The Lumiére brothers also invented film projection, which enabled multiple viewers to consume film content simultaneously, thereby increasing the profitability of film and inspiring a new business model.\textsuperscript{148} In the US, Edison was not initially interested in projecting films since he profited from selling the kinetoscope and produced content to increase the profitability of the kinetoscope.\textsuperscript{149} However, once other US entrepreneurs began to adapt the kinetoscope to project films Edison, not wanting to be left out of the new profit making venture, joined the industrialists Norman Charles Raff and Frank R Gammon to brand and market the Vitascope.\textsuperscript{150} This brief history of film technologies and the development of the film industry demonstrate that early cinema was a profit driven venture and content as a secondary concern of early entrepreneurs.

Players in the new industry extracted profit at the level of production, exhibition, and distribution. Early cinema attracted a middle-class audience through the development of theater palaces, which pre-date nickelodeons. In Proctor’s Pleasure Palace, which opened in New York City in 1895, “patrons were pampered with a large auditorium, a roof garden, a German café, and a barbershop, with a Turkish bath and both flower and booksellers in the basement.”\textsuperscript{151} Palaces like this demonstrate the high-end market for entertainment in areas like New York City that boasted a thriving middle-class.\textsuperscript{152} Palaces

\textsuperscript{148} See “Film Projection and Variety Shows” by Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer in \textit{The Silent Cinema Reader}.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid

\textsuperscript{151} See \textit{Movie History: A Survey} by Douglas Gomery and Clara Pafort-Overduin, especially page 16.

\textsuperscript{152} For an analysis of early cinemas audience see Ben Singer’s “Manhattan Nickelodeons: New Data on Audiences and Exhibitors” in \textit{The Silent Cinema Reader}. Singer concludes that although further research is necessary early cinema’s audience was likely drawn from the middle as well as working class. See also \textit{Cinema’s Milieux: Governing the Picture Show in the United States During the Progressive Era} Eric Olund’s unpublished dissertation. Olund argues that in places like Atlanta, Georgia theaters were erected in or near middle-class areas, whereas in places like Minnesota they were more likely to emerge in lower-
were however, not a catalyst for the massification of the new form at the level of consumption, since attendance was class restricted and therefore limited.

Nickelodeons, the first permanent film exhibition sites, took advantage of projection technologies to establish a mass audience. As opposed to one viewer standing in front of a kinetoscope, nickelodeons could accommodate between 50 and 300 people simultaneously consuming the same content. Unlike glamorous Palaces, attending a nickelodeon was inexpensive, about a nickel a performance, so these exhibition sites attracted a largely, although not exclusively, working class audience. Owners of nickelodeons profited by quantity sales and did not focus on the quality of moviegoer’s experience, which was a pivotal strategy of the decadent Palaces that appealed to affluent populations. Quantity, as opposed to quality sales, enabled cinema to emerge as a mass medium with an audience that crossed class lines; in 1910 an estimated 26 million people attended nickelodeons weekly. Beyond being inexpensive for viewers, nickelodeons were a relatively inexpensive entrepreneurial opportunity that appealed to many new immigrants who lacked the initial capital required to build Palaces; nickelodeons did not require much capital in start up costs.

class neighborhoods. This demonstrates that early cinema had an economically diverse audience base and must be analyzed based on localities. My project does not undertake a geographical analysis of theaters but instead relies on emerging secondary scholarship to demonstrate that early cinema’s audience seems to have been economically homogeneous. See also: Garth Jowett Film: The Democratic Art especially pages 35-42. Jowett argues that film’s early audience consisted of the middle-class, existing live theater audiences, and the working class who could not afford live entertainment.

153 See Garth Jowett’s Film: The Democratic Art, especially 59-65 and Movie History: A Survey by Douglas Gomery and Clara Pafort-Overduin, especially 17.
154 See Movie History: A Survey by Douglas Gomery and Clara Pafort-Overduin, especially 18.
155 See Ben Singer’s “Manhattan Nickelodeons” in The Silent Cinema Reader. Singer demonstrates that early exhibition sites tended to be independently owned by small time business owners including new immigrants (129).
The increased presence or at least increasingly recognized presence of women and children at nickelodeons after 1910 was one justification for increased regulation of film exhibition sites and the parallel concern over the morality of film content that was being voiced by many reformers. Women’s groups, on the other hand, were more concerned with the moral content of films than with the safety conditions present at the site of consumption as demonstrated in a *New York Times* article published in 1912: “… with 800,000 people, mostly women and children, attending the movie picture shows daily, laws should be passed regulating the safety of the buildings in which the exhibitions occur. The Women’s Municipal League takes the stand that the regulation of the moral tone of the pictures is more important, all things considered.”156 Women and children were constructed as particularly vulnerable to unsanitary and unsafe exhibition site conditions, an argument used to justify the regulation of sites by men who tasked themselves with protecting the vulnerable. Women reformers, my first wave soft citizens, had to remove themselves from the vulnerable category in order to be recognized as agents of reform, which they accomplished by appealing to their family roles and moral expertise.

Concerns about the physical and moral health of vulnerable viewers provoked a variety of reform initiatives and around the same time that nickelodeons reached the height of their popularity, cities began to regulate the exhibition sites as per my description in the previous chapter.157 Increased regulation forced many less profitable

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157 For a detailed overview of the regulation of exhibition sites including the rhetoric deployed to warrant the crackdown see Annette Kuhn’s *Cinema, Censorship, and Sexuality 1909-1925*. See also Ben Singer’s “Manhattan Nickelodeons” In *The Silent Cinema Reader*. 91
nickelodeons to close their doors inadvertently jump starting industry consolidation. Moreover, those exhibitors who were able to profit began to court a middle class audience they could charge more for a ticket. New regulations along with a desire for a middle-class audience transformed exhibition sites as theaters with “separate lobbies, grand architecture, stages, and permanent seats” not to mention adequate lighting and ventilation, replaced storefronts and folding chairs. ¹⁵⁸ New theaters had more in common with the Palaces created in the 1890s than nickelodeons popularized in the 1910s.¹⁵⁹

**Mass Culture, Capitalism, and Consciousness**
Consuming cinema was incorporated into everyday life practices as a result of its reproducibility; it was not set off from the world, but was instead embedded into the everyday life practices of hundreds of millions. The ubiquity of cinema influenced how Americans saw themselves and the world and provided them with a framework for understanding modernity and a changing nation. Writing in the 1930s, cultural theorist Walter Benjamin attributed political significance to cinema. For Benjamin, cinema was political since it was created for mass consumption with the masses instead of elites as its intended audience. According to Benjamin art made to be reproduced lacks a “here and now” quality that locates it in a specific place and time; its consumption is anticipated to occur in various localities, which is certainly reflected in the ubiquity of cinema’s presence in nickelodeons throughout the US at the turn of the century. The integration of

¹⁵⁸ See *Movie History: A Survey* by Douglas Gomery and Clara Pafort-Overduin, especially 19. ¹⁵⁹ See *Movie History: A Survey* by Douglas Gomery and Clara Pafort-Overduin, especially 19. See also Miriam Hansen’s “Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere” especially 151 and Ben Singer’s “Manhattan Nickelodeons,” *The Silent Cinema Reader*. Singer argues that the business, catering to a working class audience, was “risky and unstable” (129). He notes that many new entrepreneurs went out of business within a year (129). To support his argument Singer notes that in New York City in 1908 there were 117 nickelodeons, but half closed by the following year.
art into everyday life changed the art object’s function. Benjamin is particularly interested in film’s ability to reconstruct human perception---reorienting viewers in the world and creating critical consciousness, a new awareness of the relationship between technology, nature, and people. For him, the camera functions like an optical unconscious; it can show us the physical world that we only vaguely consciously comprehend through close-ups, slow motion, and different points of view, which enable viewers to stop and look at the world from a distance allowing viewers a new vantage point to modernity and the ability to see themselves as part of a living landscape. The hope for Benjamin is that film will position viewers to see the reification of the world, to see that structures uncritically taken to be natural, inevitable and permanent are in fact contingent, man-made and therefore subject to change.

Benjamin is also interested in the simultaneity of consumption enabled by reproducible art, which he links to the possible production of critical collective class-consciousness. I find his theorization useful for thinking about cinema as a technique of nation building that collectivizes national consciousness enabling the emergence of a national public. Film scholar Steven Ross echoes this point when he contends that early cinema enabled the working class to recognize that they were a socially positioned group with shared interests. Ross surmises that consuming content that reflected their lived

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160 See Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version,” in The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media. For Benjamin: “The primary social function of art today is to rehearse that interplay” (26). For Benjamin, culture, specifically film, trains people to comprehend new ideas in relation to old ones. It allows people to assimilate and react to the technological apparatus. This may be understood as a critical integration of technology and nature hopefully leading to a relation of reciprocity as opposed to domination. For Benjamin, people will remain enslaved to the technological apparatus until people have adapted to the productive forces that the technological apparatus has produced (26-27).
experiences must have been a “profound” experience for the working class who “believed no one knew or cared about their hardships.” Furthermore, he speculates: “Surrounded by people who laughed when they laughed and cried when they cried, movie neophytes felt less alone, less alienated than before.” In his description of working class film viewers confrontation with their life experiences Ross hypothesizes that the development of an intersubjective awareness based on class identification occurred; there is no evidence of this provided, but Ross does convincingly argue that early cinema could have enabled an intersubjective awareness of class stratification. Like Benjamin, Ross argues that if the working class could recognize themselves as collectively dominated by capitalist labor conditions they “might stop blaming themselves” and “begin to realize that many of their problems were caused by crooked politicians, avaricious companies, and a juridical system that turned a deaf ear to the sufferings of the poor.” In other words, Ross sees cinema as enabling consciousness raising by providing individuals a way of recognizing their struggles as collective although privately experienced. A critical understanding of the plight of poor laborers by poor laborers would challenge the idea that poverty was the result of personal failure by contextualizing it within a social system.

Examples of the kind of actually existing early cinematic content that both Benjamin and Ross would likely characterize as having the potential to produce intersubjective class consciousness are readily available in ‘actualities.’ In fact, much of the content reflected in actualities included scenes of everyday life from a woman bathing

161 See Steven Ross’s Working Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America, page 5.  
162 Ibid., 5.  
163 Ibid., 5.
a child to a firefighter putting out flames.\textsuperscript{164} The Library of Congress has collected a series of actualities including the Westinghouse Works, which was produced by American Mutoscope and Biograph Company from April 13 to May 16, 1904. The actuality \textit{Assembling a Generator} depicts several laborers working together to build a generator, a scene that many viewers of the short could likely identify with.\textsuperscript{165} The brief film offers workers the opportunity to see themselves at work, interchangeable with any of the men in the film, just as they are interchangeable with each other as they lift, place, and bolt together heavy pieces of steel. Moreover, in the film we see the workers and the machine, but the owners of the means of production are conspicuously absent from the frame, superfluous to the scene of labor. The men in the film produce the technology; they play an active role in the creation of the apparatus, which demonstrates man’s relationship with machine. Films like this do have the ability to reveal their viewers to themselves in startling ways demonstrating the collective experience of labor within capitalism. In this film, as well as several described in the previous section, the working class bears witness to people living lives similar to their own. The similarities of experiences—and not just labor but also love--were caught under the camera’s gaze and later the gaze of consumers who could then connect an understanding of their private lives as sharing characteristics with those of other people.

The potential for some cinematic products to democratize and offer possibilities for radical collectivizing was thwarted as a result of the commodity dimension of the political art form, which was ever present throughout its development, a fact established

\textsuperscript{164} See for example Thomas Edison’s \textit{A Morning Bath} and \textit{Life of an America Fireman}.  
\textsuperscript{165} See \textit{Assembling a Generator, Westinghouse Works} (1904).
in the opening section of this chapter. Benjamin claims that the masses were drawn to film in an attempt to understand themselves and their class, but argues that because the logic of capitalism permeated the film industry the project of collective class awareness was curtailed. Films were made by capitalists in order to generate profit, not radicalize consumer consciousness. In fact, inventors and entrepreneurs like Edison actually considered cinema content secondary to the inventions that it helped sell, a point well argued by Miriam Hansen who demonstrates that early film exhibitors were interested in profiting from their working-class audiences, not liberating them from the shackles of capitalism by exposing capitalist ideologies. She writes:

While thriving on working-class patronage, exhibitors could not have cared less about the nickelodeon's democratic mission. To the more ambitious among them - in particular men of similar immigrant background who were working their way up to eventually challenging the Edison Trust as 'independent' producers - the 'laboring man's' support not only presented immediate problems of hygiene and discipline but above all an obstacle to a long-range economic goal: attracting the better-paying middle-class clientele.

166 See Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version,” in *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*. For Benjamin, the conditions of film production affect film content, which delimits films liberating potential. This theme is revisited in “To the Planetarium” where he contends that it is the ruling classes lust for profit that turns technology that could liberate into a means of domination (58-59). If we consider this in relation to Adorno we can begin to see beyond their apparent disagreements. They focus on different issues. Adorno describes what the film industry as it exists does to consciousness. Benjamin is interested in speculating what film, if produced under different conditions and not bound to capitalism could do. He writes: “... a compelling urge toward new social opportunities is being clandestinely exploited in the interests of a property owning minority. For this reason alone, the expropriation of film capital is an urgent demand for the proletariat” (34). Benjamin is interested in the idea of innervation, a form of collective intersubjectivity that might ultimately replace the individual subject of capitalism.

167 See Miriam Hansen’s “Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?”

168 Ibid., 150.
Hansen’s critique reveals the material quest for profit that drove changes in cinematic content as well as exhibition sites, which my earlier description of the industry acknowledges.

Not only would middle-class audiences pay more and provide a more stable consumer-base than the working class, but they would also bring a level of respectability to the form. As I described in the previous chapter, by 1909 the National Board of Censors (NBC) along with various women’s clubs and other reform group were establishing a reciprocal relationship between industry representatives and reform organizations that influenced cinema content. The bond between reform groups and the film industry had a duel outcome --- Anglophone working class immigrants were exposed to middle-class values and the middle-class saw their values reflected reaffirming their tastes. By standardizing the audience and creating a mass public, the industry solidified mass culture’s profit making potential.

Literary texts were adapted to the big screen in an attempt to provide cinema with new degrees of respectability. Scholars William Uricchio and Roberta Pearson note that the introduction of literary adoptions coincided with “a time of crisis for the film industry and the larger society, as film producers sought respectability and the country’s elites sought cultural cohesion.” By incorporating literary adaptations into the industry’s film repertoire the industry was able to quell agitated reformers and reformers were able to

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170 For an elaboration of this argument see William Uricchio and Roberta E. Pearson’s Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films.
171 Ibid
demonstrate the control over cultural content that they desired. The incorporation of “respectable” content into film was applauded in a 1909 *New York Times* article that noted literary adaptations had begun to replace “cheap” content as a result of the National Board of Censors (NBC) efforts. Whereas Benjamin hoped that film would enable collective class identification it instead enabled the possibility of identification with the private family as a locus of both personal and national belonging for groups who could appropriate the ideal middle-class family form. The type of citizen-subject is a member of the national community like other members as a result of private experiences in the family that are similar to that of others. Failing to conform to the familial norm kept one from being recognized as a member of the national community as it was imagined through a familial frame.

Instead of creating a radicalized collective consciousness cinema became an assimilatory medium through which middle-class values of hard work, consumption, and familialism were massified through cinematic representation. Hansen argues that the film industry aimed to integrate its working class audience into the “democratic melting pot, yet more effectively into a consumer society of which mass culture was to become both agent and object.” According to Hansen, within the cinematic field of visibility consumerism, and I would add familialism, became “the ticket to full American Citizenship,” a point I elaborate on shortly by analyzing familialism in DW Griffith’s

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173 See Miriam Hansen’s “Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?” page 151.
films. Russell Merritt echoes this point, arguing that by 1910 “for the immigrant, movies were becoming more and more part of his assimilation into American life.” And, of course, the desire to use film as a technique of assimilation was an extension of Progressive era reform projects, which hoped to aid new immigrants and the working poor to ‘settle’ into their new urbanized and industrialized life style while emulating middle-class values. The following section explores the logics of inclusion and exclusion embedded in cinematic content through the racialized construction of ideal family life in early cinema. In addition, I consider the construction of national consciousness as a privatized collective consciousness that pivots around familialism and commodity consumption.

**Imaging National Community: Assimilating the Masses**

Cinema’s mass public, its consuming audience, is not a critical and deliberative public comparable to that theorized by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. It is also not a radicalized class-conscious public as hoped for by Walter Benjamin. Instead, as this section will demonstrate, cinema provided the necessary conditions leading to the creation of a collectivized mass national public that pivoted around the private experience of familial belonging; in other words cinema enabled the emergence of an imagined national community anchored in private experiences of family life assumed to be universally experienced and desired. Benedict Anderson theorizes the historical emergence of “nation-ness,” which he locates as beginning at the end of the eighteenth century, a point at which the nation began to be

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175 Russell Meritt’s “Nickelodeon Theaters” *The American Film Industry*, especially p. 74.
imagined [as a] political community.”

According to Anderson, the national community “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” In other words, individuals constitute the nation through the collective act of imaging themselves as members of a community.

Anderson speaks of media, in his case newspapers, as a way to create a nation of horizontal belonging to those whom one will never know because of geographical distance. The nation, imagined as a community, requires commonality among members, and as I hope to demonstrate, cinema, as the first instance of truly mass culture, constituted national commonality through familial ties. By imagining the US as a national collectivity that pivots around the shared experience of family, inequalities and modes of exploitation can be ignored, because regardless of class, or religion, or ethnicity ‘we’ all have families – family is the common denominator uniting a disparate ‘us’. The sense of solidarity that the nation provides through shared identification with the family enables a sense of belonging within a collective by belonging within an individual family unit.

Anderson is also interested in the affective consequences of nation building and the influence feelings of fellowship have on material practices. He writes: “To see how administrative units could, over time, come to be conceived as fatherlands, not merely in the Americas but in other parts of the world, one has to look at the ways in which administrative organizations create meaning.” Identification with the nation is not

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176 See Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, pp. 4 and 6.
177 Ibid., p. 6.
178 Ibid., p. 53.
identification with the State apparatus but with ideas and ideals of fellowship that justify compliance to laws and lend legitimacy to institutions of governance. Importantly, for Anderson this is not a fictive identification; it is instead constitutive; the act of collective imagining constitutes a national community, a collective sense of allegiance to values and ideals constructed as national that legitimates the use of state force and justifies the state rule over its population.

Anderson argues that print culture played a critical role in the emergence and development of the nation and national consciousness, much as print culture played a decisive role in the development of a bourgeois public and consciousness in Habermas’ theorization of the bourgeois public sphere, which I established in my previous chapter. However, instead of drawing their sense of commonality from shared class interests as the bourgeoisie did, subjects of the nation imagine their solidarity through shared national interests. Sharing a culture enables the feeling of solidarity that Anderson sees as a staple of nation building and cultural objects interpellate individuals into the collective – the national community. For Anderson, the novel and the newspaper were two “forms of imagining” that enabled the emergence of the nation as an imagined community.\textsuperscript{179}

Importantly, the logics of capitalism are deeply embedded in examples of commodified culture, such as novels and newspapers, and they are embedded to such a degree that the rise of nationalism cannot be disentangled from the rise of capitalism.\textsuperscript{180} Anderson notes that books and periodicals were designed to reach the largest possible market since the

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., p. 24.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., p. 36.
motive for production was linked to profit. In other words, the desire to expand a consumer public and by extension to profit from expanded modes of commodity consumption is integral to the development of mass culture.

From its inception, cinema opens up the possibility of a mass public on a much larger scale than that enabled by print culture, particularly the novels and newspapers that Anderson characterizes as “forms of imagining” critical to nation building. Garth Jowett applies Anderson’s astute theorization of nation building and print culture to the project of nation building through cinema, specifically, he discusses the importance of communication technologies for the kind of community building necessary to create “the nation.” For Jowett, in order to create a truly national consciousness, a national public must first exist, a public that recognizes itself as sharing a national experience. In the US, cinema was a mass catalyst provoking the formation of such a public. Moreover, media technologies like cinema enabled a national outlook to be installed throughout the US because consumption of the same product occurred simultaneously across the nation enabling a collective understanding of what America is to emerge. The act of consuming cinema is itself a mode of participating in national life through material practices; the act of leisure becomes commodified and participation in commodified leisure activities

181 Ibid pp. 39, 43
182 In Film: The Democratic Art by Garth Jowett.
183 In “Nation, Nationality, Nationalism and Civil Society,” Edward Shils elaborates on the provocative connections he makes between the nation and mass society arguing that advancements in communication technologies were a pre-requisite for mass culture, which enables the masses to be addressed as a public. Mass society is here understood as a result of democratization, consumerism, and nationalism. In National Identity, Popular Culture, and Everyday Life Tim Edensor argues that we understand and experience the nation through popular culture. He writes: “Accordingly, I consider national identity to be constituted out of a huge cultural matrix which provides innumerable points of connection, nodal points where authorities try to fix meaning, and constellations around which cultural elements cohere” (vii).
demonstrates a form of patriot performativity in which acquiescence to emerging norms, including norms pertaining to the use of free time, was enacted.

