Y Movies: Film and the Modernization of Pastoral Power

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The institutional creation of the Bureau of Motion Pictures and Exhibits, a division of the Industrial Department of the International Committee of the YMCA, is examined to assess why the YMCA turned to film as a mode of public address in its social welfare programs. The archival history supports the claim that the “attraction effect” of film transformed it into a cultural technology for shaping the conduct of industrial workers. The essay concludes by arguing how film contributed to liberalism’s modernization of pastoral power by coupling immigrant workers with the pedagogical voice of the YMCA secretary.

Keywords: YMCA; Film; Liberalism; Pastoral Power; Cultural Technology

In the first few years of the twentieth century, the International Committee of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) established an Industrial Department to co-ordinate partnerships with corporate clients to care for the welfare of workers. By the early 1920s, the Y boasted that it had 500 secretaries working in their industrial programs. They had built 158 buildings devoted to special industries such as railroads, textile mills, and mining. They had established industrial extension work in over 143 cities throughout the United States; 125 secretaries were dedicated to full-time work in
the area of Americanization, and the Association’s programs reached 4 million industrial workers—both men and boys.\(^1\) It is the scope of the YMCA’s pre-New Deal welfare programs that buttresses the claims of today’s “compassionate conservatives” that faith-based organizations can successfully replace state actors in the administration of welfare services.\(^2\)

As an arm of its recreational, educational, industrial, and civic programs, the Industrial Department formed the Bureau of Motion Pictures and Exhibits (BMPE).\(^3\) In 1919, the Bureau distributed over 12,000 reels to 185 cities in 31 states for a total of 5,280 exhibitions with an attendance of 1,888,000.\(^4\) By the end of the 1920s, the YMCA claimed to be the premier distributor of industrial and educational films in the United States, and it retained that status until it sold the Bureau of Motion Pictures (renamed Association Films) after the Second World War. In response to the YMCA’s exhibition of film at Rockefeller’s Colorado Fuel and Iron Company in the late 1920s, Diane Waldman writes that the “legacy of welfare capitalism” makes this conjuncture “more than a matter of parochial regional concern or mere historical curiosity.”\(^5\) The YMCA’s investment in film to educate and entertain large numbers of industrial workers offers an opportunity to explore the relationship between communication technologies and the logics of social welfare. Since the Industrial Department of the YMCA built a national film distribution network and a host of educational, economic, and moral welfare services, the Industrial Department will serve as the institutional locus of this study. However, unlike institutional approaches that foreground the political economy of film and critical traditions that focus on the film text as an object of ideological representation, this paper locates the YMCA’s film program within a cultural problematic of liberal governance: namely, how communication technologies shape conduct.\(^6\) As others have argued, the particular importance of communication technologies and practices for governance, in general, and liberalism, in particular, is the ability of communication to transform the spatial and temporal coordinates of everyday life.\(^7\) For example, Jeremy Packer argues that communication technologies are “a means for organizing the movement of bodies.”\(^8\) The YMCA used film to move Y secretaries and working class men and boys closer together.

For the YMCA, the value of film was located in its ability to attract large numbers of urban working class immigrants. It will be argued that the YMCA relied on film as a technology of attraction to pull the working class toward the buildings and programs of the YMCA and push the Y secretary into the workplaces, parks, homes and churches of the working class. From the perspective of the YMCA, film was transformed from a contingent medium of public address to a necessary cultural technology for supplementing the voice of Y secretaries in providing pedagogical guidance to the immigrant working class. The critical point of the essay is to diagram a history of liberalism by highlighting the contingent role of film in assembling what Foucault calls “a block of capacity-communication-power” to promote the welfare of a state’s population.\(^9\)

The paper unfolds in four steps. The first addresses the YMCA’s film program in relationship to the threat of class war and the challenge of “nationalizing” unprecedented numbers of immigrants. What emerges as common to the multiple
ideological purposes associated with film is film’s use as a visual aid to present the YMCA to potentially new members. Second, the paper describes the emergence of the working class/immigrant movie audience. The constitution of the immigrant working class as a film audience provided the YMCA with reason to believe that film was able to attract the attention of their desired clientele. Third, the archival record of the YMCA’s Bureau of Motion Pictures and Exhibits supports the claim that film’s function as an attraction effect transformed it into a cultural technology for shaping conduct. The last step describes how the modernization of pastoral power performs a double articulation creating the YMCA-film-worker block and attaching this block to the liberal state.\(^{10}\)

**Social Problems and Film Solutions**

The YMCA actively engaged a series of social problems associated with urbanization, industrialization, immigration and working class welfare.\(^{11}\) According to Thomas Winter, alongside a shifting network of urban reform organizations in the Progressive Era, “the YMCA benefited from employers’ concern with labor strife and interest in new ways of handling their workers and shaping their behavior on and off the job.”\(^{12}\) As industrialists established company welfare policies to mitigate worker radicalism, the YMCA often administered such programs and/or explicitly aligned their local and specialized Y’s with the interests and goals of “welfare capitalism.”\(^{13}\) At times, the YMCA’s administration of a company’s welfare programs included the exhibition of film. For example, in the aftermath of the Ludlow Massacre, John Rockefeller instituted an “employee representation plan” that included a “Joint Committee on Recreation and Education,” including a YMCA-sponsored movie theatre.\(^{14}\)

Diane Waldman analyzes the YMCA’s film work at Rockefeller’s Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CFI). Waldman argues that, at the end of the silent era, the Y’s film work was “part of an overall strategy to diffuse worker discontent, to discourage union activity and to exert corporate influence over areas of employees’ lives outside the workplace itself.”\(^{15}\) She supports this claim in two steps. First, she makes visible the close relationship between the YMCA and their corporate benefactors. The reliance on corporate sponsorship leads Waldman to report that “secretaries were usually willing to go along with the policy orientation of their corporate-dominated boards of directors even when they themselves held more liberal social and political views.”\(^{16}\) This first point is unique not to film but to the organizational structure of the YMCA at this time. The second reason Waldman offers for the YMCA’s complicity with capital was based on the narrative content of the films exhibited at CFI. For Waldman, “the narrative strategies by which the films deal with class conflict dovetail with the more intentional corporate discourses.”\(^{17}\) The movies the Y exhibited represented a vast cross-section of Hollywood genres. In total, over 220 movies were shown between 1927 and 1929, and the pattern Waldman discovered was that “class differences are both acknowledged and then dismissed as ultimately unimportant or surmountable.”\(^{18}\)
Winter confirms Waldman’s thesis by arguing that the YMCA imagined its work to be in direct competition with radical labor unions, in particular, the IWW. Especially in urban areas, the YMCA identified the problem of new immigrant labor as uniquely vulnerable to the appeals of radical labor. Waldman’s findings are important, since they demonstrate the YMCA’s systematic bias toward Hollywood narratives that privilege capital. But when assessing theatrical films in the class struggle, it is important to recall what Steven J. Ross calls the “revolt of the audience.” Ross uncovers a submerged history of “worker film-makers” who “produced features and newsreels that challenged the dominant political and economic order by offering alternative ways of understanding and resolving the harsh battles between employers and employees.”

By the end of the silent era, conservative pressures of anti-labor movie censors, the establishment of vertical and horizontal monopolies in the film market, and the failure of the American Federation of Labor to support labor film-makers or the establishment of labor-owned movie theaters squeezed out working class film-makers and more labor friendly narratives. Waldman, too, recognizes the “revolt of the audiences” at Colorado’s Fuel and Iron Company, when she describes workers walking away from YMCA-sponsored leisure activities because they recognized the Y’s class sympathies as capitalist and discovered the alternative pleasures provided by the local town.

One should not be too quick to privilege the “entertainment-ideological” element of the Y’s film program. The largest part of the Industrial Department’s movie program was the distribution of educational, industrial, civic, and heath films. Like the theatricals, these films were also harnessed to the needs of capital. Charles Southard, the Vocational Advisor for the YMCA Re-employment Bureau after World War I, reported to the Bureau of Motion Pictures and Exhibits in 1920:

I have had the good fortune to use your service in connection with the educational work which the YMCA is carrying on in this city [New York] with soldiers and marines. After presenting the reel on welfare work in one of the big steel mills, at least a dozen young men came to me afterward and expressed a great desire to undertake some useful trade. This result was directly due to their sensing the care of big men in corporations as to the welfare of their employees. This is of importance just at this time when there is so much unrest between labor and capital.