I wish to clarify that national consciousness, produced by the mass consumption of cultural content that enabled individuals to recognize themselves as members of an imagined community, is not coextensive with soft citizenship consciousness. To identify with the nation is not necessarily to identify with the logics that constitute the *politicized* consciousness that I refer to as soft citizenship. The national public broadly speaking is not necessarily roused to political action, but only to patriotic identification. Soft citizens are *driven* to act to protect the status quo for the sake of the child and by extension, the family, the nation, perhaps civilization itself. Patriots, on the other hand, are driven to enact the norms embedded in national culture not to defend them. The next section begins to theorize the racialization of national familialism that enables some subaltern groups access to the nation while relegating others to the periphery of national life. I produce an interpretive reading of DW Griffith films that embed familial ideals while reproducing racist logics that help consolidated a white nation against the threat of blackness.

**Imagining National Community: Screening Familial America**

DW Griffith produced numerous films for American Mutoscope and Biograph Company between 1908 and 1913; his films are stellar examples of the massification of middle-class values, particularly middle-class moralization and familialism, in early cinematic content that focuses on the family as a universal national experience. DW Griffith’s short film, *The Mothering Heart*, embeds both images of Anglo Saxon Protestant middle-class industry and middle-class familialism within its short visual
narrative, which is a moral tale that promotes temperate family life.\textsuperscript{184} It is important to note that in DW Griffith films middle-class identity is as ambiguous as it is in our own era; it is more a marker of a way of life that a categorization of income and represents normalcy rather than financial condition. In other words, the trappings and markers of ‘middle-classness’ are mostly moral and value-based in early cinematic content. They are represented by modesty, temperance, industriousness, and participation in a normative family unit. Even more, middle-class Americanness is defined against the poverty of race minorities and working-class whites as well as the decadence and intemperance of the upper-class. As a result, ‘middle-classness’ captures owners of modest homes and grand plantations alike. As such it becomes a point of identification that has little to do with material circumstance and more to do with a way of life that becomes associated with the normal and the national through participation in ideal family life and the corresponding values constructed through participation in the normative family unit.

In Griffith’s \textit{The Mothering Heart} the middle-class identity of the featured couple is represented by a strong work ethic and the young couple’s thriftiness as well as the female protagonists motherliness.\textsuperscript{185} The film’s protagonist is a young woman whose mothering spirit is portrayed in the opening scene when we see her sitting on a bench watching the playful activities of two small puppies that she soon picks up and cuddles in a nurturing embrace. Shortly, a young man joins her on the bench and proposes; she accepts and the rest of the film pivots around their married life.

\textsuperscript{184} See DW Griffith’s \textit{The Mothering Heart} (1913).
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
In the first several scenes a familial routine is established. The young woman spends her day cleaning the couple’s home and making sure that her husband makes a smooth transition from home to work; she fixes his tie and finds his hat, a demonstration of her domestic and spousal responsibilities. The young husband’s workday removes him from the home where the young wife remains, although she is as industrious as her husband and takes in the laundry of financially established neighbors. The wife’s participation in the paid labor market, however informal, seems to position her as working-class, but as I have noted ‘middle-classness’ does not necessarily reflect a material class position, but more ambiguously refers to demonstrated compliance with a way of life, which the wife’s industriousness represents.

When the young wife’s husband returns home she continues to bustle around setting the table and preparing dinner stopping only to greet him with a visual demonstration of her love and give him the money she has earned by taking in laundry; always at work as opposed to play since too much leisure is associated with upper-class decadence not middle-class temperance. The home itself models middle-class respectability. It is clean and well furnished; moreover it is a labor of love and site of labor, both paid and unpaid, which further demonstrate the importance of industry and hard work, consummate middle-class values. In these early scenes the couple is represented as content and comfortable in their home and relationship.

The couple’s home life begins to deteriorate almost as soon as the film establishes their happiness. One evening the husband comes home from work to find his wife sweeping the floor, always at work. He presents her with a check that illustrates his
newfound prosperity and the couple giddily embrace thrilled with their fortune. Unfortunately, the joy does not last long. Soon after meeting with financial success the young husband becomes dissatisfied with his home and his wife. Upon returning one evening he looks at the modest flowers on their table with disdain and shakes his head while touching her unpretentious garments. He turns up his nose at the clean but humble home created through their labor; money has made him dissatisfied with temperate family life and he wishes to experience the life of leisure and decadence money can buy without thinking of its cost.

The following evening when he arrives home he grabs his wife’s hand while pulling her to the door; we then see the couple at a decadent dance hall. This is the first time we see the young wife outside of the home. Several costumed women and men dance on a stage. The couple takes a seat and she seems very uncomfortable with her surroundings. He orders drinks but she pushes hers away, which establishes her as the consummate temperate middle-class housewife. Meanwhile, at a table next to the couple a fashionable woman in a revealing dress that contrasts the wife’s modest garbs makes eye contact with the young husband. His wife catches the other woman flirtatiously gazing at him and rises to leave. He follows and comforts her upon their return home. The next day the cycle of him leaving for work and returning home at the end of the work day is broken when he sees the enticing woman from the dance hall and is cajoled into accompanying her back there. Meanwhile his wife waits for him alone growing increasingly distressed by his absence. Scenes of her anxiety are juxtaposed with her husband and the flirtatious woman dancing. When he finally returns home he makes up
an excuse that placates his wife, but only momentarily. While hanging up his coat she
finds the other woman’s long white glove in his pocket and becomes very suspicious. His
betrayal of her trust hangs in the air but she does not confront him with the glove.

The next day when he leaves she follows him and hides behind a tree where she
spies the woman arrive. Her husband drives off with the other woman and she returns to
her home. At home she picks up a baby gown and rocks back and forth staring into space;
the gown ambiguously informs the viewer that the young wife is likely pregnant, which
adds a new dimension to the unfolding drama set into motion by a weak willed husband.

Upon his return home from the dancehall the young wife confronts her wayward husband
with her knowledge of his betrayal. She leaves her home with a suitcase demonstrating
the finality of her decision to leave her husband. In her duress she returns to her mother’s
home and the two women embrace as she sobs. The betrayal is devastating for her and
destroyes the home, which no longer contents him, but remains her “mothering hearts”
desire.

In the next scene several months have likely passed because we see the young
woman, now a mother, playing with a baby, the owner of the gown she embraced prior to
leaving her husband. The young mother’s melancholy is illustrated through her clothing
choice, a black dress, as well as the blankness in her eyes. Meanwhile, this scene is
juxtaposed with scenes of her husband at the same dance hall, still with the other woman.

At the dance hall the flirtatious scene between the husband and the other woman that
marks the downfall of the married couple’s happy life is recast and replayed, but with an
ironic difference. The woman he is with catches the eye of another man positioning him
in the role his wife inhabited several months earlier. Like his wife he is distressed and
gets up to leave and is followed by his mistress. However, once outside the man she had
been exchanging flirtatious glances with propositions her and she leaves with him. The
husband, now alone, has traded the stability, comfort, and modest joys of happy family
life for a brief affair with a “fast” woman who grows tired of him. The short-lived affair
is a moral lesson about the fleeting pleasures of fast living when compared to the long-
term contentment of temperate family life. The “fast” life of dancehalls and decadent
women is rendered undesirable, because fleeting. Nothing good has come of the affair; he
has destroyed his marriage and home and become victim to the woman he betrayed his
wife to be with.

The next scene returns the viewer to the wife’s mother’s home where her baby is
ill. A doctor comes to see to the child and his shaking head foreshadows the dire
circumstances about to unfold. Meanwhile, the husband returns to the home he once
shared with his wife and finds a letter on the table. It is presumably news about his sick
child because he rushes to his mother-in-law’s home. In this other familial space, his wife
wrings her hands, distraught over the illness of her child. Her mother goes outside and
finds the husband there. She invites him inside and he follows her, but when he tries to
touch his baby his wife drops all pretenses to decorum and violently pushes him away.
He eventually leaves; the violence of her physical contact stands in stark opposition to the
caresses the couple previously shared. Alone again with her baby the young
mother reaches into the crib to hold him only to find he has stopped breathing. Her
husband follows close behind and leans over the crib. Meanwhile, his wife has run
outside where she picks up a large tree branch and begins to thrash it around wildly, expressing her frustrations. When she reenters her mother’s home she immediately begins to hit her husband to express her feelings of rage and loss. But, she runs out of steam, her heart cannot hold the pain and the anger, which seems to diminish every time she punches her husband. She eventually takes her husband’s hand and they embrace, united in tragedy. The mutual loss of their child seems to pull them together united by a mutual desire for the child, for the family, and for the home.

In films like Griffith’s *The Mothering Heart* the private space of the home, atomized and dislocated from any markings of regional specificity works to construct the home as a generic site of aspiration and privatized belonging that can be experienced as collectively shared within the nation. Moreover, middle-class identity begins to represent a way of life that displaces the actual class circumstances of the ‘middle-class.’ By identifying the “good life” with normative middle-class values that are de-classed the working poor and new immigrants could imagine themselves as members of the national community through their appropriation of the normative family form. Identifying Americanness through family form enabled an inclusive and seemingly depoliticized version of national identification to emerge and become taken for granted. By identifying national belonging with normative familial participation films of this era construct the family as a metaphor for Americanness and a trope through which we imagine the nation. The family is the site of inclusion in the national community. Even more, films like this massify the values of reformers by glorifying the middle-class family and demonizing decadence, intemperance, and sexual promiscuity. Importantly, these moral guidelines
became naturalized and normalized as a result of their reproduction in film content that repeatedly proclaims – this is the good life.

The Limits of National Belonging: The White Nation and the Black Menace

In DW Griffith’s early Civil War films, the whiteness of the national familial ideal is revealed through the incorporation of African American characters into the cinematic field of visibility through representational practices that exclude the national community by contrasting them to white characters. Civil War genre demonstrates a backward(s) gaze that reflects nostalgia for a historical period in which race hierarchy was a naturalized component of social relations. The Civil War setting represents the desire to freeze historically specific gender and race formations in a past that, in 1910, was already receding quickly.

In the Civil War films of the 1910s African Americans were provided a proper position within the nation although certainly not on equal footing to their white counterparts. Film scholar Thomas Cripps argues that the “acceptable Negro became a loyal slave . . . a wistful icon of old ways, steadfast in the defense of his master’s home and family, obligated by the logic of the situation to reject Yankee promises of freedom, and finally, resolute in rejecting black brothers in blue uniforms and those who had fled from farm to town.”186 The “good” black man, submissive to the white family he serves, is radically opposed to the “bad” black man who is represented as a threat to whiteness.

In DW Griffith’s short films, His Trust and His Trust Fulfilled, a slave named George, played by Wilfred Lucas, is left to care for the home and family of his white

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master when the family patriarch leaves to serve in the Civil War. George represents a ‘good’ black man, because he is emasculated. He is neither a sexual threat to white women nor a physical or intellectual threat to white men; George lives to serve. The family patriarch is soon killed in battle and his wife, distraught and unable to deal with the reality of the situation, quickly dies leaving their daughter in the trust of George. George does not betray his master’s trust. He serves the white family even after the actually existing white patriarch, who quite literally owns his life, is no longer living, which demonstrates his internalized belief in white superiority and acquiescence to his subservient position within the racist patriarchal order.

In order to fulfill his trust, George finds a white family willing to care for the girl. Throughout the second film, *His Trust Fulfilled*, George becomes increasingly haggard as the girl moves through the life cycle and he continues to sacrifice his own needs for hers. Even though she lives with a white family we find out that it is George that pays for most of her expenses. George is finally freed from the promise he made to his master, a promise that binds him to continue serving the white family that owned him even after official emancipation. His work is finally completed when his young charge is married, which establishes the reproduction of the white family. Even in his master’s absence and eventual demise, George affirms the intrinsic value of the white middle-class family by ensuring its reproduction at all costs to himself. It is only through his selfless investment in a version of the good life unavailable to him that George can be recognized as having any social value to the white audiences at whom Griffith’s films were directed.

\[187\] DW Griffith *His Trust* (1911) and *His Trust Fulfilled* (1911).
DW Griffith’s Civil War shorts anticipate his groundbreaking feature length film *The Birth of a Nation*. In the film, two white families represent the North and the South personalize the drama of war framing it through family struggles. Austin Stoneman, the head of the Stoneman family, his daughter Elsie, sons Todd and Phil, and a mulatto housekeeper represent the North. The South is represented by the Camerons including patriarch, Dr. Cameron, his wife Mrs. Cameron, daughters Margaret and Flora, and sons Colonel Ben Cameron, Wade and Duke. Faithful black servants are important helpmates to the family and stand in contrast to the mulatto slave who figures prominently in the eventual downfall of the Stoneman family. The Stonemans and Camerons are acquainted; in fact Phil Stoneman is engaged to Margaret Cameron and Colonel Ben Cameron falls in love with an image of Elise Stoneman that his dear friend Phil shows him prior to the war. The families parallel one another in respectability and both experience major personal losses during the Civil War establishing their commonality, which the film constructs against the dangerous difference of African Americans.

The film opens prior to the Civil War. The Stoneman brothers journey to South Carolina to visit their friends, the Cameron brothers, demonstrating friendly relations between the American North and South prior to the Civil War. Moreover, the Stonemans’ visit to the South is an opportunity for Griffith to represent race relations in the South before the war and he portrays slaves as jovial and content, in one scene slaves dance for whites, putting on a show and eating watermelon. Both the Stoneman and Cameron sons go off to war and two and a half years pass before the film viewer is reintroduced to the families and confronted with the horrors of the war through the families’ experiences of
it. Griffith focuses on the Southern family to demonstrate the invasion of war into the private space of the home through a scene in which blacks and Northern whites burst into the Cameron home. Dr. Cameron tries to defend his home and family with a sidearm, but he is no match for the gaggle of invaders who quickly restrain him. Luckily for the Camerons’ Confederates rush to their aid and subdue the Northern invaders establishing the Confederates as heroic saviors of the white home and white family.

Meanwhile, on the battlefield the young Cameron and Stoneman boys meet again. One is about to kill the other when he recognizes him and stops, overwhelmed with sadness. They die in one another’s arms. The lives of Northern and Southern soldiers are further paralleled when each family receives the tragic news. *The Birth of a Nation* participates in the establishment of family and home as sites of national belonging that transcend regional specificity even in the context of a violently divided North and South by drawing dramatic parallels between the families’ longings and loses. Importantly, African Americans remain appendages to the white family in both the Stoneman and Cameron households; they are not constructed as partaking in a normative vision of national familial life, which serves to construct blackness as strange and menacing or subservient and infantile as in the case of the faithful nameless servants who echo the character of George in Griffith’s previous Civil War era dramas.

When the war finally ends its influence on the lives of Southerners becomes the film’s focus; the Cameron’s middle-son is dead and the eldest is in a hospital near death. Coincidentally, the Cameron’s eldest son is sent to the hospital at which Elsie Stoneman volunteers. He regains consciousness with her singing to him and Ben tells her that he has
carried her picture throughout the war. The emerging love story is interrupted when Mrs. Cameron comes to visit her ill son. Mrs. Cameron and Elsie are informed that Colonel Cameron will be hung for war crimes. Mrs. Cameron is horrified but Elsie comes up with a plan for the heartbroken mother to seek mercy and the two women are granted a meeting with President Lincoln. Lincoln desires to unite the nation after the war; he demonstrates his kindness and mercy by granting Ben an official pardon. Mrs. Cameron happily returns home leaving her eldest son in Elsie’s care and she efficiently nurtures him back to health.

In the meantime, in the North, Stoneman’s substantial political influence is established when he meets with President Lincoln to discuss how to rebuild the nation. Stoneman asserts: “Their leaders must be hanged and their states treated like conquered provinces.” Lincoln retorts: “I shall deal with them as if they have never been away.” Stoneman and Lincoln represent radically different visions. The South has hope because of Lincoln’s stance, but on April 14, 1865 he is assassinated leaving Stoneman, second in command, in charge of the nation’s fate. After Lincoln’s death blacks take over the South representing the fears and anxieties of post-reconstruction whites, which still linger. In the New South African Americans walk down sidewalks as if they own them, keep white men from voting in order to construct a political power block, and run for office. It is at this point in the film, during Reconstruction, that Griffith introduces Silas Lynch, the mulatto leader of the blacks who will come to represent a polished version of menacing blackness. Throughout the film mulattos are constructed as particularly devious and ambitious, first through the character of Lydia, Stoneman’s housekeeper and implied
mistress, and second through Silas Lynch who demonstrates no sentiments of inferiority. The malice and cunning of biracial characters justifies the mistreatment of blacks by whites. Stoneman, Lynch, and Elsie, all go to the South to help rebuild the nation. The Stonemans stay with the Cameron family, reuniting North and South through the families that have thus far represented the national divide. At this point the battle over the nation seems have ended, but the battle over white womanhood is just beginning. Elsie Stoneman and Flora Cameron represent white female sexuality and vulnerability; they soon become a pivot point for the unfolding action as the objects of black male desire. Silas Lynch is enamored with Elsie and Flora becomes the object of another black man’s desire, which establishes another parallel between the Cameron and Stoneman families. Moreover, the looming threat of black male desire for white women anticipates the white male reaction that in brimming below the surface of screened action waiting for an outlet.

The rage and anxiety of Southern men is soon organized through the development of the Ku Klux Klan inspired by an exchange between black and white children at a local spring. Colonel Cameron sees two white children being chased by four African American children while on a walk. The two white children hide under a white sheet and leap up at the black children frightening them away, which inspires Cameron to create the KKK, a group of adult men rendered both anonymous and collectivized by cloaking themselves in white hoods and taking vigilante action against African Americans. The first act of the newly formed KKK is one of personal revenge.

Flora decides to go to the spring that has inspired her brother to form the KKK. Unbeknownst to her, Gus follows behind and approaches her when she is alone. Gus
proposes to Flora, a respectable inquiry rendered illegitimate as a result of the taboo against interracial intimacy. Of course, the threat of rape haunts the scene, but the threat itself is overdetermined by readings of black masculinity as out-of-control. Flora is horrified by the proposal and runs off. Meanwhile, back at the Cameron home, Colonel Cameron is informed that Flora has headed to the spring alone and he sets off after her. Colonel Cameron arrives at the spring and sees his sister’s bucket but does not see her. In the interim, attempting to escape Gus, Little Sis has climbed onto a rocky cliff. Gus continues to follow Flora even after she shouts: “Stay away or I’ll jump.” Colonel Cameron finally spots the couple at the edge of the cliff right as his sister, screaming and flailing her hands, leaps off the cliff. Colonel Cameron runs to the cliff and then the gully below grabbing his sister in his arms where she takes her last breath. She has maintained her honor by remaining untouched by a black man although the cost has been very high. Colonel Cameron and his costumed brethren find and kill Gus leaving his body on Lynch’s doorstep as a warning a reassertion of white masculine authority. Lynch brings the body to Stoneman, who in a cowardly manner leaves the South as the African Americans and Clansman prepare for battle.

The law, represented by the North, particularly the absent Stoneman, is on the side of the African Americans and Dr. Cameron is arrested for having KKK uniforms in his home. The fates of the two families are again brought to bear on one another as Margaret rushes off to find her friend and house guest Elsie to intervene in her Dr. Cameron’s arrest. Of course, Elsie’s father is nowhere to be found and two of the Cameron servants, both former slaves, help rescue Dr. Cameron and bring him to safety.
The group then takes refuge in a small cabin inhabited by two Northern veterans and a small girl. The screen card states that North and South unite in defense of “Aryan birthright.” Elsie, meanwhile, unable to find her father seeks Lynch’s aid in his place. She trusts her father’s confidant as he does; however, their trust is soon to be betrayed. Lynch is thrilled to have his friend’s daughter requesting his help, since he sees her being with her as a means to assert his masculinity. He proposes marriage and Elsie, shocked and offended, angrily threatens him with a whipping for his insolence. He parts the window curtain to show her streets crowded with black militia and tells he is building an empire and she can be queen. She tries and fails to escape as Lynch orders his henchman to prepare for a forced marriage.

Stoneman finally returns home interrupting the forced marriage. Elsie has fainted in Lynch’s arms; he hides her in order to meet with Stoneman. Lynch says: “I want to marry a white woman.” Stoneman pats him on back, unaware that the white woman is his daughter, but only momentarily. Lynch adds: “The lady I want to marry is your daughter.” Stoneman ceases to be enthusiastic about the equality of black men when it means his daughter wedding an African American establishing the limits of his fellow feeling and protectiveness of his daughter. Stoneman realizes the horrors of racial equality when his white family-line is threatened by miscegenation.

Luckily, the KKK shows up to preserve the white family and the white nation bursting into the room with Elsie, Lynch, and Stoneman. Again paralleling the fates of the families and bringing lovers together, the scene changes to the cabin where the oldest Stoneman boy has led the rescue of the Camerons. We then find that along with the
Stoneman boy saving the Camerons it is Colonel Cameron that has saved Elsie and her father. The final spectacle demonstrating white victory over the black menace is a parade through the streets of South Carolina with Elsie and Margaret, representing national white womanhood at the front.

An extremely popular and controversial film, *The Birth of a Nation*, represents the nation healing after a war that divided North and South by uniting the white nation against the threat of blackness. Within the film, African Americans are not simply represented as a menace. Much like George, the unnamed African Americans who serve white families have a role to play as helpmates of the white family, but they cannot be free without unsettling the racial hierarchy that played an important role in US nation building.