For Mr. Southard, the mundane genres of film often produced by corporations, state actors, and reform organizations promoted less confrontational relationships between capital and labor by illustrating the motive of care underwriting the programs of welfare capitalism. As Ross writes, “The companies most active in crushing unions . . . were also the most aggressive in producing nontheatricals” and they often “arranged to have films shown at local YMCAs.” As Ross demonstrates, specific narratives (theatrical and nontheatrical) were needed to combat labor unrest, but one should also register how film provided an opportunity for the YMCA to introduce Y secretaries and their programs to potential workers.

The Y’s belief in the ability of industrial movies to manage class conflict does not exhaust the role of the YMCA’s movie enterprise. Moreover, an over-emphasis on class
conflict tends to privilege one ideological purpose for showing movies over other purposes. Finally, while the desire to manage class conflict was at the heart of the Y’s industrial programs (the stated purpose was the achievement of mutuality between management and workers), it was not a reason why film was used as a medium of public address. In other words, the use of film was contingent rather than a necessary medium of public address. Since managing class conflict was not the only reason why films were exhibited, other social problems offered themselves to a cinematic solution.

The YMCA’s Industrial Department’s Bureau of Motion Pictures and Exhibits (BMPE) was the primary advocate and distributor of film at local and specialized YMCAs. It imagined itself as providing “a service to YMCAs in industrial fields” providing films rent-free on “industrial, educational, scenic, welfare and safety first subjects.” The social work of the Y was supported by a multimedia campaign including poster art, lectures, magic lantern shows, stereopticons, and silent film—all presentation forms offered by the BMPE. However, the BMPE nurtured the use of film. To explore the reason, it is useful to register film’s role in the Y’s Americanization programs. The BMPE relates the following story:

At one Sunday meeting of 250 non-English speaking men, representing nine nationalities, the picture used was a melodrama—the story of a moon shiner, the United States revenue officer and, of course, a pretty mountain lass. For one hour the secretary talked with the picture, reading the titles in very simple English, composing short sentences from the picture action: such as, “the door opens,” “the man comes out,” “he looks around,” “he hears a noise,” “he grabs the gun,” “he shoots the man,” “he is a bad man,” “he breaks the law,” “he is not a good citizen,” “a good citizen will not break the law.” Those men went home that afternoon with higher ideals of citizenship, and best of all, they had been helped to think in English.

The first important thing to notice is the “talking secretary” beside the “silent film.” The secretary’s voice was one of the “many sounds of early cinema.” Moreover, the Y often sent a talking secretary to commercial movie houses for the purpose of introducing the Y’s programs and encouraging movie patrons to visit the local YMCA. From the standpoint of the exhibition context in the above passage, the use of silent cinema by the Y to express norms of good citizenship (speak English, be law abiding) addressed audiences in ways other than the narrative structure of the film. In this case, it would be a mistake to argue that the “eye” was being privileged at the expense of the ear. As the example illustrates, the secretary was providing the moral and linguistic soundtrack for the audience. The visual and narrative elements of the film may offer important clues to the ideological content of the narrative, but the role of the talking secretary does not support the suggestion that the “public screen” was replacing face-to-face interactions. Or better yet, the YMCA used the screen in hopes of creating interpersonal encounters between the Y Secretaries and working class audiences. To over-emphasize either the narrative or visual elements of the film-text displaces the YMCA’s institutional work to transform the abstract film-audience (spectator) encounter into a concrete Y secretary-worker relationship (intimate).
The second lesson of the Sunday morning melodrama concerns the content of the secretary’s talk. He wants to use the film to impart moral lessons and English language competence. There was nothing ideologically neutral about the content, but the point to stress is the process by which film was being transformed into an educational tool; more specifically, it was a visual aid to help Y secretaries teach English and moral character. In this particular case, these films were also efficient, since they accomplished two goals (English and moral character) at the same time. The critical recognition of film as a visual aid, as a pedagogical supplement to the voice of the Y secretary, gets us closer to why the Y used film as a cultural technology rather than do broad narratives about class interest and nationalist self-fashioning (as true in spirit as they are). As Charles Acland comments, film was often used for educational purposes during the 1920s and the lecturer standing beside the film helped to register any given film event as educational as opposed to mere entertainment. My question, then, can be re-written as: What did the Y think was the “media bias” of film that contributed to its use as a visual aid? The answer to this question requires a closer investigation into the making of the movie audience.

The Immigrant Audience of Early Film

To better appreciate how the contingent use of film became a necessary cultural technology requires a closer look at the film-immigrant couple. In standard histories, the success of the nickelodeon and other cheap movie houses turned urban immigrant workers into movie audiences. In these narratives, as Judith Mayne argues, “the immigrant’s film going is often mythologized in accounts of early movie history.” For example, Mayne reports that historians believe that (Hollywood) movies socialized new immigrants by revealing “the manners and customs” or “social topography” of the United States. Moreover, film historians have accounted for how silent films aided new immigrants in learning English. While we should avoid mythologizing, the Y did witness a synergy between immigrants’ enjoyment of movies and their desire to learn English. As Claude Peake, an Industrial secretary for the Niagara Falls YMCA, reported, “The desire to be able to read the [movie] titles is bringing men into English classes.” In one month, Mr. Peake boasted, he had shown “twenty-one [movie] exhibitions … to a total attendance of 2,475 people.”

However, by de-mythologizing the socializing effect of the film-text, we can focus on the “the act of going to the movies.” For Russell Merritt, what explains the immigrant experience with movies is co-presence, the changing nature of one’s social experience that occurs as one comes to recognize how one shares space with others. Recall the exhibition of the melodrama discussed in the previous section. How might we address those “250 non-English speaking men, representing nine nationalities” gathered together to watch a melodrama as the Y secretary speaks the titles in English and offers a moral lesson in citizenship? The success, if any, of the Y’s Americanizing project may have had less to do with the narrative content of the films shown, or even the lessons narrated, and more with bringing together those nine nationalities to share space together. Following Merritt, we might hypothesize that what made Y movies
work as a “cultural technology” useful for Americanization was their ability to bring different “nationalities” into proximity with one another as an audience, a situation that allowed the Y secretary to re-name them as “American.” Whether the actual audience imagined themselves as “Americans,” “Christians,” or “Italians” this paper does not attempt to answer. What the established research does suggest is that film pulled “ethnically” distinct individuals together to share time and space, and what I am arguing is that the YMCA took advantage of this “attraction effect” to address the many nationalities as one (American). Perhaps, the most immediate media bias of film resided in its uptake in the immigrant working class population as a form of popular culture.

Judith Mayne’s pioneering work on immigrant audiences holds an important clue to the material consequences of film. Mayne argues that the shift toward the consumption of commercial culture re-organized the relationship between private (or domestic) and public spheres creating new lines of mobility for immigrant women, even as these new lines were formed to increase consumption. According to Thomas Winter, the YMCA played its part by transforming codes of masculinity and class to support the demands of consumption. At the same time, while the YMCA provided a vast array of leisure activities—movies, athletic leagues, gymnastics—it was often in competition with other places like the nickelodeon, the amusement park, or the saloon that provided forms of capitalist consumption to colonize leisure time. The proliferation of film as commercial popular culture provided the YMCA with the idea to re-deploy this new communication technology to influence where a man might spend his time in the company of others. Film had grabbed the attention of the YMCA because it attracted the populations they desired to mould.

(WH)Y Film

My argument at this point is that the Y distributed and exhibited films because they were visual aids presenting the programs of the YMCA to industrial workers. Furthermore, the constitution of immigrant workers as “movie audiences” provided the possibility of bringing together different ethnic sections of the immigrant working class to be addressed as one. The film-immigrant/worker coupling gave the Bureau of Motion Pictures and Exhibit the opportunity to assign film a competitive advantage in relationship to other forms of public address. To explore how this competitive advantage was assigned is to highlight how film’s “attraction effect” made possible its transformation into a cultural technology for shaping conduct. Three lines of reasoning take center stage: film’s popularity, efficiency as a visual aid, and portability.