African American families are absent from all of the Griffith films described in this section; and I would argue that this absence tells a story. African Americans are portrayed as selfless servants who joyfully work to protect the white families that they serve, as in the case of George in *His Trust* and *His Trust Revisited* as well as the nameless ex-slaves who save Cameron from being carted off to prison in *The Birth of a Nation*, or they are represented as desiring to penetrate the white family as in the case of Silas and Gus. The simple oppositional framing of African American characters provides no access point into national belonging since the national community is conceived through the trope of the normative family and African Americans are not represented as sharing in this national experience. It is at this historical juncture that I see logics of queering emerge; a process by which African Americans are constructed as radically
other to their white counterparts as a result of their familial difference, and by extension their sexual difference. I wanted to linger on race in this chapter to consider the race dimension of massified construction of normative familialism, because it this raced dimension haunts constructions of the national normative. Although some African Americans have certainly breeched the dominant social formation racial politics haunt the contemporary political landscape even as racism is obscured behind colorblind rhetoric.
CHAPTER FOUR: CONTESTED CITIZENSHIP, CATHOLIC CRUSADE
RS, AND THE CODE

In contradistinction to the earlier modes of Protestant led censorship activism I have discussed, changes in censorship policy and practice beginning in the late 1930s were initiated by politically and culturally subaltern Catholics who spearheaded soft citizenship’s second historical formation. During soft citizenship’s first wave Protestant women used censorship activism as a way to claim allegiance to national values and conduct norms that began to coalesce in the temperance movement. To do this they claimed moral guardianship of mass culture, a move echoed by Catholics who appropriated many of the logics and strategies of Protestant women in the late-1920s. Since Catholics were differently disenfranchised than their predecessors the development of second wave soft citizenship is characterized by similarities and differences to the forms previous manifestation. In addition, since the film industry itself had changed radically in the early decades of its development, becoming increasingly monopolized by a few studios and organized under strong trade organizations, the influence that Catholics were able to wield over film content by the mid-1930s was more ubiquitous than women in the early 1900s.

Catholics in the US have a lengthy history of political, cultural, and economic ostracization. As early as the temperance movement Anglo Saxon Protestants constructed new immigrants, including Catholics, as unfit for national life and citizenship in order to
strengthen their power. As a result differences between Catholicism and Protestantism including the celibacy of priests and nuns in the Catholic Church, the use of wine in Catholic ceremonies, and the Catholic Church’s hierarchy anchored in Rome were used to justify characterizations of Catholics as un-American, because different from Anglo-Saxon Protestants.\textsuperscript{188} Anti-Catholic sentiment did not dissipate after the turn-of-the-century; in fact, historians tend to agree that the 1920s were characterized by intense nativism on the part of Protestants.\textsuperscript{189} In the 1920s, Protestants, concerned with the rising political and cultural influence of assimilated Catholics reacted by working to keep Catholics out of political office by constructing Catholicism as incompatible with American democracy.\textsuperscript{190} As a result of the rise of anti-Catholic sentiment in the 1920s, Catholics organized through voluntary associations to change the image of Catholicism

\textsuperscript{188} See Marie Anne Pagliarini’s “The Pure American Woman and the Wicked Catholic Priest: An Analysis of Anti-Catholic Literature in Antebellum America” and Sandra Frink’s “Women, the Family, and the Fate of the Nation in American Anti-Catholic Narratives, 1830 – 1860” both analyze cultural representations of Catholicism that construct Catholic religious authorities, particularly priests and nuns, as sexually deviant because celibate and morally warped because they have private lives that do not mirror the familial norm. The importance placed on sexual normativity within anti-Catholic narratives illustrates another cultural logic, one that pivots around the sexual innocence and purity of white women, and the voracious sexual appetites of men marked racially or religiously other. In addition, the temperance movement came to demonize all forms of alcohol consumption include the moderate consumption of wine in religious rituals. Moreover, the Church hierarchy was constructed as anti-democratic and by extension un-American. Dispelling the image of Catholicism as anti-democratic influenced the rhetoric used by Catholic organizations, particularly the construction of Catholicism as a voluntary association.

\textsuperscript{189} See for example: “Face the Nation: Race, Immigration, and the Rise of Nativism in Late Twentieth Century America” by George J. Sanchez. Sanchez notes that early twentieth century nativism was connected to anti-Catholic sentiment fueled by the idea that Catholics were incapable of independent thought as a result of the Church hierarchy and their allegiance to it. In the 1940s and 1950s Catholics were still associated with lacking the ability to think and act independent of the Church hierarchy in books that were well-received in academic and popular journals including Paul Blanshard’s \textit{American Freedom and Catholic Power} and \textit{Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power}. Moreover, the 1920s saw the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, an organization invested in racial purity that included a disdain for Catholics and Jews along with African Americans. See for example \textit{One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s} by Thomas R. Pegram and \textit{Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK’s Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930} by Kelly J. Baker.

\textsuperscript{190} See Lynn Dumenil’s “The Tribal Twenties: "Assimilated" Catholics’ Response to Anti-Catholicism in the 1920s”, especially page 22.
within the US imaginary. Historian Lynn Dumenil contends that collectivizing for political ends around their religious identity led to a culture war between Protestants and Catholics over “who were the rightful representatives of American culture and institutions” (26). As this chapter will demonstrate, the battle was over the meaning of Catholicism in America and the inclusion of Catholics within the national community.

In order to portray themselves as worthy of inclusion and acceptance Catholics highlighted their similarity to Protestants, not their differences. In other words, Catholics organizing through powerful groups like the Legion of Decency claimed allegiance to extant national values. Catholics waged much of the war for inclusion, as did their predecessors, on a celluloid battlefield. Moreover, like their Protestant women predecessors, they demanded moral guardianship of culture to carve out a place for themselves as members of the nation, which I suggest is a prerequisite for full political participation. In addition, highlighting similarities between Catholics and Protestants reflects the politics of assimilation central to soft citizenship, which demonstrated as early as the 1800s when working class Americans appropriated norms of middle-class sobriety to performatively constituted themselves as properly American. Moreover, this logic is repeated in contemporary manifestations of the citizenship form as my conclusion will demonstrated through an analysis of the incorporation of gays and lesbians into the national imaginary as a result of conformity to extant familial norms.

Although the Catholic contest for citizenship inclusion via the appropriation of soft citizenship logics and strategies is the central focus of this chapter’s analysis I also

explore the parallel emergence of social scientific discourses that re-frame religious-moral claims for cinema censorship in the language of the increasingly popular social sciences expanding the logics of soft citizenship into other domains of knowledge-power. I describe this important parallel discourse, which repeats the Progressive era convergence of religious and scientific explanations for social ills and their remedies, because by the 1960s secular scientific arguments for cultural censorship were needed to warrant censorship in a pluralistic society that purports to have an investment in the free circulation of ideas. In the section on social science discourses and cinema censorship I seek to demonstrate science’s reliance on already existing religious modes of framing morality as these are connected to the welfare of children, families, and the nation. Social scientists used popular concerns about the effects of cinema on vulnerable viewers to validate the knowledge they produced, which in many instances influenced policy and was well-funded as a result of its practical importance. In other words, social science ‘proved’ the need for censorship and the desire for censorship produced the need for evidence of cinema’s negative influence on vulnerable viewers.

Catholic Mobilization and the Creation of the Production Code

In the 1920s and 1930s the US boasted a population of approximately 20 million Catholics and although Catholic men and women possessed the vote by 1920 Catholics continued to inhabit a subordinate position to Anglos Saxon Protestants. Francis Walsh notes that between 1920 and 1930 the revival of the KKK, anti-immigration policies, and increased nativism led many Irish Catholics to believe that there was a “concentrated

192 See Gregory Black’s Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies, especially page 37.
attack on their race and religion” (34). Several films produced in the 1920s provide cinematic evidence of the subordinate status held by Catholics in the national imaginary. For example, *The Callahans and the Murphys*, a film anchored in the comic representation of Irish stereotypes was one of many films to spark Catholic backlash, which led to the formation of the Legion of Decency, a Catholic organization very active in cinema censorship from the 1930s through the 1960s. In the film the Callahans and the Murphys are rivaling working-class Irish families living in a dirty tenement whose son and daughter fall in love and the plot pivots around the star crossed lovers. Dan Murphy, the young man in love with the Callahan daughter, Ellen, is a drunk and a bootlegger. He secretly weds Ellen, but she refuses to live with him until he stops drinking and illegally selling alcohol. Meanwhile, she becomes pregnant and decides to leave their baby on her mother’s doorstep rather than admit to having eloped. Once Dan and Ellen are reunited they let her mother keep the child and the film jokingly claims that there will be more babies, which pokes fun at the sexual appetite and impressive fertility of Irish Catholics. The film’s humor requires its audience to be well versed in Irish stereotypes including alcohol consumption, hyper-sexuality, fertility, and poverty of Irish Catholics.

Martin Quigley, an Irish Catholic publisher of film industry journals including *Moving Picture World* and *Motion Picture News*, was at the forefront of organized

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193 See Francis Walsh’s “The Callahans and the Murphys (MGM, 1927): a case study of Irish American and Catholic Church censorship.” For examples of other films with similar themes see: *McFadden’s Flats* and *Harp in Hock.*
194 Ibid.
Catholic initiatives to reform cinema content. He brought his plan to censor content during production to William Hays, President of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). Preproduction censorship would render postproduction censorship obsolete, which would improve the industry’s profit margin. Hays’ willingness to form relationships with censorship agitators was established through his close working relationships with women’s groups and he was receptive for Quigley’s plan. Just as the industry was quick to recognize and legitimate the moral authority of maternal activists to avoid negative publicity and boycotts, Hays soon forged a strong relationship with Catholics to ensure that cinematic content was appropriate for a mass audience as second wave soft citizens imagined it.

Quigley teamed up with Father Daniel Lord, a Jesuit priest, to draft the Production Code, which created detailed guidelines for regulating and standardizing cinematic content. Along with providing Hollywood producers with standardized rules to follow, the Production Code defined cinema as a socializing force that could be an enemy of the nation or an ally helping to uplift the morals of citizens. The Code states: “Motion picture producers recognize the high trust and confidence which has been placed in them by the people of the world” and explicitly characterizes films as “important influences in the life of the nation.” Moreover, just as reformists of the previous decade argued that film could improve mankind, the Code links cinema to “spiritual or moral progress, for higher types of social life, and for much correct thinking.”

Film scholar Gregory Black

196 Ibid.
197 See Martin Quigley and David A Lord’s “The Production Code of 1930” (1930).
198 Ibid.
argues that the authors of the Code did not simply wish to keep “obscenity from the screen,” but to codify extant institutions and values as intrinsic to the nation’s strength and stability. According to Black Lord and Quigley:

wanted entertainment films to emphasize that the church, government, and the family were cornerstones of an orderly society; that success and happiness resulted from respecting and working within this system. Entertainment films, they felt, should reinforce religious teachings that deviant behavior, whether criminal or sexual, cost violators the love and comforts of home, the intimacy of family, the solace of religion, and the protection of law. Films should be twentieth century morality plays that illustrate proper behavior to the masses (39).

In other words, the Code controlled the field of cultural visibility by manipulating presence and absence; what was absent from the screen, sex, drugs, critiques of religion and nation, had no place in the national imaginary, whereas scenes that made their way to the big screen, happy families and properly punished deviants demonstrated the moral story being told about the nation, a story that would influence how America was imagined, if not how Americans acted. According to Quigley, Lord, and Breen the Code’s authors and enforcers, church, family, and government were beyond critique because they were necessary elements of society. This is significant if we think in terms of the US as an imagined community since the kind of America screened in cinematic content post-Code does not reflect reality, but rather an ideal constructed in the minds of Catholic men that the industry in its desire for profit without fear of boycotts and bad publicity consented to deliver.

199 See Gregory Black’s *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies.*
The Code pivots around three ‘general principles’ that served as governing logics shaping the ‘particular applications,’ which are detailed in the Code. The first principle states: “No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrong-doing, evil or sin.” The first general principle implies an unambiguous relationship between crime, wrong-doing, and immorality. In fact, in the Code it is expressly stated that the film audience must feel sure “that evil is wrong and good is right.” There should be no ambiguity, no space for interpretation or doubt in the oppositional construction of wrong and right. Moreover, the Code aimed to influence film plots by regulating how human action could be portrayed.

The second general principle extends the first: “Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment, shall be presented.” The notion that correct standards of life can be agreed upon with little discussion and codified through censorship policy demonstrates the taken-for-grantedness of norms in this period. Moreover, it established people as objects of reform who must meet a standard that is set forth by Anglo Saxon Protestants in soft citizenship’s first wave, and appropriated with little change by Catholics in soft citizenship’s second wave. Although quite abstract the second principle illustrates the desire of the Code’s composers to limit the field of cultural visibility itself as a way to further solidify standards of life that permeate from the dominant social formation, which Catholics are attempting to access by

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200 See Martin Quigley and David A Lord’s “The Production Code of 1930” (1930).
201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid.
demonstrating their commitment to national values and ideals. Whereas the first principle demands that crime cannot be portrayed sympathetically the second principle states that only “correct standards of life” can even be presented in film.204 The third principle, “Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation,” seek to reify existent conduct norms, placing them beyond critique.205 Natural laws, in this example, imply refer to historical ideas about “natural” sexuality and may be associated with the erasure of miscegenation from the big screen and homosexuality as a result of the Code’s prohibition against modes of intimacy that strain the ideals of the period. Taken together these general principles, created to govern filmic representations, seek to reproduce already existing institutions, moral ideals, and normative modes of behavioral conduct; in other words “correct standards of life” that reinforce Anglo Saxon Protestant hegemony, even as the dominant formation expands to envelope morally upright Catholics, are massified through the Code’s eventual influence on cinematic content.

The three general principles inform the particular applications that make up the majority of the Code. One of the more interesting particular applications falls under the headline “Sex.”206 The Code’s authors write: “The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld.”207 Providing marriage and the home with their own unambiguous protective decree demonstrates the Code’s commitment to normative values far beyond keeping sex and violence of the big screen. The notion that the ideal of

204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
206 Ibid.
207 Ibid.
the family must be upheld implies that it has been questioned and that the nation’s moral guardians must work to sustain and support these institutions by controlling the field of cultural visibility. In other words, the family is home, family, and institution of marriage are seen as vulnerable in the 1930s, echoing anxieties about the vulnerability of the family and home discussed in my previous chapter through an analysis of *The Birth of a Nation*.

In addition, a cluster of sexual relations is highlighted as “forbidden,” including sex perversion (a code word for homosexuality), white slavery, and miscegenation.”

The sexual relations that are constructed as taboo are tellingly non-familial, at least not imaginable as familial at the historical juncture of the Code’s creation. For instance, homosexuality and miscegenation are considered abominations and threats to the white family and white nation, although it will be decades before homosexuality is discussed so openly in these terms. In addition, the prohibition against representations of white slavery references racial anxieties that compelled censorship activism during cinema and soft citizenship’s first waves as discussed in my previous chapter. The racist anxieties of past decades are reintroduced in the Code, which seeks to uphold dominant values and reproduce social relations with one major difference, that difference being a more inclusive understanding of Christianity so that Catholics can be folded into the dominant social formation.

In addition to protecting the law and the family, the Code sought to place religion beyond critique, which makes sense since it was negative representations of Catholics...
that provoked Catholic religious leaders to organize around cinema content reform. For instance, the Code’s authors write: “No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith” and “Ministers of religion in their character as ministers of religion should not be used as comic characters or as villains.” Even more, the Code’s section on reasons for particular applications of general justifies this mode of censorship: “The reason why ministers of religion may not be comic characters or villains is simply because the attitude taken toward them may easily become the attitude taken toward religion in general.” Catholics were particularly interested in religious representations, because it was their religious difference from the Protestant majority that placed them outside the dominant social formation. The desire to protect a religion in general from ridicule obscured the desire for Catholicism in particular to be represented in a fair and favorable manner.

The desire to protect the image of the collective identity around which second wave soft citizens mobilized echoes the desire of first wave soft citizens to protect representations of women in order to control the framework through which women were understood as respectable mothers, for example, as opposed to sexual objects. Both waves of soft citizens wished to control the dissemination of potential disparaging images demonstrating an understanding of the link between representation and reality. In other words, the cultural construction of Catholics as radically different from Protestants enabled members of the dominant social formation to relegate Catholics to the periphery of national life and controlling representations of Catholicism helped neutralize negative

\[209\text{ Ibid.}\]
\[210\text{ Ibid.}\]
associations. As a result controlling cultural representations is an attempt to reconfigure the relationship of excluded subaltern populations to the dominant social formation. The desire to dissolve differences and ascend to the dominant formation is intrinsic to the development of soft citizenship throughout its historical waves and the dynamic of exclusion that produces subalternity is intrinsic to the project of nation building that takes enter stage whenever the dominant social formation is threatened. By incorporating the dominant groups ‘others’ into the dominant formation a more pluralistic dominant culture is constructed but the terms of domination remain uncontested.

Finally, and of importance to me here, the Code sought to control representations that would influence “national feelings.”\textsuperscript{211} It is stated that the flag, which represents the nation, should be treated with respect.\textsuperscript{212} Interestingly, the Code specifically prohibits negative representations of countries other than the US stating: “The history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be represented fairly.”\textsuperscript{213} However, other than the flag no specific mention to preserving positive feelings about America are codified, it seems likely that the impulse behind representing nations other than the US also applied to representing the US.

The Code closes with a lengthy description of the reasoning that justifies the standardization of film content one of which is that film is “\textit{the art of the multitudes.}”\textsuperscript{214} The Code states: “Most arts appeal to the mature. This art appeals at once to every class,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{211} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{212} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{213} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{214} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
immature, developed, undeveloped, law abiding, criminal.” Here Quigley and Lord appropriate extant logics to justify their work; it is the vulnerability of films mass audience that provokes mature, adult citizens to claim the role of protector and make sure that film reflects acceptable moral standards. The Production Code demonstrates a ‘thickening’ of soft citizenship logics insofar as these logics, particularly the vulnerable-protector dynamic, is institutionalized in state and industry cultural policies that deeply influence mass cultural content.

**Cracks in Hegemony: The American Dream, Broken Promises, and the Big Screen**

Although Hays was happy to allow Quigley and Lord to pen a Code in order to appease Catholic agitators he did little to ensure its enforcement; policy did not become practice until 1934. In the intervening period cinematic content that broke all of the rules the Code established was actually the norm. This period in film history is referred to as Pre-Code cinema. Films produced between 1930 and 1934 often foreground the very content prohibited by the Code. By representing the fissure between ideals of “correct standards of life” that the Code sought to uphold and the reality of the American experience during the depression, including poverty and changing gender and sexual norms. Films produced in this period can frequently be understood as critical cinema; they challenge the status quo by dramatizing the shortcomings of capitalism, marriage, and the state. Although I refer to Pre-Code Hollywood cinema as critical, it still falls short of Benjamin’s hoped for revolutionary potential. It does offer a form of representation that granted visibility to life experiences cinema culture had previous

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215 Ibid.
failed to explore and that would be erased from the field of cultural visibility only four years later. The influence that the Code had on film content post-1934 is significant because cinema is a critical catalyst for the dissemination of cultural values and by controlling cinematic content soft citizens are able to construct their specific moral views as universal. Alternatives to the ideas and ideals perpetuate by members of the dominant social formations and soft citizens who desire to ascend into the upper-echelons of society are prevalent in Pre-Code cinema creating a visual landscape that critiques hegemonic ideals even if imperfectly.

Director William A. Wellman’s depression era film, *Wild Boys on the Road*, is an example of the kind of critical cinema produced in this brief period.216 *Wild Boys on the Road* questions the ability of capitalism to deliver the promised American Dream to average people willing and able to work hard for their family and nation by dramatizing the ubiquity of failed families who buckle under the financial stress widely experienced during the Depression leading to train cars full of ‘wild boys.’ Moreover, the film upsets the Code’s proclamation that wrong and right should be unambiguously represented by exploring how circumstances force good people into a life of crime.

The film’s two high-school aged male leads, Ed Smith, played by Frankie Darro, and Tommy Gordon, played by Edwin Phillips, represent two different family formations. Ed’s ideal home life includes a mother who is a homemaker and a father who works to support the family. In contrast, Tommy’s single mother struggles to meet the family’s financial needs. By including two types of family forms, the film critiques the

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216 See William A. Wellman’s *Wild Boys on the Road* (1933).
association made between conformity to familial norms and financial stability that is part of US mythology that links individual will and moral character to success. In this historical period, marked by a flailing and failing capitalist economy the good life was not widely attainable and in films it was not represented as a reasonable aspiration. Moreover, in this film the family, institution of marriage, and home are not “upheld”; in fact they are represented as unsustainable within the context of a crumbling capitalist economy and as a result of a state whose regulative interventions worsen the lives of the vulnerable.

In *The Wild Boys on the Road*, the depression era economy fails to provide the stable economic context that is required for ideal family life when Ed’s hardworking father loses his job rendering him unable to provide for his family, which causes him to fail at his masculine role. Ed’s father has no personal weaknesses that can be blamed for his inability to provide for his family once he loses his job. In fact, the film paints him as a kind and generous man devoted to his family. In this depression era film, the economy fails hardworking Americans.

In order to avoid being a financial burden to their families, Ed and Tommy plan to drop out of school and leave home to find work elsewhere. The broken families in this film represent capitalism’s broken promise and personalize economic misfortune. On the road, the young men meet other youth in similar situations and form a large motley crew of hungry unemployed teenagers. One of the homeless youths, Sally, downplays her femininity to blend in with the mostly male cast off runaways --- although there is no hint

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of sexual threat at this point in the film. Sally is headed to Chicago where she hopes an aunt will help her. Lacking any concrete plans, Ed and Tom decide to follow her. Once the trio reaches Chicago, Sally’s aunt happily takes them in and offers them food. However, the police, who invade the sanctity of the home for reasons that remain unclear throughout the film, interrupt the family reunion that offers all of the children a chance at salvation and in doing so painting the state, represented in this instance by its repressive arm, as an enemy of the children and the family. Back on the road, the trio falls in with another crew of homeless youth stowed away on a train heading to Ohio, continuing their search for jobs.

The failure of adults to protect children is further demonstrated by incorporating a violent adult character into the film, a character that introduces sexual threat into the community of runaway children. On the train outside of Cleveland an adult worker rapes a female stowaway and a riot ensues as the boys react violently to the violence enacted on one of their own. In the chaos Tom falls in front of a moving train and loses his leg. Ed is able to get his friend medical attention from a doctor and soon steals a prosthetic leg for Tom, but the burglary is traced back to the youths’ fixed informal camp, leading to its forceful dispersion at the hands of law enforcement officers. Although the Production Code requires crime not to be portrayed sympathetically the act of robbery is an extension of Ed’s nurturing character and is an act of everyday heroism in a chaotic world. Furthermore, there is no formal justice for the girl who is raped; instead the police destroy the haphazard community the children have forged. Critiques of the law, such as this, stand in stark opposition to the Code’s demand that the law be represented in a
positive light and that criminals be constructed as unsympathetic. The film critiques the regulatory force of law as leading to chaos, not controlling it, and paints criminals as forced into a life unmoored from family and work by economic circumstances beyond their control.

The trio eventually makes their way to New York City and Ed is finally provided with a job opportunity, but even this turn of luck produces new challenges since the position requires appropriate attire, something that Ed lacks having spent months on the road; he needs money for clothes. The trio unsuccessfully turns to panhandling to raise funds. Desperate, Ed is tricked by a criminal adult into participating in a robbery, again demonstrating that the adults have no investment in children, their purity or well-being. The police, although unable to catch the masterminds behind the robbery, do catch Tom who is placed under arrest. Standing before a judge Ed has the opportunity to tell his story to an adult in a position to help him. The judge, a representative of the state, steps in with a positive plan assuring Ed, Tom and Sally that he will find them work saving the day in the end, but not creating an avenue to the good life for the awkward family.

Wild Boys on the Road is not the only example of Pre-Code cinema that critiques existing social relations and institutions, Heroes for Sale, also directed by William A. Wellman, critiques the link between economic success and access to the good life as it relates to individual morality in the mythology that is the American Dream.\(^{218}\) Moreover, much as Wild Boys on the Road portrays a bumbling state that is failing the national community and its families, Wellman’s film represents the economic and governmental

\(^{218}\) See William A. Wellman’s Heroes for Sale (1933).
systems its protagonist negotiates as disastrously flawed. Importantly, happy families are not what connect the national community in the film, but instead it is shared misery and barely varied experiences of poverty that link disparate characters. The film’s protagonist Tom Holmes, played by Richard Barthelmess, is a smart, hard-working, morally upright, courageous American with horrible luck. The film begins with a scene of men at war and focuses on Tom and his good friend Roger, played by Gordon Westcott. When enemy combatants open fire on their unit, Roger leaves Tom for dead in an act of cowardice that is mistaken for and rewarded as heroism, which in times of war can sometimes just mean surviving. In the meantime, unknown to Roger and his fellow combatants, Tom also survives and is taken prisoner by enemy troops. When Roger again meets up with Tom, he confesses the story of how he became a hero and Tom agrees to keep Roger’s secret. Upon their return home, Roger is greeted with a hero’s welcome while Tom, in constant pain as a result of war related injuries, becomes addicted to morphine. Counter to the myth that individual work and strong character will be rewarded, in this film cowardice is mistakenly praised and the real hero, a physically and mentally traumatized veteran, is left to succumb by his addiction. The war here, unrecognized for his heroism, is failed by the state, which certainly paints state institutions in a negative light and even implies that the patriotism of soldiers fighting to defend the nation is unappreciated and perhaps naïve.

Roger’s good fortune is represented as entirely unearned. Not only does he receive accolades after the war as a result of embracing a lie, but also his family is extremely wealthy. Roger is more than a lucky person, his character is an indictment of a
social system that misrecognizes its heroes and rewards its citizens not for effort as US mythologies promise, but as a result of the accident of birth and ability to deceive. In fact, Roger’s father owns the bank that both Roger and Tom work at upon returning home. The bank becomes a pivotal site of the film’s narrative when Tom’s doctor refuses to give him morphine for his pain and steals from the bank to fund his drug habit. Upon discovering Tom’s misdeed Roger’s father wants to fire Tom, who reacts by revealing Roger’s secret. Roger, however, dismisses Tom’s confession as the ravings of a mad man, a morphine addict who cannot be trusted. As a result, Tom is sent to a state “narcotics farm” where he is eventually cured of his addiction.

After being discharged from the state narcotics facility, Tom looks for a room to rent so that he can remake his life. He goes to a poor-man’s restaurant run by financially unsuccessful owners who demonstrate the strong character and good work ethic that the American Dream associates with success. They are more concerned with feeding their starving patrons than profiting from them and dialogue between the owners constructs their investment in people over profit as their downfall. In addition, a German character, Max, played by Robert Barratt, provides a running critique of capitalism and the stupidity of laborers. Max’s character makes brief appearances throughout the film, but is structurally necessary to the film’s critique of capitalism and character.

Tom finds a room to rent above the restaurant, and his new neighbor, Ruth, played by Loretta Young, helps him get a job at the laundromat she works at. In his new position, Tom demonstrates a strong work ethic and smart business skills, which against all odds, are recognized by his boss who promotes him. In yet another example of
transformed luck, Tom and Ruth fall in love with one another and decide to get married. It seems as if Tom, the hard worker and unrecognized war hero, is finally getting the life he deserves; his wife even becomes pregnant and the couple has a healthy baby boy to round out their family. However, things can only go so well for so long.

Max, the vocal communist, is reintroduced into the film and it turns out he does much more than rants about politics; he is an inventor and has created a new laundry machine that he must raise money to manufacture. He discusses his idea with Tom, who after all works at a laundry, and Tom thinks that the idea has merit and is a possible opportunity for his co-workers to invest in and profit from. He introduces the idea to his co-workers who, trusting him, collectively invest small amounts of money. Tom also discusses the invention with the owner of the Laundromat, Gibson, who is very interested. Gibson promises Tom that he will neither fire workers nor lower wages with the introduction of this new technology. Sadly, Gibson soon has a heart attack and the business is sold to a new owner, Southpark. Southpark is the consummate capitalist motivated by profit and successful as a result of his wanton disregard for people. He cuts labor by three fourths refusing to recognize the agreement Tom had made with his predecessor. The now unemployed workers blame Tom, who brought the invention to their attention and convinced Gibson to make use of it at the Laundromat. They perceive Tom as a heartless capitalist who sold them out to profit and Max, the mind behind the machine, disappears making no complaint on the workers behalf.

The laborers gather outside of Tom’s home and develop a plan to destroy the machines in order to get their jobs back. Tom follows them to the Laundromat, hoping to
intervene, and shouts as he walks: “If you smash the machines, they’ll only make more” 
emphasizing the hopelessness of resistance. 219 His wife, Ruth, tries to stop Tom from 
following the laborers shouting after him: “Don’t, they’ll kill you.” 220 Ruth then calls the 
landlady of the boarding house where she and Tom fell in love in, Mary, played by Aline 
MacMahon. Once Mary arrives Ruth runs after her husband and the mob. When she 
arrives at the laundry, it is to find a riot between police and the laborers. In the 
commotion, she is hit in the face and knocked down, soon dying in the riotous street.

Back at his home guarded by police there to bring him to prison, Tom explains to 
Bill that Ruth has been killed and he must stay with Mary for a while. Tom is accused of 
starting the riot even though he was trying to stop it and spends five years in prison where 
he is assigned to do hard labor. Critiques of law enforcement breaking up families and 
inappropriately enforcing punishment on intrinsically good people are threaded 
throughout this film as in Wild Boys on the Road. In prison, Max visits Tom and tells him 
that his share of the profit is 1000 dollars a month. Max, the consummate communist, has 
converted into the consummate capitalist, and tells Tom that the catalyst for the change is 
possessing money; the film is as skeptical of leftist politics as it is capitalism. In addition, 
the film dramatizes the impossibility of altruism and success making Tom a failed hero 
negotiating a flawed world.

Five years later, Tom is released from prison and returns home where Mary 
reintroduces him to the son he left behind. Max interrupts the familiar scene wearing a 
tuxedo and top hat to give Tom a check for 53,000 dollars, his profit. Tom turns the

219 Ibid.  
220 Ibid.
account over to Mary who gives out food to the poor in the restaurant where Tom met both Ruth and Max. Tom’s story ends with more bad luck that is characterized by mischaracterization. The “Red Squad,” an anti-communist brigade is suspicious of Tom’s generosity especially since he spent five-years in prison for leading a labor riot. Tom is threatened and told that if he does not leave town voluntarily he will end up back in jail. Tom again leaves behind his young son. He leaves the city to find work somewhere else like the “wild boys on the road” previously discussed; spatial mobility replaces upward mobility as the reality of Depression era America replaces the Dream the Code was created to circulate on the big screen. In an ironic turn of events that brings the film full circle, Tom and Roger are reunited under a rainy sky; both men wind up in the same space—a space of temporary equality, as with the war where they started out. Social distinctions are leveled in the Depression era as it is in war, two moments of crisis the strip the characters of everything but their base humanity.

*Heroes for Sale* is not likely to rouse the masses to action inspiring a revolution; it is not leftist propaganda. It is revealing to the extent that it highlights misrecognitions. Tom, the good guy, is really good, but, his goodness cannot be seen, he cannot be a hero. He is misrecognized by the state for his wartime heroism, which is attributed to a conniving coward. He is accused of betraying his fellow workers even as he attempts to protect them from themselves. Finally, he is accused of inciting a riot that he was hoping to end. In highlighting misrecognitions this film comes close to delivering the type of content that Walter Benjamin sees as possessing the political potential to enable critical class-consciousness. It shows us the world as it is, people looking past each other,
blaming one another, the power invested in political and economic systems that can only fail, it is not a call to action and it is certainly not a plan of action, but it shows the dehumanization of social relations within the existing world.

Beyond critiquing capitalism, sympathizing with criminals, and portraying the state as clumsy and ineffectual several films produced in this period contain content strictly prohibited by the Code such as divorce and extramarital affairs. For example, *The Divorcée* (1930) directed by Robert Z. Leonard features four sophisticated New Yorkers in a love quandary and foregrounds the destructive power of unrequited love and promiscuous sex.\(^{221}\) The film opens with several couples at a dinner party dancing and playing cards. Outside of the party Gerry, played by Norma Shearer, and Ted, played by Chester Morris, discuss marriage. Although in love he wants to save more money before they get married, but she does not want to wait and the couple agrees to get engaged. Inside, Paul, played by Conrad Nagel, hears the news, which sends him into a state of despair because he is secretly in love with Gerry. Paul drowns his sorrow in alcohol and when the party ends he offers to drive another member of the group, Dorothy, played by Helen Johnson, home. Dorothy accepts, although the other guests try to talk them out of it. Paul drives erratically and the couple is in a car accident that leaves Dorothy disfigured. Recognizing that he is responsible for the accident Paul offers to marry Dorothy. He does not marry her out of love, but instead guilt and duty, since the scar tissue that maps her face removes her from the marriage market. Their wedding ceremony, in her hospital room with her face veiled in bandages, is juxtaposed with that

\(^{221}\) See Robert Z. Leonard’s *The Divorcée* (1930).
of Ted and Gerry, a celebratory and lavish affair. Paul and Dorothy’s lonely wedding is a declaration of their resignation to dreary loveless lives, whereas Ted and Gerry spectacle of love dramatizes their happiness. However, as the plot unfolds happiness becomes increasingly ephemeral and marriage is represented as unstable at best.

The leaps forward three years from the juxtaposed wedding ceremonies to Gerry and Ted’s third anniversary. A few friends come over to help the couple celebrate and a woman named Janice, played by Mary Doran, tags along. It turns out that Janice is there to tease Ted with whom she has had an affair demonstrating that even the happy couple that married for love fails to play by the rules of monogamy, a filmic representation that explicitly ignores the Codes decree against adultery. When Gerry, noticing that Janice and Ted seem to have met before, confronts Ted he flippantly responds that the affair was meaningless and should not affect their marriage. He goes so far as to accuse her of acting like a woman about the affair and suggests that she take the ‘man’s point of view’ and get over it.

Gerry takes her husband’s advice seriously and orchestrates an affair of her own with one of her husband’s friends. When Ted returns home from his trip, Gerry confesses her infidelity stating, “I’ve balanced our account.”222 Ted demands a divorce revealing a sexual double standard at play in their relationship that reflects that of the dominant culture. Following the divorce Gerry indulges in nightlife and Ted indulges in alcohol. One night Paul, still married to Dorothy, meets Gerry on a train where she is entertaining a wealthy man. Paul and Gerry quickly begin an affair that eventually prompts Paul to

222 Ibid.
declare his love for Gerry and begin proceedings to divorce his wife. However, when Dorothy finds out their plans, she begs Gerry not to take Paul from her and Gerry, feeling guilt, ends the relationship and searches for Ted. Far from upholding marriage as beyond critique the disturbed romantic relations disrupt any notions of effortless matrimony as a guarantee of safety, security, and sanctity. Although Gerry sacrifices her happiness with Paul to uphold Dorothy’s marriage it is out of pity for the physically scarred woman, not respect for the institution of marriage.

Gerry and Ted meet again at a New Year’s Eve party and as the clock strikes midnight, the couple kisses demonstrating that their love has triumphed over the sexual double standard, or perhaps that the two morally ambiguous indulgent characters are perfect for each other and only each other. Although hardly revolutionary, The Divorcee explores sexual double standards, critiques the institution of marriage, and considers the dependency of women on men as a moral problem and screens the diminishing power status quo gender roles have in organizing American life in the 1930s. The film’s portrayal of marriage and sexuality ignore regulations that seek to control cinematic representations and by extension the field of cultural visibility at the level of the national. In The Divorcee, Gerry and Ted end up rekindling their romance, acts of betrayal seemingly forgiven in the film’s representation of marriage as a messy enterprise and desire as something that exceeds the norms of proper conduct.

**Catholic Mobilization; the Legion of Decency**

Filmic depictions of adultery, poverty, broken families, and orphaned children such as those described in the previous section were an affront to the Code and provoked
strong reactions from moralists including Catholic agitators. In 1933, Reverend John J. Cantell, Bishop of Los Angeles, requested that negligent enforcement of the Code be a discussion point at the annual conference of American Bishops. At the conference, it was decided that a Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Motion Pictures should be created to organize around cinema censorship. The Legion of Decency was created the following year: it constructed itself as the nation’s moral guardian, representative of a national will to clean up cinema, much like the maternal activists that preceded them. Whether or not the Legion of Decency actually represented the will of the majority or that of a vocal minority mattered less than the ability of the Catholic Church, through the Legion of Decency, to consolidate and vocalize Catholic dissent.223 In addition, the Legion of Decency was able to incite Catholics to the pro-censorship cause. In one instance, the Legion of Decency created a pledge that was read at masses throughout the US condemning many films of the period as “a menace to youth, home, family, and religion.”224 Approximately 10 million Catholics signed the pledge promising not to

223 The national moral consensus that the Legion of Decency claimed to represent was not without its critics, which demonstrates that Catholics had yet to shake off the outsider status attributed to them by Protestants throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, in December 1934, The North American Review printed a scathing critique of Hollywood’s concessions to the Legion of Decency, “The Hollywood Purge,” written by William E. Berchtold a popular media critic who argued that the film industry, particularly William Hays note you give his name here, capitulated to the Legion of Decency and their ilk, because the Legion “had reached the brain of the Hollywood producer through his pocketbook” (503). For Berchtold the Legion did not represent the will of the majority of moviegoers but instead a minority group “loud in voice” (503). Berchtold places the industry’s conformity to the Legion’s demands in the context a lengthy history of struggles over representation between special interests groups and industry representatives. He writes: “Peace societies want anti-war films. Patriotic societies ask for pictures that glorify love of country as their social goal. Societies for the preservation of crime turn thumbs down on gangster films, and insist on endings which invariably portray the law as triumphant” (504).
attend films deemed objectionable to the Catholic Church, or patronize theaters that screened objectionable films.\textsuperscript{225}

The threat of organized boycotts and general negative publicity had compelled Hays to work with Catholics only four years earlier and the newer threat would again bring the film industry and Catholic moralists together to censor cinema. The trade organization responded in 1934 by creating the Production Code Association (PCA), which was empowered to enforce the Production Code.\textsuperscript{226} Even more, they appointed Joseph I. Breen to spearhead the organization. Breen, described as an overzealous Catholic by many historians, was passionate about continuing to solidify America’s Christian core, while incorporating Catholicism into the national imaginary.\textsuperscript{227}

Politicized Catholics used cinema censorship activism as a platform to intervene on the dissemination of Catholic stereotypes both on and off screen in order to demonstrate their similarities to Anglo Saxon Protestants and fitness for democracy by

\textsuperscript{225} Several detailed historical accounts of the Catholic mobilization for cinema censorship have been produced. See for instance Gregory D. Black’s \textit{Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies}, James Skinner’s \textit{The Cross and the Cinema: The Legion of Decency and the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures, 1933-1970}, and Frank Walsh’s \textit{Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and Motion Pictures}.

\textsuperscript{226} For detailed studies of the Production Code see: Stephen Vaughn \textit{Freedom and Entertainment: Rating the Movies in an Age of New Media}, Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era edited by Matthew Bernstein, and \textit{Prurient Interests} by Andrea Friedman. During the Production Code era, only studios represented by the MPAA had to submit films for review by the PCA, which is also true of the post-1968 classification system. However, films without the Code Seal of Approval were not likely to be financially successful, because theaters, mostly owned by or affiliated with the major studios, would not screen them. At the time, the five major studios owned controlling interests in approximately 70 percent of first-run theaters. The MPAA also instituted a $25,000 fine to theaters that showed a film without a PCA Seal of Approval. As long as the MPAA’s member studios could control film distribution and exhibition the Code could be enforced and Hays continued to assure studio moguls that failing to conform to the Code would result in government regulation.


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highlighting the voluntary aspects of their political mobilization. The Legion countered attacks that its work, and Catholicism more generally, were undemocratic and by extension un-American by contending that their work was a necessary pre-condition for democracy that enabled Americans to choose cultural products that reflected their moral beliefs. In other words, by vocalizing their concerns in the public sphere, and by forging a relationship with the film that bypassed the government, the Legion represented themselves as participants in democracy, in the civic life of the nation. The Legion considered their film content regulation methods counter to censorship, which they understood to be coercive governmental control over free expression and they eschewed previous controversies over the best way to censor.

**Cinematic Content Post-Code**

The influence of the Catholic Church on cinematic content from the 1930s through the 1950s, when studios began to release films without the PCA’s seal of approval, cannot be underestimated. For example, film scholar Gregory Black notes that after the mid-1930s it became increasingly difficult to adapt literary texts, including Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* and Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*, into films that reflected the thematic content and tone of the written texts. According to Black: “These novels were too frank in their discussions of adultery, corruption, and injustice, their screen versions were altered to make them more in turn with the conservative, moral, political, and economic value system that dominated the movie censorship code” (6). Although this seems to contradict the adaption of literary texts into films found in earlier decades, by

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228 See Frank Black’s *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies.*
230 Ibid., p. 6.
the 1930s film producers no longer had to clamor for a respectable middle-class audience, although they did need to maintain the existing one by not offending the moralistic sensibility that permeated the reform agenda.

In order to demonstrate dramatic transformations in film culture and content as a result of the Code’s post-1934 enforcement I will briefly describe Jezebel, a 1938 Warner Brothers release directed by William Wyler that demonstrates cultural anxieties about the changing role of women in society by evoking a backward gaze to the Antebellum South in 1852 and 1853.231 The film does not critique race relations instead highlighting white patriarchal dominance over white women. By setting the film in the historical past, Jezebel, demonstrates a nostalgia for the ‘good old days’ similar to that characteristic of the civil war genre described in my previous chapter. The desire for a return to ‘traditional’ gender roles and sexual relations also echoes the desire for a return to a ‘traditional’ racial order embedded in the dramatic action of older films produced about the Civil War era such as Birth of a Nation. The film depicts a fallen woman, Julie, played by Bette Davis, who forsakes access to the good life as a result of her impetuous childish behaviors.232

Jezebel opens with the protagonist, Julie, arriving late for a party thrown in her honor. In addition to being late, Julie is wearing inappropriate attire demonstrating her failure to conform to Southern standards of feminine conduct. Another example of Julie’s callous behavior occurs the following day when she shows up at the bank her fiancé

231 See William Wyler’s Jezebel (1938).
232 See Lea Jacob’s The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942 for a detailed study of fallen women narratives that span Pre-Code and Post-Code Hollywood.
works at with one of her slaves, a young boy who interrupt the men’s meeting because Preston has promised to go dress shopping with her. He tells the boy to send Miss Julie his regrets, but he must continue working. She does not respond well to being dismissed and storms into the bank. He repeats his apology, but he will not leave. Julie ends up going to the dressmakers with her Aunt Belle, played by Fay Bainter. Aunt Belle shows Julie several beautiful white dresses, which is the customary color for unmarried women to wear for the occasion. Julie has other plans and decides to wear a red dress described in turn as “vulgar” and “saucy” to humiliate Preston. Later that evening, Preston stops by Julie’s home to see her dress and is horrified to see that it is red, commenting that it will “scandalize the whole town.” At the Ball the attendees are in fact scandalized and the couple’s attempts to mingle with acquaintances are met with polite refusals. Everyone stares at the couple seemingly horrified with Julie’s appearance and it is Julie who is embarrassed. Julie begs Preston to take her home, but he refuses.