The popularity of film cannot be underestimated. It was the sheer numbers (the magnitude) of people attending movies that convinced the Y that the movie was an untapped educational resource. Association Men reported, “The audience of the moving picture theatres is about 2,500,000. The realization of an increasing number of Associations . . . that in the moving picture we have today one of the greatest unused educational forces of civilization is causing a rapid installation of machines.” The existence and magnitude of a large movie audience moved film from the realm of
a contingent medium of public address to a necessary cultural technology. In the
“Foreword” to the pamphlet *Moving Pictures and Working Men*, the Y noted:

All classes of people enjoy moving pictures. None more so than the industrial
worker. In fact, the extraordinary growth to the motion picture business has in a
large measure been made possible through the enormous patronage on the part of
machine and hand workers. A few visits to motion picture theaters made by an
observant secretary will impress him with the fact that it is the operatives of mills,
factories, shops, mines and foundries who are pouring the largest and steadiest
stream of dimes and nickels into the coffers of this latest form of commercialized
recreation. The mental and emotional impressions made nightly upon thousands
and thousands of working people throughout the United States through witnessing
these pictures in an educational and socializing factor [are] not to be lightly regarded
by the Association. In the broader program being carried out by many of our
Associations located in industrial centers the motion picture is coming in for a
degree of attention commensurate with its importance.43

The popularity of film provided the opportunity to use film as a cultural technology
to create encounters between the YMCA secretary and the immigrant/working class.

The second reason is less quantitative and more qualitative: the visual element of
film. The “mental and emotional impressions made nightly” projected by moving
pictures convinced the Y that film would be useful in their welfare work. As pointed
out in the first section, the Y used film as a visual aid to supplement the voice of the
secretary. One should not assume that the Y thought the visual dimension of film was
so radically new that the working class audiences were simply mesmerized by the
images flickering in front of them. As Tom Gunning argues, even the earliest audiences
of motion pictures were not naive; they were, in fact, very sophisticated visual
consumers due to the vast array of visual entertainments available at the time.44

It was the combination of movement and temporality that morphed film into a
cultural technology to shape conduct. Specifically, film was an efficient educational
tool. According to the BMPE, “From fifteen minutes of motion pictures a class will
learn more about Yellowstone Park, geyser, and hot springs than by reading a hundred
pages of descriptive material.”45 Due to its presumed efficiency, “visual instruction”
was taking its place in the field of modern education. Moreover, the visual was
considered particularly useful for negotiating problems of literacy. As Ira Shaw
reported, “The moving picture machine is a powerful agent for good in an industrial
community. … In some of the coal mining fields not half of the residents can read
and write, thus things taken in through the eye in a pictorial way can be made to have
a powerful educational value.”46 It is worth remembering, however, that the YMCA
did not imagine the visual element as a substitute, but as a supplement to oral
communication.

The educational purpose of film cannot be completely subsumed under the
narratives of welfare capitalism, Americanization, or shifts in the value of
consumption and masculinity. The presumed efficiency of visual education is a
subtler and more parsimonious reason for why the YMCA turned to film. Moreover,
film presents the YMCA as a “modern” organization capable of handling its
responsibilities. The YMCA was not alone in recognizing how film modernized
education. For example, R. W. Reynolds justified the need for the US Bureau of Education to provide a handbook on how to use motion picture equipment with the claim that "the day of motion pictures for the purpose of education has arrived." As Charles Acland reports, during the first half of the twentieth century, cultural authorities often signaled their "modernity" by shifting resources in the direction of film. For the YMCA, an organization that claimed to be reaching 4 million working class men and boys a year and hoped to expand, film became a modern necessity in order to deliver instruction faster to more people.

The third reason to harness the contingent power of film was that it pushed the YMCA into the community. Film's popularity worked hand-in-hand with film's portability. The portability of film carried the Y secretary into new and diverse sites. In other words, film was capable of pulling working-class men toward the Y, and pushing the Y secretary into the daily life of its target population. The Industrial Department recognized that "if the Association is to make itself a community factor of importance, it will have to project itself into the home, work, and recreational life of the largest class of men and boys (the industrial workers) that make up the community." The Bureau of Motion Pictures and Exhibits specifically remarked on the ability of motion pictures to establish Association programs in "plants, parks, street meetings and other points."

C. W. Baldwin, a Community Secretary of the YMCA in Geneva, New York reported to the BMPE:

> Previous to the time of our promoting moving pictures in industry it was almost impossible for the YMCA to get an opportunity to have a hearing for any of its plans which it had regarding the promotion for industries. It was through the cooperation of the Industrial Department, and its Bureau of Motion Pictures and Exhibits that we were able to get our first entry into the industries of the city, and since then have been able to carry out other parts of our industrial program. I certainly believe that the moving pictures are one of the grandest things we have as a means to an end.

Film's popularity and portability combined to move the Y secretary throughout the social body.

In writing about its social hygiene films, the BMPE commented that "unlimited possibilities for the Association programs lie in the parks, playgrounds, and vacant lots during spring, summer and fall." While the YMCA hoped to target working-class men and boys, its decision to exhibit films increased its ability to attract the whole family. As the promotional material of the Bureau of Motion Pictures and Exhibits states, "Hospitals, institutions and homes appreciate the Association program of religion, music and entertainment." The portability of film was highlighted as early as 1912 in the following YMCA advertisement for Edison's Kinetoscope

> We are glad to call attention to the "Edison Home Kinetoscope" that promises to be particularly useful for showing moving pictures at shop meetings and at small assemblies in or out of the Association building. The machine weighs but twenty pounds in the convenient carrying case and can be used with the electric current from an ordinary incandescent light socket and set up for use in less than five minutes.
The portability of film helped the Y secretary travel to new locations. As film historians have remarked, movies were often exhibited "on the move" at fairgrounds, parks and tent shows throughout the United States. The Y took advantage of this portability to connect the Y secretary to places frequented by industrial workers. It was, as Charles Acland argues, the mobility of modern life that contributed to the dispersion of educational sites and the effort of cultural authorities to attempt to organize this chaotic slice of daily life. Since other forms of public address are portable as well (traveling preachers and theatre companies, for example) portability requires the rhetorical contextualization offered by the Y's recognition of its popularity and modernity.

It was the constellation of popularity, efficiency and portability that established the value of film as a cultural technology. The distribution and exhibition of films allowed the YMCA to perform that most rhetorical of strategies, the bait and switch. In an effort to address a specific population, the YMCA contributed to the invention and constitution of movie audiences with the hope that these movie audiences would then turn around and become members of the YMCA. As John Hartley comments, critical recognition of the role institutions play in representing audiences reveals a "desire to enter into relations with them ... that serves ... institutional needs and purposes." The Y's desire was to create a pedagogical relationship between the Y and the working class. Not surprisingly, this desire required moving the immigrant/working class closer to the voice of the YMCA secretary. Film was just the ticket.