After the Ball Preston returns Julie home and breaks off the engagement. Her aunt begs her to call him back, but as stubborn as she is impetuous, she simply replies, “he’ll come back.” However, instead of returning, he departs for the North where his bank has several firms and she spends the year in repentant solitude. Then one year later, he does return. Julie assumes that their relationship will pick up where it left off and throws a huge party at the plantation home in the country she and her aunt have escaped to in order to avoid a yellow fever outbreak in the city.

233 Ibid.
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid.
To Julie’s dismay when Preston arrives at the plantation it is with his new wife. After a formal dinner Julie escapes to the outdoors where Preston finds her. Unable to give up on her love and demonstrating a spectacular affront to the institution of marriage, Julie kisses Preston who quickly pulls away. Buck Cantell, played by George Brent, stumbles upon Julie after Preston has retreated inside, and seeing her upset asks what Preston has done to her. She insinuates improper conduct. The next day, Preston leaves for the city on business. In his absence Buck and Preston’s younger brother Ted, played by Richard Cromwell, end up arguing about Julie’s respectability. The argument provokes Buck to defend Julie’s honor in a duel that ends his life. Upon hearing the news Aunt Belle, who had indulged Julie’s whims throughout the film, implies that she is a Jezebel, a whorish woman who taunts men into be the catalyst for their own ruination.

The cluster of events leads Julie to see herself as others see her, not as a grand catch, but a frighteningly self-centered woman who refuses to take responsibility for her actions. She recognizes that Preston does not want her and that even her dotting aunt is disgusted with her callous behavior. Whereas Pre-Code Hollywood cinema often paints sympathetic portraits of fallen women by dramatizing the disappointments that lead them to trade in promiscuous sex for money or revenge Jezebel introduces its protagonist as a flighty egotistical woman undeserving of sympathy. Even more, Pre-Code cinema gives its fallen women a crack at a happy ending once reception is sought, but Julie will never have Preston on the terms she desires.

Meanwhile, in the city, yellow fever has become an epidemic and Preston is stricken with the virus. When news of his illness makes its way to the Plantation Amy,
Aunt Belle, and Julie are told that he will be taken to Leper’s Island to stop the spread of infection. Julie, ever impulsive, sneaks into the city to be with him. When she arrives she learns that Preston, because he is contagious, will be sent to Leper’s Island. Julie sees this as an opportunity at redemption and goes with him to Leper’s Island. There is no ‘good life’ awaiting her at Leper’s Island. The film’s lesson is that the only hope for a Jezebel is redemption through self-sacrifice, which asserts the value of traditional gender roles.

The Production Code sought to create a national cultural landscape that upheld ideals and values that would allow Catholics to ascend into the dominant social formation without radically transforming the dominant social formation or challenging the subordination of groups that could not or would not conform to the Code (off screen as well as on). Within the Code certain groups of people are typed as ‘fringe’ and squeezed out of the frame --- homosexuals, criminals, social critics, interracial couples, adulterers are all constructed as inappropriate. The Code controlled cinematic content and identified certain people and behaviors as dangerous, threatening to viewers who could easily be led into an immoral pattern of conduct after seeing such behaviors screened. Importantly, in the 1930s religious reformers were joined by social scientists in their quest to justify the censorship of mass culture in a move that solidified censorship arguments by providing them with scientific credence.

**Conjuring the Parent-Citizen in Cinema Censorship Discourse**

Concerns about the socialization of children and the effects of cinema content were also being made in print periodicals geared towards parents and by social scientists in the emerging disciplines of psychology and sociology. As this section demonstrates,
the secularization of discourses about cinema and its effects on children, although still related to religious moralization, anticipates and lays the groundwork for the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA)’s adoption of a parent-centric cinema regulation model in the 1960s, which constructed the parent as rightful protector of childhood innocence with a unique interest in the nation and its future vis-à-vis the familial relation shared with vulnerable children. In the 1930s the popular press begins to address parents as a unique public, which is a pre-condition for the construction of the parent-citizen in the 1960s, a formation that becomes intimately bound to the development of soft citizenship and provokes its rise to dominance as a citizenship form in the 1980s.

The social sciences took on an increasingly important role in justifying cinema censorship by reframing religious justification in scientific discourse, which led to the elaboration of a knowledge apparatus justifying censorship as a moral-political imperative by producing knowledge about the harm cinema could do to vulnerable viewers. Not only were the logics and assumptions embedded in social science research indebted to religious discourses that preceded them, but many researches were part of the religious establishment and many studies not conducted by religious leaders were funded by religious organizations. For example, sociologists, psychologists, and educators from around the US between 1929 and 1933 conducted the most popular social science

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See Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy edited by Garth Jowett, especially page 211. For example, in 1916, Hugo Munsterberg, a Harvard psychology professor, published The Photoplay: A Psychological Study, about the interaction between psyche and film and the ensuing social effects of cinema’s influence on the individual. The Reverend John Phelan’s analysis of motion pictures that considered the financial, moral, and physical state of films in the local context of Toledo, Ohio, published in 1920, is another early example of social science research about cinema. Although his goal was to objectively compile data and leave the interpretation to his reader, Jowett notes that he “could not resist the temptation and voiced some grave doubts about the ‘moral tone’ of many films, noting this ‘tone’ endangered the large number of children attending the shows” (214).
inquiries into the influences of cinema on society popularly referred to as the Payne Studies.\textsuperscript{237} The Payne Studies were financially supported by the Payne Fund, a philanthropic organization based in Ohio, which granted the Reverend William H. Short and his Motion Picture Research Council $200,000 to study the effects of cinema consumption on children.\textsuperscript{238} The turn towards science was not a turn away from religion.

The studies, released in 1933, found that films were a likely contributor to the social development of children. However, films were considered one of several factors along with parental involvement, pre-existing tendencies towards delinquency, school and Church, which taken together influenced the moral development of children. The cautious findings collected in this 3000-page study were not widely read, but importantly for my analysis, they were summarized in a popular book by Henry James Forman, \textit{Our Movie Made Children}, which became a best-seller in 1933.\textsuperscript{239} A \textit{Saturday Evening Post} review of \textit{Our Movie Made Children} describes it as a “careful investigation” and differentiates it from moral reform discourses and religious arguments in favor of censorship by arguing that it is not “a sermon, but unbiased and well supported judgment of the problem.”\textsuperscript{240} In other words, Forman’s text, although a popular summary of scientific studies, was imbued with the authority of science and successfully extended cinema censorship discourse beyond religious reformers anticipating the construction of

\textsuperscript{238} See Gregory Black’s \textit{Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies}, especially page 151 and \textit{Film: The Democratic Art by Garth Jowett}, especially 220-228.
\textsuperscript{239} See Arthur R Jarvis’s “The Payne Fund Reports: A Discussion of Their Content, Public Reaction, and Affect on the Motion Picture Industry, 1930-1940,” especially page 127.
\textsuperscript{240} See Donald Gordon’s \textit{The Saturday Evening Post} July 15, 1933, p 32.
parents as consummate moral guardians that would move censorship in the direction of the secular.

Forman’s book lacked the nuance found in the 3000-page collection. He describes cinema as “a social force” and “one of the most potent of all educational instruments” echoing descriptions of cinema by first and second wave soft citizens clamoring to censor film content and failing to note other variables such as school and church that social scientists argued tempered cinema’s influence.\(^{241}\) According to Forman’s reading of the studies, films “produce effects upon the conduct, behavior patterns, morals and even upon the health notably of the younger spectators” (3).\(^{242}\) The problem for Forman is that films may negatively influence “the parents and citizens of the future” which is “a liability to the progress of our national development and consciousness” (11).\(^{243}\) Forman’s arguments echo the sentiments of reformists demonstrating that the moralizing logic and vulnerable-protector dynamic that I have associated with soft citizenship is reproduced through successive waves of cinema censorship, permeating seemingly unrelated discourse communities around cinema as an object of consternation. As the by now familiar story goes cinema, as a socializing agent, influences the development of future parents and citizens, which makes cinema content regulation nationally significant. Existing norms and values must be reproduced in order for the nation to be reproduced as it is imagined by soft citizens with an investment in the status quo.

\(^{242}\) Ibid., p. 3.
\(^{243}\) Ibid., p. 11.
The first several chapters of *Our Movie Made Children* demonstrate the stakes of the studies themselves by describing the importance of cinema in the everyday life of America’s youth.\(^{244}\) These early chapters demonstrate that regulating film is essential for the future of the nation because a large part of the film audience is children who are not accompanied by adults; he estimates that over 28 million children actually attend films weekly. Therefore, film attendance, as a staple of everyday life for millions of children, has the opportunity to indoctrinate simply as a result of its ubiquity. The content children are exposed to is also significant since Forman estimates that “somewhere between seventy-five and eighty per cent (sic) of all pictures dealt with love, sex, crime or mystery” (29 -30).\(^{245}\) For Forman, the problem of what children see relates back to their being unaccompanied since children need “assistance in interpreting” films, which are a “distortion of life” (41-42).\(^{246}\) Film content, its ubiquitous un-chaperoned presence in the lives of youth, and that they remember a fair amount of content, warrants the further study of cinema and its effects on youth. Forman adds little to existing debates about the importance of cinema censorship, what he does is appeal to social science discourses to warrant already existing censorship policies and practice. But, in doing so he reflects the continued ubiquity of these logics in US culture and demonstrates the recursivity of moralism in national life. In the 1930s we are only a few decades away from the rise of the parent citizens and permeation of soft citizenship logics throughout US political culture as demonstrated by the rise of family values discourses that conjure visions of the

\(^{244}\) Ibid.

\(^{245}\) Ibid.

\(^{246}\) Ibid.
‘traditional’ family massified in large part as a result of the Production Code, which overdetermined what could be screened by prescribing what could not.

The popular press responses to and engagements with the *Our Movie Made Children*, which dramatized the fear that children were being raised by movies as opposed to parents, often addressed a parental public with a personal investment in children and movies as an enemy to the project of proper child-raising. Various national magazines and newspapers, including *The New York Times*, *Parent’s Magazine*, *the Elementary School Journal*, and *School and Society* published articles based on Forman’s interpretation of the Payne Studies, inciting citizens beyond those Catholics connected to the Legion of Decency to take interest in censorship as a parental public for the sake of children and the nation. In this historical moment the moralistic censorship discourse that had previously been steeped in religious moralization takes a turn for the secular by addressing a parental public, not a religious public, through a call to action in the name of children and the nation. In this moment the discourses parallel one another, as they will continue to do through third wave soft citizenship not becoming antagonistic until the millennium.

Forman addresses *Our Movie Made Children* to concerned parents, which reflects the construction of ideal citizenship as parental and begins the process of constructing the general public, not as a public united through religion, but as a parental public united

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through shared family status. Even this move is not entirely new since the nation had been imagined as familial for decades. In his discussion of filmic content Forman writes:

Jack, schoolmate and friend of your daughter Joan, has come on pleasure bent. They are not exactly sure what they are going to see at the movies, because titles are so numerous as to be confusing. But Jack has seen what he calls a honey of a poster, which is almost certain to be a highly colored lithograph of a man embracing and kissing a girl. {…} Both Jack and Joan are lovely children, for are they not yours and your neighbors? {…}  

In this passage Jack and Joan become stand-ins for the reader’s child and the neighborhood children that comprise his or her community. They are good and innocent children unaware of what they are going to see. According to Forman, it is the task of a good parent to take a more active role in their child’s leisure activities. By the end of the book Forman moves beyond holding parents responsible for the content their children consume; he issues a veritable call to arms: “It becomes, therefore, a matter of fundamental and critical importance to the parents of the land that what their children see should build up rather than break down the principles of conduct which have made the American nation” (139). Forman contents that American parents must be responsible for the content that their children consume as a national imperative lest the “principles of conduct” that make America great be weakened. The sentiment expressed here, one in which, parents are responsible to the nation and exercise this responsibility through their control of their children, anticipates the next stages of both soft citizenship and cinema censorship. Third wave soft citizenship and third wave cinema censorship are

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248 See Henry James Forman’s Our Movie Made Children.
249 Ibid., p. 28.
250 Ibid.
characterized by a shift away from religious moralization to familial moralization and parents as citizens and moral guardians step into the role of cultural censors and ideal citizens.

Importantly, up until the 1930s religious logics dominate moralistic debates about national values. First wave soft citizenship insinuated a shift towards the familial, but one that remained intimately bound to the Anglo Saxon Protestantism of these maternal activists and that was subsumed under the religious moralism of second wave soft citizens. I suggest that both modes of moralization expressed in these early instances of soft citizenship compliment each other and serve to buttress the authority of the dominant social formation. As the next chapter will demonstrate the religious and the secular develop into two temporally parallel manifestations of soft citizenship in the 1970s and 1980s expressed through the activism of the religious Right and secular, often quite liberal, parents. The main point I wish to make is that the logics of soft citizenships and power dynamics that the form supports are enthusiastically claimed by variously positioned social actors beginning in the 1930s, but this soon becomes a shared goal. For instance, by the 1990s everyone seems to have boarded the family values train contesting the very meaning of the family, but not problematizing the use of the family as a marker of national belonging. Before discussing the advent of the parent-citizen and the rise of the New Right in the late-1960s and throughout the 1970s and 1980s I conclude this chapter by describing cracks in religious hegemony, cracks that began to appear in the 1950s when religious hegemony began to be questioned by secularists, social critiques, and, importantly for my project, the film industry.
Cracks in Religious Hegemony

The centrality of Christian morality to cinema censorship, demonstrated by the influence of the Catholic Legion of Decency over the Production Code Association (PCA) and codified in the Production Code of 1930, began to collapse in the early 1950s. The breakdown in Catholic religious domination of film censorship in the 1950s is crystallized in the controversy surrounding *The Miracle*, an Italian film directed by Roberto Rossellini and distributed in the US by Joseph Burstyn who soon found himself at the center of a controversy that changed US cinema censorship policies and practices. The introduction of thematically sophisticated European cinema into US theaters beginning in the 1950s tested the Production Code Association’s authority while demonstrating that there was an audience for more thematically sophisticated film content.

*The Miracle* depicted pregnancy out of wedlock and parodied the doctrine of the virgin birth, failed to conform to the content standards set forth in the Code and provoked harsh criticism by Catholics in New York City who claimed the film’s content was sacrilegious. The Legion of Decency demanded that local officials, many of whom were Catholics themselves, revoke Joseph Burstyn’s license to distribute the film. Burstyn countered by arguing that Catholic pressure groups were not sympathetic to foreign cultures and patronizingly assumed an American viewing public that lacked the intelligence to interpret complicated texts. Importantly Burstyn’s critique of Catholics

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251 The 1950s folk devils include communists and homosexuals.
252 Roberto Rossellini’s *The Miracle* (1948).
253 Ibid.
254 See *The Miracle Case: Film Censorship and the Supreme Court* by Laura Wittern-Keller and Raymond J. Haberski Jr., especially page 71.
as a dominant group intolerant of difference implied that Catholics had succeeded at getting themselves accepted as Americans. Even more, it demonstrates frustration with the paternalism that anchored cinema censorship policies forcing mass culture to appeal to a youthful audience and by extension influencing the kind of cultural content available for adults to consume. Burstyn’s was not the only critique of the role Catholic representatives played in censoring national culture; Protestant religious leaders also began to question Catholic religious moral hegemony as embedded in cinema censorship practice because it was too conservative. For example, Reverend Karl M. Chworowsky of the Flatbush Unitarian Church, issued a statement about the controversy contending:

“As a Protestant and as a religious liberal of the Christian persuasion, I resent a public statement calling the Catholics of the nation ‘the guardians of moral law,’ and I further and deeply resent the insinuation of the Cardinal that everyone not sharing his opinions regarding The Miracle is thereby classified as an indecent person.”

As this quotation demonstrates, Reverend Chworowsky compares conservative Catholicism to his liberal Protestantism to argue that Catholics did not represent a position that could be universalized as Christian or American. He implies that both Christianity and America are pluralistic and that Catholics should no longer be allowed to play the role of the nation’s moral guardians.

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) refused to come to Burstyn’s aid because “the MPAA’s mission was to protect the business environment so films could be made, distributed, and exhibited profitably. Bucking social and political

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255 Ibid., p. 72.
trends was not in the organization’s best interest” (78). However, organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) were an integral part of Burstyn’s support network as they came out in support of artistic freedom. Burstyn introduced a new character into the US cinema censorship debate – adult filmgoers. In a January 1952 press conference Burstyn reframed the cinema censorship debate by arguing that Americans were an adult public capable of viewing films at their discretion:

Speaking personally, I have always felt and still feel that Americans are mature people, imbued with a great sense of freedom, and that they would strenuously object to anyone telling them what to see or not to see, regardless of the controversial nature of the subject. I say that if we permit one person or one group to direct us on what to see and what not to see, then our basic constitutional liberties will have been abridged and our dignity as adult people abused.

Burstyn cleverly argued that adult filmgoers should consider censorship offensive since it limited their ability to choose what cinema content that enjoyed. He goes even further implying that censorship infantilizes adults whose “dignity as adult people” is “abused” by the censor who sweeps in to protect children from controversial content by condemning it as unscreenable. Burstyn’s argument influenced the development of cinema censorship policies post-1960s by introducing the specter of the adult cinemagoer into the argument.

After successfully arguing that it was unconstitutional to censor a film because a segment of the national population considered it sacrilegious, the US Supreme Court

256 Ibid., p. 78.
258 See Joseph Burstyn’s "American Distributor of "The Miracle" at Press Conference Monday Afternoon January 8th."
259 Ibid.
consented to hear Burstyn’s case. The Supreme Court ruled that film communicates ideas unraveling the logics at the core of the Court’s 1915 Mutual decision, which effectively alleviated any substantial fear of federal censorship that the industry might have. Furthermore, in response to Burstyn’s argument about the constitutionality of censoring against sacrilege, Justice Felix Frankfurter argued that the sacred was defined as such by different religious sects and that the state owed no allegiance to protecting what any one religious group deemed sacred from scrutiny and criticism. Since so much of the Production Code was indebted to religious models of morality, which would no longer warrant censorship the Code’s hold on cinematic content began to unravel. Studios produced films that ignored the Code and theaters increasingly exhibited films without the Code Seal of Approval. For example, films like Otto Preminger’s 1953 film *The Moon is Blue*, which discusses sexuality outside of marriage with a lightness and frankness unheard of in Production Code Hollywood; and the 1966 release of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolfe*, which was directed by Mike Nichols and features an implied marital affair and dark comedic representations of married life generally. The family and the institution of marriage, considered sacred and protected by the Production Code, became the subject of dark comedies and dramas in the 1950s, reintroducing the possibility of critical cinema into American movie theaters.

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260 See The Miracle Case: Film Censorship and the Supreme Court by Laura Wittern-Keller and Raymond J. Haberski Jr.
261 See The Miracle Case: Film Censorship and the Supreme Court by Laura Wittern-Keller and Raymond J. Haberski Jr. and Burstyn v. Wilson, 343 U.S 495 (1952).
262 Ibid.
A New Era in Cinema Censorship History

Meanwhile the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), a trade organization representing major Hollywood studios for decades, was strategizing a new model of cinema censorship that they would soon execute. In 1966, under the leadership of Jack Valenti, the National Association of Theater Owners (NATO), the MPAA, and the International Film Importers and Distributors Association (IFIDA) formed the Code and Rating Administration (CARA), which replaced the Production Code Association (PCA) and ushered in a new era of cinema content regulation.\(^\text{263}\) CARA was responsible for the movie rating system, which replaced the Production Code and outright censorship with film classifications based-on the assumed age appropriateness of cinematic content. With the shift from outright censorship to film classification the MPAA argued that adults would have access to the mature content that there was obviously a market for and that reflected changing cultural mores and tastes, while children could still be protected from content deemed inappropriate for their eyes. At this moment the elements are put in place for the parent-citizen to emerge and reframe US political culture by extending the child-centric framework that has historically guided cultural policy into the political domain.

\(^{263}\) See Stephen Vaughn’s *Freedom and Entertainment: Rating the Movies in an Age of New Media*, especially 8, 26.
CHAPTER FIVE: STRONG SOFT CITIZENSHIP AND THE STATE AFTER THE 1970S

In this chapter my narrative finally catches up to that of contemporary social and cultural critics who attribute shifts in the conceptual and material framing of US citizenship to the rise of the New Right in the 1970s and 1980s.264 Scholars tend to agree that the late-1970s and 1980s was characterized by virulent backlash against demands for social change emanating from a variety of sources including women, gays, lesbians, African Americans, and Mexican Americans.265 In this period citizenship subjectivity and practice were being reimaged and the meaning of America was highly contested, all of which provoked the culture wars of the 1980s. In the myriad battles that comprised the symbolic war, private lives, particularly sexual lives, became objects of politicized contestation over the meaning of America. Moreover, sexuality became a marker of normal or marginal citizenship provoking while justifying a range of policies and practices that sought to manage sexuality including sodomy laws, age of consent laws,

264 See for instance: Lauren Berlant’s *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, Roger Lancaster’s *Sex Panics and the Punitive State*, Lee Edelman’s *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, David Harvey’s *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, and Lisa Duggan’s *The Twilight of Inequality*. For historical accounts of the rise of the New Right see: Lisa McGirr’s *Suburban Warriors: The Rise of the New American Right*, William Berman’s *America’s Right Turn: From Nixon to Clinton*, and Sara Diamond’s *Facing the Wrath: Confronting the Right in Dangerous Times*.  

265 See Lauren Berlant’s *The Queen of American Goes to Washington City*, Sara Diamond’s *Facing the Wrath: Confronting the Right in Dangerous Times*, William Berman’s *America’s Right Turn: From Nixon to Clinton*, and Lisa McGirr’s *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*.  

164
and abortion legislation. In The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship Lauren Berlant laments the privileging of private life in politics:

Something strange has happened to citizenship. During the rise of the Reganite right, a familial politics of the national future came to define the urgency of the present. Now everywhere in the United States intimate things flash in people’s faces: pornography, abortion, sexuality, and reproduction; marriage, personal morality, and family values. These issues do not arise as private concerns: they are key to debates about what “America” stands for, and are deemed vital to understanding how citizens should act.266

Berlant’s declaration that intimate matters including sexuality, family form, and pornography are now intrinsic to how “America” and proper citizenship are defined implies a historical rupture with a less morally obsessed past, but, as I have demonstrated, politicizing the personal has been an intrinsic part of US nation building since the 1800s when citizen acceptability began to be envisioned through moral conformity and shared values instead of white property owning masculinity. In other words, the issue that guides Berlant’s research has a much more permanent relationship to US culture and politics then she theorizes.

Although I disagree with interpretations that characterize the 1980s as a period of rupture with a less moralistic political past, I wholeheartedly agree that the period marks an intensification of already existing soft citizenship logics at play in political and cultural spheres as well as the intensification of these logics in the “properly” political sphere of state politics. In other words, it is in this period that soft citizenship comes out of the shadows. Throughout this project I have demonstrated that historical junctures marked by intense material and symbolic changes that threaten the status quo have been

266 See Lauren Berlant’s The Queen of America Goes to Washington City, p. 1.
manipulated by new waves of soft citizens who claim allegiance to all that is “traditional” in order to become members of the “dominant formation” of social power.\textsuperscript{267} As always, in the 1980s, controlling the field of cultural visibility was a critical component in the fight to control the meaning of America and the values that would be claimed as national. However, unlike previous waves of soft citizens who can be characterized as properly subaltern, members of soft citizenships’ third and fourth waves who tried to control mass culture already enjoyed membership in the dominant formation. As this chapter will demonstrate, soft citizenship, as a subjectivity and corresponding set of practices, began its ascent to dominance in the 1970s when it began to be manipulated by groups in positions of power.

In this chapter I identify Christian conservatives as soft citizenship’s third wave. As I’ve already suggested, prior to the 1970s soft citizenship existed at the periphery of official politics, whether Protestant maternal activists or mostly male Catholic crusaders. Soft citizens certainly exercised influence on state institutions, but it is not until the 1980s that cultural and political spheres collide as third wave soft citizenship coalesces through the religious Right, a group that was able to do more than politicize culture, but radically reframed the official political public sphere by putting women’s reproductive health including access to birth control and abortion as well as gay rights front and center. By bringing sexual morality to the forefront of political discourse the racist and classist

\textsuperscript{267} In \textit{Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films} William Uricchio and Roberta E. Pearson use the terms ‘social formations,’ marginalized social formations,’ and ‘dominant social formations’ to enable “consideration of such factors as social, cultural, academic, and political capital that, while undoubtedly related to economics, are not necessarily economically expressed” (206). This description of relation formations of power has proven useful to my theorization of soft citizenship since members of the dominant social formation are not necessarily wealthy elites, but are in fact often derived form the middle-class.
norms that family values spokespeople defended were obscured behind a color- and class-blind normative family form. Even more, soft citizenship, as popularized by the religious Right in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s laid the groundwork for the emergence of soft citizenship’s fourth wave in the 1990s. The 1990s marks the development of the parent-citizen, a secular antidote to the conservative religious version of soft citizenship embodied by the religious Right. Far from creating an antagonistic relationship to the Right and its moralism secular soft citizens of the 1990s actually embraced moralization albeit through a secular parental framework.

It is my assertion that soft citizenship has become so ubiquitous that a single group can no longer claim it. Now, soft citizenship logics and strategies, not to mention motives, shape seemingly antagonistic citizenship forms, which nevertheless are indebted to childcentricity, sentimentality, and familial moralization. The logics and dynamics that I associate with soft citizenship have been embedded in US culture and politics for the last one hundred years as a result of soft citizens’ relationship with the culture industry. Understanding the historical and conceptual development of soft citizenship is an urgent political-intellectual task, since as theorist Lee Edelman argues: “the fantasy subtending the image of the Child invariably shapes the logic within which the political itself must be thought. That logic compels us, to the extent that we would register as politically responsible, to submit to the framing of political debate” (2). In other words, it is by claiming to act on behalf of the child that citizenship action and demands are justified and demands that take someone else, specifically adult citizens as their beneficiary are

The New Subalterns and Soft Citizenship

Feminists and lesbians and gay men, the subalterns cast as internal threats to the family and nation in the culture wars that US politics have pivoted around for the last several decades, have only recently been able to claim cultural and political visibility and viability by appropriating the logics of soft citizenship, as have the previous waves of subalterns I’ve examined, including Anglo Saxon Protestant women and Catholic men. However, in the 1970s, 1980s, and even the 1990s the religious Right and hetero-parents, two groups who can by no means be considered subaltern, had the form on lockdown having usurped soft citizenship logics in order to maintain their hegemonic control over US politics and culture.

Lacking access to soft citizenship, a new citizenship trajectory emerged through the activist efforts of feminist, lesbians, and gay men. Roger Lancaster claims that leftist social movements of the 1960s and 1970s developed a victim’s rights strategy in which they constructed themselves as victims of sexism, racism, and/or homophobia and addressed their grievances to the state in order to demand the creation of legislation that would protect them from a range of abuses. Lancaster argues that an emerging victims’ rights movement appropriated this template, leading to the creation of an exaggeratedly punitive state that rounded up criminals in order to protect the vulnerable. According to Lancaster: “The victims of criminal violence, like the victims of Jim Crow or institutional
sexism or homophobia, would step out of the shadows to claim rights” (194). It was the self-proclaimed position of victim that justified demands to the state as protector. Whereas soft citizens make demands on behalf of another group, one more vulnerable than themselves, feminists, gays, and lesbians constructed themselves as victims of homophobia and patriarchy demanding protections before the law.

Claiming vulnerability proved a successful strategy for women and race minorities who were able to demand many protections including the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which made it illegal to compensate men and women performing the same labor in a workplace differently. In addition, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, or Title VII, made discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, or sex illegal. In 1965 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was created to enforce new federal laws that made job discrimination based on race and sex among other population distinctions illegal (US EEOC). These examples demonstrate that by identifying themselves as vulnerable, racial and ethnic minorities and women were able to successfully make demands for the state to legislate protections. A new model of subaltern politics emerges through these practices, one that provoked a backlash that reframed the issue from protecting vulnerable adults from structural inequalities to

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269 See Roger Lancaster’s *Sex Panic and the Punitive State* especially “Constructing Victimization: How Americans Learned to Love Trauma” and “The Victimology Trap: Capitalism, Liberalism, and Grievance.”

270 For a smart critique of the limits of liberal feminism see Wendy W. Williams “The Equality Crisis: Some Reflections on Culture, Courts, and Feminism” anthologized in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*. Williams argues that courts can only attempt to legislate equality “against legal benefits and burdens that are an expression of white male middle-class interests and values” (71). Moreover, according to Williams, since liberal feminists aspire to inclusion in the already existing world the courts have been an “efficient, accessible, and reliable mode of redress” (71).

271 Since the inception of the EEOC protected groups have expanded. For a full description of the laws that the EEOC enforces and ever evolving protected classes that the laws pertain to see the EEOC’s official website at http://www.eeoc.gov/.
protecting vulnerable children from adults who were a threat to children, families, and the nation. In this way, a society that began to focus on the rights of adults throughout the 1960s was recast to focus on the vulnerability of children in the 1980s. The backlash politics I refer to herein is crystallized through the emerging religious Right, which reacted to the political successes of feminists and gay rights activists by demonizing the two groups.

In the emerging cultural war, racial antagonisms were subordinated to battles over the appropriate form national gender and sexuality should take; normative gender and sexual formations were emphasized over and against racial differences, which took a rhetorical backseat. Of course, racial anxieties remained present and resurfaced with a vengeance periodically, but it was sexuality and family values that became the major sites of contestation over the meaning of America.  

Popular press coverage of feminist demands for social change often positioned feminists as enemies of the family and the nation. For example, the cover story for an issue of *Time* published in 1970, “The American Family: Future Uncertain,” reflects cultural anxieties about the fate of the family in the context of quickly changing gender roles. Moreover, the article connects the ‘traditional’ family to the survival of society. In the article, the founder of the American Institute of Family Relations, Dr. Paul Popenoe is quoted stating: “No society has ever survived after its family life

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272 See for example “Race, Family Values, and Welfare Reform” by Bonnie Thornton Dill, Maxine Bava Zinn, and Sandra Patton in The Matrix Reader. See also Stephanie Coontz’s *The Way We Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* and In the Name of the Family: Rethinking Family Values in a Postmodern Age by Judith Stacey.

deteriorated.”\textsuperscript{274} In addition, retired Harvard professor Carle Zimmerman ostentatiously argued: “The extinction of faith in the familistic system is identical to movements in Greece during the century following the Peloponnesian Wars, and in Rome from about A.D. 150. In each case the change in the faith and belief systems was associated with rapid adoption of negative reproduction rates and with enormous crises in the very civilizations themselves.” Professor Zimmerman fears population extinction while Dr. Popenoe is sure that society will disintegrate if the family remains at risk as a result of shifts in gender and sexual norms. Both quotes construct a narrative about the “crisis” in American families, a crisis that the article attributes to a booming divorce rate and decrease in births as a result of birth control and abortion, issues politicized by feminist organizations in the struggle to include women in economic and political spheres on terms similar to their (white middle-class) male counterparts.\textsuperscript{275}

Although women’s rights certainly had a place, albeit an ambiguous one, in the mainstream press, gay and lesbian rights were considered quite radical throughout the period. Furthermore, even though the state often responded positively to rights-based claims for legal protections that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s its should be noted that gays and lesbians rarely met with such success at the national level, since gays and lesbians were stigmatized as enemies of the nation. For example, during the height of the Red Scare in the 1950s, the US government went on a rampage attempting to find communists and communist sympathizers within its borders. The government purge of

\textsuperscript{274} Ibid.
communists was extended to homosexuals as illustrated in the US Senate’s “Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in the US Government,” a guide that rationalized finding and removing homosexuals from government positions. The document states that “homosexuals and other sex perverts are not proper persons to be employed in Government for two reasons; first, they are generally unsuitable, and second, they constitute security risks” (243). Moreover, the stigma attached to homosexuality was assumed to increase the chances of blackmail, which was constructed as a threat to national security. In other words, gay men specifically were deemed internal threats to national stability as a result of their difference from heterosexuals; gay men and lesbians were not to be protected by the state, but instead were considered a threat that the state had to protect proper citizens and the nation from. The nation is imagined through the family to such an extent that acceptance of gays and lesbians as fellow citizens and members of the national community was foreclosed until quite recently, when gays and lesbians began to be constructed as members of families like heterosexuals. I will elaborate on this point later in this chapter as well as in my conclusion.

276 For more detailed accounts of legal and cultural constructions of homosexuality in the 1950s and beyond see Byrne Fone’s *Homophobia: A History*, especially his chapter “American Masculinity.” See also Lee Edelman’s “Tearooms and Sympathy, or, The Epistemology of the Water Closet.” In this highly anthologized essay Edelman argues that throughout the 1950s and well into the 1960s and 1970s gay men were an analogy for communists. He analyzes the intersection of sexuality, national security, and the Cold War arguing that gay men were constructed as an enemy within the US, a threat to national security because ‘sex perversion’ signified an emotional illness and homosexuals could easily be subjected to blackmail (553-554). He also considers popular media representations of homosexuals focusing on a photo-essay of homosexuals published 1964 issue of *Life* magazine. The essay was intended to help the general reader expose homosexuals among them by being able to read the visual clues embedded on the homosexual body (555-556). Edelman is invested in the interpretive context that framed how gays and lesbians could be understood in the 1960s only as threat. Moreover, Edelman contends that when homosexuality enters the cultural field of visibility it “occasions a powerful disruption of that field” (568).

277 For an analysis of gays and lesbians troubled relationship to the state see Shane Phelan’s *Sexual Strangers*. 
Virulent homophobia including that emanating from the state politicized homosexuals. For example, in 1950 Harry Hay and Rudi Gernreich created the Mattachine Society, which sought to end the oppression of homosexuals. The organization soon developed branches throughout the US.278 Lesbians also organized in the 1950s, forming the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955, a social group where women met to discuss issues facing lesbians and socialize with other lesbians, but through monthly publications and meetings aided in politicizing sexual identity in ways similar to that of the Mattachine Society.279 The emerging gay and lesbians rights movement had more modest and localized successes in the 1970s then feminists did. For example, in the late 1970s, localities including Aspen, Colorado and Eugene, Oregon passed laws protecting gays from discrimination.280 These successes were often limited and often provoked immediate backlash.

The the 1970s the religious Right became a national presence by claiming to protect all of the things soft citizens hold most dear – the child, the home, and the nation as imaginary community that shares decidedly Christian values. As third wave soft citizens, the religious Right worked to reinsert “traditional” values that had been implanted at the center of the national imaginary by previous waves of soft citizens. In addition the religious Right demonized women and gays and lesbians, constructing these

278 See Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan’s “The Mattachine Society” in We are Everywhere A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics, p. 283 and Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America by Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney
groups as ‘folk devils’ out to destroy the family and the nation.\textsuperscript{281} Importantly, unlike previous soft citizenship formations third wave soft citizenship was not comprised of subalterns, but a group in power who sought to maintain control of national culture and politics by reasserting the importance of narrowly defined version of the family against feminists, gays, and lesbians. Even the rhetoric employed by the religious right in defense of what they call traditional family implies a historical rupture and expresses longing for a more stable past in which hetero-familial hegemony and Christianity reigned supreme.

The American Family Association (AFA) is an illustrative example of religious Right mobilization in the 1970s and the AFA remains very active into the present. In the 1970s, the AFA drew on existing characteristics of soft citizenship whose history I’ve sketched, including familial-moralization, sentimentality, and child-centricity, while accessing an unprecedented degree of publicity and politicization since third wave soft citizens were drawn from the dominant social formation. Formed in 1977 by Donald E. Wildmon, a Methodist pastor, and at the time called the National Federation for Decency, the American Family Association (AFA) was re-named in 1988.\textsuperscript{282} While the AFA’s

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{281} Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda define folk devils in Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance. They write: “The moral panic is a scare about a threat or supposed threat from deviants or “folk devils,” a category of people who, presumably, engage in evil practices and are blamed for menacing a society’s culture, way of life, and cultural values. The word “scare” implies that the concern over, fear of, or hostility toward the folk devil is out of proportion to the actual threat that is claimed” (2). Furthermore, Gilbert Herdt describes moral panics as “processes of representing and demonizing scapegoats in popular culture and media, commonly identified with the dread of “folk devils,” or subalterns, undermining cherished sociality and morality” (7).

\textsuperscript{282} In the 1970s and 1980s several Christian organizations were formed including Focus on the Family founded by psychologist James Dobson in 1977. The organization promotes the heterosexual family according to biblical principles and is affiliated with CitizenLink, which is responsible for Focus on the Family Citizen Magazine and a radio program; the mission of CitizenLink is to prepare Christians to exercise “biblical citizenship” (Focus on the Family). Yet another example is the Christian Coalition of America (CCA), which was formed as the Christian Coalition by Pat Robertson in 1989. Robertson ran for President in 1988 and for its inception CCA had a political focus. Currently the organization producers voter guides to aid Christians in making political decisions as well as highlighting various political issues.
original name places it within a long-line of moralizing missions that focus on cleaning up culture and instilling decency at the core of the nation, its 1988 name change reflects the importance family and family values played in the culture wars of the 1980s and the privileging of familial morality and the protection of the family as a justification for repressive legislation.

The AFA’s self-proclaimed mission is to “strengthen the moral foundations of American culture.” The group polices mass culture for what it considers signs of offense and directs Christian activists to utilize tactics including boycotts and negative publicity, reminiscent of the strategies of previous waves of soft citizens. Examples of “indecent” culture that the AFA has tasked itself with cleaning up include billboards, television, radio, advertisements, and pornography that send an “anti-Christian” message. The AFA also boycotts “anti-Christian” retailers and mobilizes the organizations followers to do the same. For instance, the AFA creates a “Naughty or Nice” list around the winter holidays that ranks retailers “for-Christmas,” “marginal on Christmas,” or “against-Christmas” based on their holiday advertising campaigns; recognizing Hanukah or Kwanza by name or referring to the “holidays” without specifying Christmas is enough to put a retailer on the naughty list. These are only a few examples of the activist initiates that the AFA participates in to represent America as

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on their website including “Appeal Obama Care” and “Stop the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA)” (Christian Coalition of America).

284 The AFA explicitly describes its consumption based political strategy: “We believe in holding accountable companies that sponsor programs attacking traditional family values. We also believe in commending those companies that act responsibly regarding programs they support.” See the American Family Association’s website at http://www.afa.net/Detail.aspx?id=31#WHO-IS-AFA
285 See “Special Projects” on the American Family Association’s website at http://www.afa.net/
purely Christian. The version of Christianity espoused by the organization is virulently homophobic and considers the heteronormative family intrinsic to the wellbeing of the nation. The organization’s philosophical statement asserts: “AFA believes that a culture based on biblical truth best serves the well-being of our nation and our families, in accordance with the vision of our founding documents; and that personal transformation through the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest agent of biblical change in any culture.” According to this logic Christianity is a critical component of the nation and secularism is the implied enemy of the nation and the family since both entities must be informed by biblical truths to reach optimal health.

The strategies of influence they deploy are an important distinction between third wave soft citizens and their historical precursors. Strategies of influence refer to the persuasive means employed to establish national values through cultural texts. Whereas first and second wave soft citizens constructed reciprocal bonds with the film industry to control mass cultural content, no such relation has been constructed between the religious Right and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). This is, in part, because the political and moral positions espoused by the Right are highly controversial and cannot be said to represent the will of an obviously divided American public. Instead, religious Right organizations like the AFA produce their own cultural content, without needing to rely on persuading the mainstream culture industry to produce and distribute “moral” content. For example, the AFA maintains an impressive multimedia propaganda machine that espouses a fundamentalist Christian world view including: 1) AFA Journal,

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286 See “Philosophical Statement” at http://action.afa.net/Detail.aspx?id=31
a monthly periodical with 180,000 subscribers; 2) 200 radio stations throughout the US operating under the banner American Family Radio (AFR); 3) a web-based news program syndicated in several countries; and 4) two internet television stations, AFA Channel and Home School Channel. As Sarah Diamond notes, “Apart from the corporate owners of media outlets, no other force in society has access to such a large soapbox” (14). Moreover, according to Diamond: “It is the coherence of the Christian Right’s cultural institutions and ideological message that makes millions of people want to participate” (44). By not only demanding a say in mainstream culture, but also producing their own counter-culture, conservative Christians have been able to dramatically shape the tone of political and mass culture.

Third wave soft citizens have a “strong” relationship to the state and official politics. Unlike previous groups of soft citizens, the AFA and other religious Right groups make demands to the state, including filing official complaints with the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) to demand that the organization regulates cultural content according to the standards of those groups, to the extent that it is empowered to do so. In addition, the religious Right has made religious-moral issues ranging from

287 See “Who is AFA” on the American Family Association’s website at http://www.afa.net/Detail.aspx?id=31
288 See Sarah Diamond’s Facing the Wrath: Confronting the Right in Dangerous Times.
289 Ibid.
290 The Federal Communication Commission (FCC), an independent government organization founded in 1934 to manage communication technologies is principally responsible for regulating radio airwaves, not content, but the organization does have the authority to fine television and radio stations or pull stations broadcasting licenses for airing “obscene” content. An example of the AFA’s censorial activism is their successful mobilization of over 165,000 Christians in 2006 to demand that the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) fine CBS because Without a Trace included “an extended teenage orgy scene” (American Family Association). Step-by-step directions for filing complaints with the FCC along with a brief history of the agency are available on the site, which showcases numerous calls to action and along
marriage equality to reproductive freedom central to political debates. Addressing the state and state institutions has never been excluded from soft citizens’ arsenal of strategies, but it was never a preferred strategy. The extension of soft citizenships reach beyond the cultural arena and into the properly political sphere could not have occurred in the 1980s if Christian moralism was not already central to how a majority of Americans imagine the nation and national belonging. Christian logics, ideals, and values have historically been encoded into mass culture as a result of religious moralists’ control over mass cultural content.

The Cultural Landscape: CARA and the New Censorship

By the 1960s real world cultural practices were changing at a much faster pace than cinematic content, which remained loosely bound to the Production Code. Although the 1950s and early 1960s saw the release of several films without the Production Code Association’s seal of approval it remained the standard-bearer for appropriate cinematic content. However, by the mid-1960s in an era when the birth control pill was discussed on the nightly news and Life printed scandalous exposés of the homosexual “lifestyle” the Code was seen as increasingly antiquated and it was increasingly ignored.  

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) could no longer justify censoring cinematic content based on overtly religious logics, nor could it justify prohibiting adults from viewing content they could see in their homes on the nightly news. The inability of religious moralism to pass as representative of national morality

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with detailed information pertaining to addressing complaints to industry representatives and relevant government organizations (http://action.afa.net/Detail.aspx?id=2147483692).

291 See for example Life June 26, 1964, especially “The Gay World Takes to the City Streets” and “Scientists Search for the Answers to the Touchy and Puzzling Question Why?”
once the diversity of actual US citizens became impossible to ignore a new moral rhetoric was needed. However, recognizing the lack of religious-moral consensus did not mean that the industry was willing to ignore motivated the issue of moral content that had caused intense debate and antagonisms throughout cinema history. It is at this point that a secular discourse begins to congeal around the family and censorship is justified through an appeal to the vulnerability of children and natural role of parents as protectors. Importantly the shift towards secularism in the 1960s does not represent a rupture with the religious moralism of the past, which was always intimately bound to the family. Instead, it uncouples familial morality from overtly religious discourse in order to make it easier for diverse populations to identify with the new rhetoric.

The industry still desired to be seen as working on behalf of the general public to protect children, a project that was part of a long term public relation strategy to make the industry appear invested in the moral well-being of children, families, and the nation. Protecting children and aiding parents became the central justification for continued regulation of cinematic content and the vulnerable-child/adult-protector dynamic framed the industry’s new censorship strategies. The following description of the dramatic shifts in cinema content regulation in the 1960s reveals residual traces of existing moral logics as well as the emergence of new ways of justifying and practicing censorship.

In 1966 the Code and Rating Administration (CARA) was founded under the leadership of Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America. —

292 In Jon Lewis’ Hollywood vs. Hardcore: How the Struggle over Censorship Created the Modern Film Industry, he contends that economic, not cultural or moral factors, shape Hollywood censorship. He focuses on the political and industrial dynamics that turn censorship into a productive marketing strategy for Hollywood studios.
(MPAA), and in collaboration with the National Association of Theater Owners (NATO) and the International Film Importers and Distributors Association (IFIDA). CARA replaced the Production Code Administration (PCA) and ushered in a new era of cinema content regulation.\textsuperscript{293} CARA is responsible for the current age-based movie rating system, which replaced the Production Code and outright censorship with film classifications based-on the assumed age appropriateness of cinematic content described on the MPAA’s website as “a revolutionary new parent-focused rating system.”\textsuperscript{294} With the shift from outright censorship to film classification, the MPAA argued that adults would have access to mature content, which there was obviously a market for, while children would remain protected from content deemed inappropriate for consumption by youth.

The MPPA’s website contains the following description of the shift from the Hays Code to the rating system:

While the Hays Code authorized a movie for distribution based on whether it was deemed “moral” according to an exhaustive list of rules, the current movie rating system was born out of the simple notion that the movie industry wouldn’t approve or disapprove what audiences should see, but instead would focus on “freeing the screen” and educating parents to help them make movie-going decisions for their family.\textsuperscript{295}

According to the MPAA’s description of the rating system, it is anti-censorial, providing adults the ability to choose the content that they watch and providing parents the information necessary to choose what their children watch. In other words, the MPAA

\textsuperscript{293} See Stephen Vaughn’s \textit{Freedom and Entertainment: Rating the Movies in an age of New Media} especially pages 8 and 26.
\textsuperscript{294} See “History of Ratings” on the Motion Picture Association of America’s website at (http://www.mpaa.org/ratings/ratings-history)
\textsuperscript{295} Ibid.
empowers consumers to make informed decisions. In addition, the above quoted paragraph seeks to redefine the MPAA’s project: the organization is no longer responsible for censoring through the application of an “exhaustive list of rules,” instead they classify films based on the age appropriateness of content. This is a public service, since it serves a parental public by helping them with the arduous, and nationally significant, task of parenting.

Regardless of the rhetoric, CARA’s classification system is prescriptive and it does not represent a radical break from previous iterations of institutionalized authority, such as the Production Code Association (PCA). CARA is a product of colliding residual and emergent cultural logics as well as material practices tussling over dominance at a historical juncture marked by symbolic and material crisis about race, gender, and sexuality. At its founding several members of CARA were affiliated with its precursor, the PCA, making CARA an updated version of, rather than a rupture with, the organizational body it was created to replace.²⁹⁶ However, whereas religious leaders were at the forefront of the PCA, the only criterion for being a board member of CARA was, and continues to be, parenthood. The Ideal Parent, in its abstract generalness, replaces religious leaders as American culture’s moral guardian in a move that seems to embrace secularism, but cannot mask its indebtedness to the religious logics that precede it.²⁹⁷ So, at this moment we see the film industry’s trade organization moving towards a new vision

²⁹⁶ See Stephen Vaughn’s Freedom and Entertainment: Rating the Movies in an age of New Media especially page 29.
²⁹⁷ Documentary filmmaker Kirby Dick interviewed two former members of CARA, Jay Landers and Stephen Farber in his 2007 film This Film is Not Yet Rated. Landers and Farber claim that there was no training system in place, no rubric to evaluate film content with, and no self-identified homosexuals.
of secular familialism while maintaining ties with religious moralism that was already deeply embedded in censorship practice.

The residual traces of the Christian moralism embedded in the Production Code also resurfaced in the continued relationship between the MPAA and religious groups, with which the organization maintained informal ties. For example, the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) consulted with the MPAA as the rating plan was constructed and endorsed the system in 1968, even though it withdrew support in 1971. The continued involvement of religious authorities demonstrates the shadow presence of Christian morality during the shift to a rating system that emphasized protecting children. Even after the USCC withdrew their support of CARA in 1971, Jack Valenti invited members of the USCC to attend ratings appeals hearings, thereby remaining a presence on the ratings board; although they did not have a vote, they could use their voice to influence the voting members of the board, i.e. parents. Even without an official vote religious authorities were able to exercise influence, soft citizenship strategy par excellence.

In keeping with my sense that a historical account matters, much of the content CARA found objectionable in the late 1960s echoed qualms voiced by William Hays and Joseph Breen during the Production Code era. In Stephen Vaughn notes:

Through the early 1970s, members of the rating board reflected the tone of the Production Code … in that they generally were much more concerned with sex, nudity, and language than with violence: one sighting of a

298 See Stephen Vaughn’s Freedom and Entertainment: Rating the Movies in an age of New Media especially page 31.
female nipple assured an R, and one use of the word “fuck” automatically required an R rating. 299

Content constructed as indecent, or taboo, by religious authorities appealing to a religious moral system were recursively drawn upon in secular familial-based moralization that continued to construct sex as taboo. The echo of Production Code moralism is noted in a study of film conducted in 1970 about censorship practices. The study of films rated by CARA and re-edited by directors to avoid objectionable content found that of the 82 films analyzed, 32.8 percent involved nudity, 28.7 percent involved sex acts and 1.8 percent involved homosexual themes. 300 Sexuality remains the greatest taboo subject even in the shift from religious warrants for censorship to familial ones. And, of course, it was sexuality that would motivate the culture was that emerge in the 1970s and continue to haunt US politics.

Although myriad residual traces of Production Code moralism appear in CARA’s classification practices there was a notable increase in representations of gay and lesbian characters following the dissolution of the Production Code in the late-1960s. Importantly, films represent queerness as neither providing the intimacy nor security of the heterosexual familial unit. In other words, hetero-familialism remained central to normative representations of healthy and happy adulthood. 301 Films including The Killing of Sister George and Boys in the Band granted homosexuality new degrees of visibility while constructing gays and lesbians as sadistic, self-loathing, miserable, and violent.

299 Ibid., p. 30.
300 See Andrea Friedman’s Prurient Interests.
301 Several historical reviews of lesbian and gay representations in film culture have been published since the 1980s, most notably Vito Russo’s The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies, but also Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin’s Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America and Richard Barrios Screened Out: Playing Gay in Hollywood for Edison to Stonewall.
Although lesbian and gay sexualities into the national cultural landscape, but on terms that emphasized the radical otherness of gays and lesbians while defining sexual differences as deficiencies. *The Killing of Sister George*, directed by Robert Aldrich and released in 1968, is about an abusive soap opera actress in a relationship with a young naïve woman nicknames “Childie,” that showcases lesbian relationships, sex, and hangouts, but pivots around the emotionally abusive relationship between the two women and the unraveling of the protagonist’s career; by the end of the film, she loses her lover and her job. *Boys in the Band*, released in 1970 and directed by William Friedkin, represents a group of gay men gathered for a birthday celebration that degenerates into a fest of self-loathing. Even as the eradication of Production Code regulations creates unparalleled opportunities to see queer characters on the big screen the portrayal of non-normative sexualities and genders highlights queer difference from normative heterosexuality as sick and sad, which is significant because it further demonstrates that the subalterns discussed herein, gays, lesbians, and feminists, do not have access to the good life as envisioned through the trope of heterofamilialism as seen in mass culture. Importantly, as my conclusion demonstrates, by the 1990s gay and lesbian characters began to be portrayed as more sympathetic because they were constructed as invested in versions of the good life that reinforced happy family life.

**CARA and the Parent-Protector**

Although parents may seem like the obvious choice to defend children against inappropriate content, US cinema censorship policy and practice is an anomaly. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) is a
state-based institution, as opposed to an industry trade organization, with a relatively transparent method of classification. Furthermore, unlike CARA, the evaluators of cinematic content for the BBFC are not necessarily parents. They are drawn from various professions and include educators, social workers, lawyers, and researchers. The idea that parents have moral expertise that can be generalized to benefit all children is uniquely American.

CARA’s censorship strategy, particularly the organization’s construction of parenthood as a cohesive category that can be represented by a handful of people rating films in Hollywood, idealizes and normalizes a particular version of parenthood and falls far short of representing the range of ideas parents have about moral content. In an interview with The Associated Press, Joan Graves, chair of CARA since 2000, discusses the ideal rating board member:

“The ideal person is out in the community getting feedback from other parents,” Graves said. “We don’t want hermits. We don’t want anybody with a cause. ... We’re looking for parents with solid judgment who want to raise healthy kids and know that a lot goes into it.”

Graves’ claim that CARA does not want raters ‘with a cause’ depoliticizes cinema classification by claiming that parents interested in raising ‘healthy kids’ are altruistic and singularly focused on protecting children.

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302 For details about the BBFC’s classification system see the BBFC’s official website at http://www.bbfc.co.uk/.
303 See “Who We Are” at http://www.bbfc.co.uk/about-bbfc/who-we-are.
CARA fails to represent a universal national value system as demonstrated by the rise of alternative film classification systems since the 1990s. The Dove Foundation was created in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1990. The Foundation is overtly Christian and rates films based on “traditional Judeo-Christian values.” On the organizations website the CEO and a co-founder of the Dove Foundation is quoted explaining why the organization was created: “We were frustrated because we felt inadequate to make selections on behalf of our children without watching the films themselves beforehand. And we didn’t trust the Motion Picture ratings; G, PG, PG-13 and R.”

Common Sense Media is the liberal alternative to both the MPAA rating system. Common Sense Media describes its rating method thus: “We rely on developmental criteria from some of the nation's leading authorities to determine what content is appropriate for which ages.” The ratings are age-based and address the ideal marker of development for every birth year. Moreover, instead of being prescriptive and restrictive Common Sense ratings include “On,” meaning acceptable for a child of x age, “Pause,” meaning may be acceptable for a child of x age but requires parental presence, and “Off,” not appropriate for child of x age. Whereas the MPAA rating system groups children of various ages together, for example all children under 13 are grouped together, Common Sense’s system recognizes radical differences between the emotional and intellectual development of a 6-year-old and a 12-year-old.

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305 See the Dove Foundation’s website at (http://www.dove.org/aboutdove.asp?ArticleID=1)
306 (See Common Sense Media’s website at http://www.commonsensemedia.org/about-us/our-mission)
CARA’s classification system, which positions parents as essential moral authorities invested in the well-being of children, as well as the classification systems of the conservative Christian Dove Foundation and the liberal secular Common Sense, establish the prevalence of the activist parent-citizen in the 1990s. Whether liberal or conservative, religious or secular, parenthood becomes a source of identification through which individuals develop a sense of themselves as members of a national community vested with political agency. Although who exactly could represent the ideal parent is certainly contested it seems to be assumed that parents need to intervene and protect children from cultural representations that could harm their moral development. Much as first wave soft citizens legitimated their publicness as mothers, fourth wave soft citizens claim that they are acting on behalf of children and as parents. As the next section demonstrates the desire to protect children reaches a fever pitch in the 1990s when activist-parents begin demanding changes in cultural content and arguing that the culture industry has betrayed the public trust by filling public spaces with adult content inappropriate for children.

The 1990s and the Parent-Citizen

CARA’s censorship system utilized parents as moral guardians and justified content classification strategies in the name of children who needed to be protected from adult content. The vulnerable-child/adult-protector dynamic intrinsic to CARA’s classification program reproduces a relationship dynamic that I have associated with soft citizenship throughout this project. In addition, it anticipates the emergence of fourth wave soft citizenship. Fourth wave soft citizenship emerges in the 1990s and takes the
historically specific form of the parent-citizen. Of course, the establishment of fourth wave soft citizenship as parental contains traces of other soft citizenship formations that emphasize the religious and maternal. However, by focusing on a secular ungendered version of morality and moral guardianship the form becomes available to a variety of diverse groups as opposed to specific groups as in its previous formations. In other words, it is not until the 1990s that soft citizenship becomes available for mass identification and the massification of the citizenship formation that continues to shape its post-millennium development. Several books published in the 1990s including Michael Medved’s *Hollywood vs. America* and Tipper Gore’s *Raising PG Kid in an X-Rated Society* are illustrative of the 1990s form soft citizenship took, the parent-citizen, in its specificity.\(^{307}\)

Tipper Gore represents the secular and liberal difference that is intrinsic to fourth wave soft citizenship. At the time Gore was the wife of President Clinton presidential running mate, Al Gore, a Democrat, although the couple have since divorced. In *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated World*, first published in 1987, Gore refers to her polemic as a “call to arms for American parents” (13).\(^{308}\) She writes that as “parents and as consumers, we have the right and the power to pressure the entertainment industry to respond to our needs” (13).\(^{309}\) Gore addresses her book to a familial public of parent-citizens empowered as consumers to protect their children, which is reminiscent of first wave soft citizens who justified their political demands by claiming children as their beneficiaries. It is as

\(^{307}\) See also William Bennett’s *The De-Valuing of America: The Fight for Our Culture and Our Children*

\(^{308}\) See Tipper Gore’s *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated World.*

\(^{309}\) Ibid.
parents that Gore is demanding people mobilize to protect children. She writes: “As parents and as consumers, we have the right and the power to pressure the entertainment industry to respond to our needs” (13).\footnote{Ibid.} By appealing to one’s familial role to justify citizenship participation the tone is set for constructing family affairs as political matters, which justifies the governance of culture and conduct for the good of the nation.

Gore’s qualms with the culture industry extend beyond film to include music and video games. In fact, most of her activism was directed at the music industry and organized through her participation in the Parents’ Music Resource Center (PMRC), which she helped establish in 1985.\footnote{See Tipper Gore’s Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society.} The expansion of moral governance over mass cultural content beyond the film industry beginning in the 1980s reflects concerns soft citizens have had about cinema since the forms inception while expanding the demand for control to include other forms of mass culture that were bound to the everyday life practices of many US children. In fact, mass culture did become increasingly sexual throughout the 1980s with pop stars like Madonna and Prince at the top of the charts so the interest of fourth wave soft citizens in forms of mass culture besides cinema is not surprising. However, the logics used draw upon those already bound to soft citizenship and inform the political culture wars of the 1980s including women’s reproductive freedom and the right of gays and lesbians to participate in the institutions of marriage and military.

The PMRC allied with the National Congress of Parents and Teachers (the National PTA) to demand that record companies classify their products to conform
parents about the content. The PRMC secured the audience of the Recording Industry of America (RIAA) through a media campaign that publicized their concerns. Unlike first wave soft citizens Gore, then married to a popular politician, had political capital that supported the moral capital she was able to direct against the industry. At a 1985 meeting between the PRMC and the RIAA the PRMC presented a letter signed by “sixteen wives of Unites States representatives and senators” demanding that the industry self-regulate “by developing guidelines and/or a rating system, such as that of the movie industry, for use by parents in order to protect our younger children from such mature themes” (29). It should be noted that Gore herself emphasizes the marital status of her and her fellow PRMC members as well as the political prestige of their husbands. The PRMC’s industry contact, Stan Gortikov, took the PRMC’s demand seriously and following a meeting before the Senate’s commerce committee that proved the further publicized the issue the PRMC was taking with music content the industry decided to create the PAL Program, which administers the labeling of music for “Explicit Lyrics,” an initiative that remains intact over a decade later

The RIAA appropriated a self-regulation strategy that appeased concerned parents by defining cultural content as appropriate or inappropriate for children. By conceding to the demands of parents, who represent soft citizenship’s fourth wave, the industry validated the panicked activism of parents perturbed by representations of sex and violence in music. Without the industry’s recognition and validation the movement may

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312 Ibid., p. 23.
313 Ibid., p. 23.
314 Ibid.
have sputtered out, but instead it picked up steam as the logics characteristic of soft citizenship that congealed in fourth wave activism began to influence other media content regulation regimes as well as political discourse and practice beyond mass culture. For example, the video game industry created the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), a self-regulatory agency that rates video games to aid parents in making informed decisions about content consumed by children.\(^{316}\) The ESRB rates video games “Early Childhood,” “Everyone,” “Everyone10+,” “Teen,” “Mature,” and “Adults Only.”\(^{317}\) According to a statement on the ESRB’s website the organization was developed because “Parents felt strongly that a rating system should inform and suggest, not prohibit, and should reflect the product overall rather than quantifying every instance of potentially objectionable content.”\(^{318}\) The fact that various cultural industries from the recording industry to the video game industry decided to adapt age-based classification systems in the 1990s demonstrates if not agreement with child protection arguments, acknowledgment of them that led to action. Cultural guardianship has historically been a rallying point for soft citizens and the 1990s was no exception even though the decade and the decades preceding it saw an extension of soft citizenship logics into other spheres of influence.

Michael Medved, author of *Hollywood vs. America* (1992), refers to Hollywood cinema as “the poison factory” (3).\(^{319}\) He constructs Hollywood as an enemy of

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\(^{316}\) See “About ESBB” on the ESRB’s website at http://www.esrb.org/about/index.jsp

\(^{317}\) See ESRB “Ratings Guide” on the ESRB’s website at http://www.esrb.org/ratings/ratings_guide.jsp#rating_categories

\(^{318}\) See “How was the rating system created” on the ESRB’s website at http://www.esrb.org/ratings/faq.jsp#7

Americans and justifies censorship by appealing to the vulnerability of children, a by now familiar argument. He claims “tens of millions of Americans now see the entertainment industry as an all-powerful enemy, an alien force that assaults our most cherished values and corrupts our children” (3). 320 According to Medved, a sizable number of the American public considers Hollywood a danger to children as well as national values. He soon identifies the tens of millions of disgruntled citizens as comprising a familial public upset because “Hollywood no longer reflects – or even respects – the values of most American families,” which include marriage, religion, and patriotism (10). 321 The investment in marriage, religion, and patriotism embeds these three highly contested spheres of influence at the center of new debates about mass culture and its guardianship, which echo old ones demonstrating the recursivity of moral claims and demands for national morality intrinsic to soft citizenship throughout its development. These institutions were protected by the production Code of 1930.

The examples of cultural texts and cultural policies that reflect the obsession with childhood innocence throughout the 1990s are meant to establish the intensification of an already existing trend in political and cultural discourses. By the 1990s two forms of soft citizenship co-existed, a liberal secular version that claimed moral authority and the right to political agency through parental roles and a conservative Christian version that claimed moral authority and the right to political agency by arguing Christian values are intrinsic to family and national stability.

My concluding chapter considers soft citizenship now and demonstrates that a

320 Ibid.
321 Ibid.
new form of soft citizenship has emerged in the form of the millennial queer. I use examples of shifts in filmic representations of queer characters in relation to the familial in order to explore transformations of how gay, lesbian, and since the 1990s, trans* characters have been envisioned as sharing the universal national desire for family life. I explore how assimilationist logics, always intrinsic to subaltern soft citizens are reemployed by lesbians and gay men in the millennium. As I will demonstrate, some members of the LGBT community have been able to claim allegiance to national values through familial roles testing the limits of inclusion in the national community and gaining access to social institutions from marriage to the military that in very recent history excluded gays and lesbians.
CONCLUSION: MILLENNIAL SOFT CITIZENSHIP --- SHEDDING STRANGENESS

Throughout my genealogical narration of soft citizenship’s development at the intersection of US mass and political culture I have sought to explore the recursive nature of political and cultural practices and formations. I set out to challenge theories that claim the 1980s as a period of historical rupture in which US citizenship subjectivity and practice were radically transformed leading to a change in politics characterized by sentimentality, child-centricity, moralization, and the politicization of various intimate matters. My intent was to better understand the historical development of citizenship subjectivity and practice as well as their influence on politics in order to demonstrate how intrinsic the traits that I associate with soft citizenship are to the US nation-building project. Although I emphasize recursivity throughout my project I do not wish to suggest that things do not change, my genealogy demonstrates that they do, but change itself is bound to and shaped by history. More than anything I hope to have produced a genealogy of the political present that reveals its attachments to historical forms.

In each chapter of this project, I have demonstrated that national belonging and the terms of inclusion and exclusion implanted at the center of the national imaginary are based on a normative image of family life. Even more, I have elucidated the important

322 See especially Lee Edelman’s No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive and Lauren Berlant’s The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship.
role normative familial ideals have played in political culture. Specifically, I have emphasized the historical constitution of a state invested in the welfare of children and families for the sake of the nation, a project begun in the temperance movement and reinforced through cultural practices and content that romanticizes the family while constructing it as a site of national belonging which in turn legitimizes the state’s concern with its formation and management.

Differing slightly from many social critiques I have argued that the 1970s and 1980s were marked by an acceleration and intensification of pre-existing national political investments in policing the personal conduct of adults to protect the social and psychological development of children. One reason I have focused on cinema censorship history is because soft citizens have always congealed around mass culture because of its attractiveness and availability to children. Soft citizens sought to uphold religious morals, patriotic feelings, and an idealized version of family life. Of course, sex and sexual identities were major sites of moralistic panic motivating their erasure from mass culture. It was not until the 1970s that queer lives and desires made their way to the big screen. In fact, shifts in censorship policies that occurred in the late-1960s, namely the creation of a rating system to replace the Production Code, were a response to the increased visibility of feminists, gays, and lesbians in politics throughout the 1960s as well as the loosening of sexual mores. Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and into the millennium, political contests over the rights of LGBT citizens and cultural representations of LGBT people have increased exponentially and it is the increased visibility in political and mass culture of LGBT people that this chapter begins to theorize.
In this chapter I take an exploratory approach to describing and theorizing the development of soft citizenship’s newest adherents --- millennial queers. I argue that the obsession with personal conduct, particularly sexuality, that accelerates in the 1980s has ironically provided lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and increasingly trans* citizens unprecedented political publicness and that it has transformed the political strategies and demands of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and to a lesser extent trans* citizens. The historical appropriation of soft citizenship by various groups changes the form, even as it remains attached to particular logics, tactics, and ideals. I cannot project how soft citizenship’s newest shapers will influence the future development of the form. I am comfortable claiming that third and fourth wave soft citizens helped forge the preconditions necessary for millennial queers, the very group most demonized throughout the 1980s and 1990s, to claim allegiance to the form and all it stands for by emphasizing their familial relations.

As I will demonstrate, millennial queers have fed off of the political and cultural obsession with family values to demand a place for their families in the national imaginary by constructing themselves as members of families and protectors of children rather than as threats to children and families as claimed by the religious Right. In fact, many activist and scholars now argue that marriage equality is good for children, families, and the nation. Arguing that marriage equality is good for children being raised in lesbian and gay families that lack the same legal protections and security as

heterosexual families has been a critical part of LGBT activist strategies since the 1990s and is meeting with increasing success; currently 16 states and the District of Columbia recognize same-sex marriages.\textsuperscript{324}

The Move Towards Marriage: Sexual Identity and the State
In the past fifty years sexual identity has risen to the forefront of US culture and politics leading to the politicization of sexual lives and identities while also bringing into view gender and sexual expressions previously excluded from cultural representation. Shifts in mass cultural representational and political polices and practices provide a window into the context of soft citizenships fifth historical emergence. Throughout the 1970s a liberal activist discourse that focused on securing the rights of gays and lesbians before the law emerged and attempted to decriminalize consensual sex between same-sex partners as well as create anti-discrimination legislation to protect gays and lesbians from housing and employment discrimination.\textsuperscript{325} As discussed in my previous chapter, small successes by gay and lesbian activists compelled big reactions from the religious Right and the 1970s and 1980s was characterized by backlash to the gains of gay and lesbian activists as well as feminists. By the 1980s and 1990s family values rhetoric was so prevalent the Democratic Party jumped onboard the family values bandwagon. Scholar


\textsuperscript{325} See Michael J. Kiarman’s “How Same-Sex Marriage Came to Be” in Harvard Magazine April 2013. Although anti-discrimination initiatives were only sporadically successful they served as justification for increasingly vigilant conservative initiatives to block them. In 1977 Miami-Dade County, Florida, became the one of the earliest municipalities to protect lesbian and gay men from discrimination. Anita Bryant responded by forming the “Save Our Children” campaign to protect children from homosexuality. See Lauren Kiritsy’s “Shades of 1977 tinge 2002 Miami-Dade fight” in Bay Windows February 21, 2002 and “Gay Rights: More Initiatives” in Of Our Backs January 1978.
Judith Stacey notes: “During the late 1980s, a network of research and policy institutes, think tanks and commissions began mobilizing to forge a national consensus on family values and to shape the family politics of the “new” Democratic Party” (119). Family values issues pervaded US political culture and although Democrats and Republicans discussed these issues differently everyone was proclaiming their investment in the welfare of children and the family.

It was in the context of cultural and political family-centricity that reports of gay men dying of unknown causes emerged in the 1980s. Apparently the deaths of gay men did not warrant the attention of the state; President Regan did not address the deaths or there cause until 1984. However, within the gay community information began circulating in 1982. Larry Kramer, founder of the Gay Men’s Health Crisis and AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP), helped inspire a political movement. Kramer convincingly argues that if white middle-class heterosexuals were dying and no one knew what was killing them politicians and the media would be paying attention demonstrating a keen awareness of the gay men’s second-class citizenship and its devastating consequences.

By the 1990s decades of gay and lesbian political mobilizations and the increasingly open hostility of the religious Right led Robert Bray, spokesman for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force to state: "We believe civil rights for gay people

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327 See Larry Kramer “1,112 and Counting” (1983) in Shane Phelan and Mark Blasius’s We are Everywhere.
328 For a critique of how the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to be associated with gay men to the detriment of their full participation in national life see Jeffrey Bennett Banning Queer Blood: Rhetorics of Citizenship, Contagion and Resistance. See Simon Watney’s “The Spectacle of AIDS” in The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader.
will be the social-change issue of the 1990s.” Bray was correct; struggles for gay and lesbian rights in the 1990s have transformed into millennial victories that could not have been anticipated even a decade ago when “roughly 75 percent of Americans deemed homosexual sex immoral, only 29 percent supported gay adoptions, and only 10 percent to 20 percent backed same-sex marriage.” In a climate characterized by oppressive homophobia gays and lesbians were able to enter the political public sphere and make political demands with unprecedented success. For example, President Bill Clinton actively pursued the gay and lesbian vote in the 1992 presidential election and assured his supporters that he would lift a ban excluding gays and lesbians from the military. Of course, this led to the creation of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell; a compromise that further institutionalization LGBT marginality within the military.

The most relevant gay and lesbian rights issue to emerge in the 1990s for the purposes of my analysis was marriage equality, which made its way into US politics in 1991 when three gay couples in Hawaii argues that laws limiting marriage to a man and woman were unconstitutional. The case, Baehr vs. Miike, went before the state supreme court in 1993. The judge ruled that excluding same-sex couples from marriage was likely unconstitutional and remanded the case to be tried in a lower-court. In 1996, a trial judge, Kevin Chang, ruled that banning same-sex couples from marriage was indeed unconstitutional. However, Chang stayed his own decision because of the legal repercussions of same-sex marriage. Even more, in 1998 the state constitution was

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330 See Michael Kiarman’s “How Same-Sex Marriage Came to Be” in Harvard Magazine April 2013.
331 Ibid.
332 See Gary L. Lehring Officially Gay: The Political Construction of Sexuality by the US Military.
amended to ban same-sex marriage. It was not until late 2013 that Hawaii legalized marriage equality, a move that followed fifteen other states.  

I want to briefly describe the logics that emerge in Baehr vs. Miike, because they reflect the ubiquity of familial-based moralization and child-centricity at the heart of US culture and politics. Gay and lesbian adults and their rights as citizens are discursively downgraded as same-sex marriage advocates focus on the family and children to make the case for marriage equality. At issue in the case was the constitutionality of denying couples marriage licenses because they are of the same sex yet the case pivoted around the state’s investment in marriage and “protecting the health and welfare of children and other persons” as well as “fostering procreation within a marital setting.” As my genealogy makes clear, familial-moralization and child-centricity are deeply embedded in US culture and politics. In fact, since the temperance movement the state investment in the welfare of children and other persons that it constructs as vulnerable the state has justified actions that repress adult rights in the name of protecting children. Protecting children and at times other groups characterized as vulnerable has justified multiple state policies that infringe on the rights of adults from temperance to film censorship and sexual freedom.

In Baehr v. Miike child protection rhetoric was used to warrant the state’s investment in marriage as an institution intimately bound to having and raising children.


334 Baehr v. Miike.

Although several experts called to testify reminded the court that not all married couples have children the state made its case for heterosexual marriage based on the welfare of children.\textsuperscript{336} In \textit{Baehr v. Miike} many experts were called to the stand to describe the influence same-sex parenting was likely to have on the social and psychological development of children. Almost all of the experts claimed that same-sex couple parents were as fit to raise children as opposite-sex couple parents. The one exception, Dr. Richard Williams is described in the court’s decision as “not persuasive or believable because of his expressed bias against the social sciences.”\textsuperscript{337} Moreover, Williams is describes as expressing “severe views” such as “there is no scientific proof that evolution occurred.”\textsuperscript{338} Most other experts testified that sexual identity of parents is “not an indication of parental fitness.”\textsuperscript{339} Even more, several experts turned the tables by arguing that children were being denied benefits including access to health care as a result of the sexual identity of their parents.\textsuperscript{340} Although it has taken over a decade opinions on marriage equality are now rapidly changing. For example, a 2013 \textit{Washington Post} article notes that whereas in 2011 only 15 Senators supported marriage equality by 2013 the number increased to 51.\textsuperscript{341} By constructing themselves as members of families, particularly as caring parents, lesbian and gay activists are seeking inclusion into the dominant social formation by politicizing, not their sexuality, but their family status.

\textsuperscript{336} Ibid. For examples, Dr. David Eggebeen testified that many individuals get married without intending to have children
\textsuperscript{337} \textit{Baehr v. Miike}.
\textsuperscript{338} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{339} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{340} Ibid. For example, Dr. Merrill and Dr. Schwartz both argue that the state is denying children economically stable homes by denying gays and lesbians access to the institution of marriage.
And, it is working in much the same way soft citizenship tactics have worked for previous waves of soft citizens clamoring for inclusion in the dominant social formation. Even as popular opinion, political climate, and mass culture seem to be heading towards a pro-marriage equality position, queer critiques of the privileges marriage bestows along with the limits of assimilation politics have proliferated in academia and increasingly the popular press.\textsuperscript{342} The issues many queer theorists have with marriage equality tend to pivot around the assimilationist impulse at the core of a politics of inclusion that requires an “other” to solidify the center.\textsuperscript{343} For example, Jasbir Puar argues that the US is embracing LGBT rights in order to separate America from Islamists who are constructed as uncivilized terrorists as a result of their virulent homophobia.\textsuperscript{344} I do not think that the people most likely to take a simplistic anti-Islamist position have any interest in demonstrating US pluralism and freedom by embracing sexual minorities. Certainly Muslims are "othered" in some instances by some people, but I do not think that demonizing Muslims is a national moral imperative the way that demonizing blacks through miscegenation laws and lynching campaigns was or that vilifying sexual minorities was and in many instances continues to be. The work of "othering" blacks and queers was a truly national past time at specific historical junctures. I do not think Muslims, even immediately following 9/11, fit into the same structural position. I do agree with Puar that avenues of national and political inclusion are increasingly being opened for sexual minorities willing and able to identify with dominant US values and

\textsuperscript{342} See Michael LaSala’s “Same Sex Marriage: A Queer Critique” in Psychology Today (June 2011).
\textsuperscript{343} Carol Queen “Never a Bridesmaid, Never a Bride” (105-112) and Marlon M. Bailey, Priya Kandaswamy, and Mattie Udora Richardson “Is Gay Marriage Racist?” (113-119) in That's Revolting: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation.
\textsuperscript{344} See Jasbir Puar’s Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times.
ways of life historically reserved for heterosexuals like marriage. However, I would actually argue that millennial queers have yet to construct a discernible enemy, a demonized other that they define their normalcy against, and this certainly sets the group apart from previous waves of soft citizens. But, as I have mentioned, fifth wave soft citizenship is a currently emerging form and it is impossible to project its next step.

In addition to criticizing assimilation maneuvers by members of the LGBT community some queer theorists, most notably, Michael Warner contend that marriage equality represents compulsory heteronormativity and an end to critical queer resistance to oppressive state institutions.\textsuperscript{345} Although I am sympathetic to critiques of liberalism and assimilation politics generally, I have no reason to suspect that keeping the institution of heterosexual marriage on lockdown would accelerate the coming of the revolution. It actually seems to assume that sexual object choice predisposes one to being an agent of revolutionary change, which seems like a feeble grasp at queer exceptionalism, not a reasoned refusal of assimilation. I find it more productive to critique the power of heteronorms to produce subjects of normative desire who constitute themselves as political subjects through familial relations than to criticize the acquiescence of some LGBT citizens to heteronorms. In other words, my critique remains of soft citizenship itself as a citizenship subjectivity and set of practices, not the particular subjects who inhabit the form.

A Typical Hollywood Ending

I end this project, which has focused on the development of soft citizenship at the intersection of US mass and political culture by turning back to Hollywood. In my discussion of the landmark Baehr v. Miike case I demonstrated that millennial queers have helped make LGB rights about children not adult queer citizens and as my conclusion will show Hollywood is also working to normalization queer sexualities by claiming the normalcy of children raised in queer-ish households. The Kids are All Right (2010), directed by Lisa Cholodenko, opens with a montage of suburban family life. Two teenage boys, one on a bicycle and one trailing slightly behind on a skateboard is followed by an image of the boys snorting coke. Meanwhile, in a tidy teenage girl’s bedroom two girls and a boy play scrabble and banter about sex. These snapshots of everyday life are followed by an unremarkable family dinner at which an ever so slightly butch Nic, played by Annette Bening and homemaker mom Jules, played by Julianne Moore, discuss their day, argue about Jules starting a landscape design business, lecture their son on the bad company he keeps, and badger their daughter about writing thank you notes. The opening sequence aggressively asserts the normalness of the lesbian suburban family and its title offers assurance of said normalcy by characterizing the children as all right.

It is not lesbians of gays that threaten to destroy our happy nuclear family; instead it is a straight man, the sperm donor used by the couple. Laser, played by Josh Hutcherson, is a fifteen-year-old boy who strongly desires to meet his biological father.

346 See Lisa Cholodenko’s The Kids are All Right (2008).
while eighteen-year-old Joni, played by Mia Wasikowska, is more reticent and demonstrates concern about their mothers’ feelings.

The next scene introduces the donor, Paul, played by Mark Ruffalo, receiving a phone call that turns out to be from the donor service he donated to almost twenty-years ago. It turns out Joni has requested a meeting. Later that day he calls her and they clandestinely sets up a meeting, which although awkward goes well. Joni is impressed with Paul’s laidback disposition and hippie outlook while Laser finds Paul’s motorcycle cool. Of course, none of these things are usually associated with appropriate parenthood further solidifying the over-all normalness of the lesbian parents.

Meanwhile, the moms become increasingly disturbed by Laser’s relationship with his best friend and assume it likely has a sexual component. In an attempt to be supportive mothers they create the perfect circumstance for him to come out by repeatedly asking him if he has anything he wants to share with them. Although they are expecting a sexual confession he assumes they know about his meeting with Paul and mentions it. This was not the secret they had in mind.

The couple retreat to their bedroom, their private space where squabbles about how best to parent take the place of playful pillow talk. They decide to be pro-active participants in the developing relationship between their children and Paul and make nice and invite Paul to dinner. The family and Paul dine around an outdoor table reflecting his insider/outsider status within the family. Nan grills Paul, failing to find his laidback personality charming. She notes how different he is from the man he represented himself as being in his donor profile. Jules dissatisfaction with her home life and desire to begin a
career also comes out at dinner. She mentions starting a landscape design business and Paul offers her a job.

Later that night Nan attempts to seduce Jules in their master bathroom, lighting candles, drawing a bath, massaging her, but she interrupts herself once she realizes she has forgotten bath salts and rushes to get them. She is away from the room for so long that the water turns cold and Jules goes to find her only to discover her on the phone taking a work call. Jules is frustrated and walks away in a huff. The absence of lesbian sex in a film that pivots around the flailing relationship of a lesbian couple is quite pronounced.

The next morning Jules begins her new job at Paul’s and while joking about gaining wait in his kitchen Jules starts to complain about how unsupportive and distracted Nan acts. Paul shows the support and interest she lacks in her relationship with Nan and Jules surprises herself by kissing Paul. She immediately apologizes shocked at her actions. The kiss marks the beginning of what will be an active although short-lived affair. Whereas Jules and Nan never manage to have sex Paul and Jules seem unable to stop and we see them in a variety of positions. In this film the menace to the happy home and family is not represented as homosexuality, but instead heterosexuality in a symbolic reversal of types that reproduces the idea of the family as vulnerable and sexual desire itself as the problem.

It is unclear how much time elapses before the affair ends; certainly enough time goes by for Paul to become attached to Jules and for Nic to become frustrated with Paul’s encroachment on her family life. One evening as the family gathers for a meal Nic says
she knows they are all getting along well with Paul and states that she would like to get to know him better. She suggests that they should have dinner at Paul’s so she can see Jules’ work in his garden. The following day Jules passes Nic’s request along to Paul and tells him they must end the affair, but they wind up back in bed almost immediately.

Paul agrees to host a family dinner and during the meal he and Nic bond over a shared interest in Joni Mitchell. However, the light mood does not last long. While Nic is using the bathroom she finds Jules long red hair on Paul’s brush and in his bathtub. When the family returns home Nic confronts Jules demanding to know if she’s sleeping with him. Although Jules tries to deny it she cannot maintain the lie. The couple argues so loudly that their children overhear. The children quickly side with Nic, ignoring Jules who is relegated to sleeping alone on the couch.

Joni, the perfect daughter, an eighteen-year-old science wiz heading to college rebels by coming home drunk and turning the tables when confronted by her mothers’ disappointment by shouting “I did everything you wanted. You can tell everyone you have your perfect lesbian family.” In the film it is not the children who disappoint, but the parents. Importantly, their troubles are quite uninspired; even in their perversity, they are normal.

Family meals together continue to ground the film’s action serving as recognizable sites of normal family life. As the family gathers to eat together the night before Joni leaves for college Paul shows up at the family’s home wishing to say goodbye to Joni. Although Jules opens the door Nic runs outside as soon as she realizes

[^347]: Ibid.
who has interrupted dinner. She confronts Paul shouting: “This is not your family. This is my family.” He has trespassed claiming a parental role in regards to her children and developing an intimate relationship with her wife. She slams the door in his face creating a barrier between her family and Paul the threat she wants to keep out. Later Jules tried to explain her actions to her family as her children surround Nic on the couch. She rants:

“...marriage is hard... Just two people slogging through the shit, year after year, getting older, changing. It's a fucking marathon, okay? So, sometimes, you know, you're together for so long, that you just... You stop seeing the other person. You just see weird projections of your own junk. Instead of talking to each other, you go off the rails and act grubby and make stupid choices...”

Jules unglamorous description of married life is relatable if not desirable aligning her long-term lesbian relationship with that of heterosexuals. Nic cries on the couch clutching Laser’s hand as the family drama unravels. The next morning they all pack into the family car to bring Joni to her new school.

The film ends with an awkward reconciliation, as each member of the family seems to decide to move on from the affair. Joni hugs her mothers and the three women with linked arms cry united through a history emblazed in good memories. On car ride home Laser says, “I don’t think you guys should break up.” When his mothers ask why he responds, “I think you’re too old.” Jules and Nic seem to agree; they tentatively hold hands – a typical although notably chaste Hollywood ending.

*The Kids Are All Right* and the *Baehr v. Miike* that I discuss in my conclusion establish a trend to frame LGBT rights through the trope of national familialism that has

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348 Ibid.
349 Ibid.
350 Ibid.
351 Ibid.
been established after over a century of normalization and naturalization in politics and culture. Even though moves to include previously excluded groups from national and political lives are commendable the terms of inclusion remain narrow and, as many queer theorists have noted, require an outside. In the film the outsider is the single man who never settled down and wants to infiltrate a family another person spent decades creating – he wants the pleasure and none of the work. However, outside of this Hollywood film I am not comfortable venturing a guess about who our next folk devil will be --- the consummate bachelor and sperm donor does not seem likely. In fact, I am not at all sure LGBT citizens are safe from demonization or pinned to assimilation. Fifth wave soft citizenship is a developing phenomenon tethered to the forms history, but not completely determined by it.
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