The Liberal State and the Modernization of Pastoral Power

For the YMCA, the service provided by the Bureau of Motion Pictures and Exhibits had Christian roots in the spiritual guidance provided by a pastor. For Foucault, a pastor “designates a special form of power.” Pastoral power aims to “assure individual salvation in the next world.” It is “prepared to sacrifice itself for the life and salvation of the flock.” It “does not just look after just the whole community, but each individual in particular, during his [sic] entire life.” Finally, pastoral power “implies a knowledge of the [individual’s] conscience and an ability to direct it.” For Foucault, the modernization of pastoral power resulted in (1) “no longer ... leading people to their salvation in the next world, but rather ensuring it in this world,” (2) an increase in the number and kinds of “officials of pastoral power” including state and non-state actors, and (3) “the development of knowledge ... around two roles: one ... concerning the population; the other ... concerning the individual.” The model by which the liberal State would increasingly take responsibility for the welfare of its own population was first accomplished by philanthropic and Christian organizations, such as the YMCA, providing health, education and economic assistance. Moreover, the classical liberal State relied on these organizations to limit its intervention in social life. The critical point about the emergence of the Y secretary-film-immigrant/worker block is how the modernization of pastoral power limits the overt reach of the state but nonetheless allows the state to care for its population.
For the YMCA, the desire to serve its population was not designed to produce substitutable bits of raw material for the industrial machine of modern capitalism. Rather it was an attempt to form capacities (speak English, clean house, forge steal) under the (moral) guidance of the Y secretary. As the BMPE commented, “In the industrial movies... [workers] realize the importance of their contribution to the progress of the world, civilization, and humanity. Jobs become service and their trade an art of which they have the right to be proud.” The Y secretary-film-worker block was a node in the circulation of service as a norm of interaction that required the pastoral guidance of the Y secretary for the worker to unleash their artistic capacity. For the YMCA, the norm of service had the potential of transforming class conflict into pastoral relationships of mutual care.

In the nineteenth century, the political threat of the working class required liberalism to educate the working class for their roles as citizens and increasingly pushed the state to create more administrative functions to enhance the security of its population. The result was the slow and uneven development of modern liberalism that, in the United States, would result in a thin layer of social democracy associated with the New Deal. During the progressive era, the relationship between the cultural spheres of citizenship witnessed interventions into the everyday lives of immigrants at the same time as the political level (most vividly demonstrated by the right to vote) witnessed the “purification of citizenship” whereby literacy, health and immigration status were all used to deny people the franchise. While literacy, health and immigration status limited formal political participation, they also became objectives pursued by the Y secretary in creating pedagogical relationships of pastoral guidance.

During the Progressive Era, John Dewey declared that “inquiry” and the “art of communication must take possession of the physical machinery of transmission and circulation and breathe life into it” if the media revolution hoped to solve the modern problems of fragmentation and alienation. The Y secretary desired to be the divine spark that turned the machinery of film into a pedagogical relationship to save the immigrant working classes from the social problems of urban living. To harness this pedagogical relationship to the modernization of pastoral power necessitated the Y secretary to “know your group individually. The rind of the orange is sour—you must go inside for the juice. Sit with the men and learn their problem, and you’ll be surprised how sweet it is to help the man lower down.” Pastoral power required knowledge of the conscience of the individual to better guide it toward new capacities. Film attracted and educated “foreign” industrial workers, but its primary purpose was to supplement a pastoral relationship whereby the Y secretary turned the bitter reality of “foreignness” into the sweet intimacy of brotherly care.

As for the articulation between the Y secretary-film-worker block to the liberal state, the telegraph provides a point of comparison. According to Andrew Barry, the value of the telegraph allowed the liberal state to keep its distance from social life by providing the temporally sensitive information to judge how and when to intervene. Film was not capable, at this time, of providing instantaneous real-time information from far away places. Yet, the YMCA's social work allowed the liberal state to keep its distance. The large increase in immigration and the potential of class war generated
a governing crisis in the wake of the US federal government’s historic resistance to interfere directly in such areas as health, education and welfare. While the state often resorted to repression and violence to stop immediate short-term threats, it preferred to govern at a distance. To do so, it needed organizations like the YMCA to develop more intimate relationships of governance. The YMCA’s institutional use of film connected the working class to the Y secretary while allowing the YMCA to stand in for the liberal state. In the early twentieth century, the unique of film to produce an “attraction effect” secured it a starring role in the modernization of pastoral power. In so doing, the spatial coordinates of liberal governance were experiencing a double articulation as the Y’s film program connected its secretaries to industrial workers in pastoral service while the YMCA and the liberal state were being stitched together by the modernization of pastoral power.

Conclusion
By 1920, the Industrial Department of the YMCA had established a complex network of local and specialized Ys with the task of caring for the social welfare, education, recreation and moral uplift of working class men and boys, many of whom were new immigrants. It also established a Bureau of Motion Pictures and Exhibits to coordinate the distribution and exhibition of industrial and educational film. For the YMCA, film was assigned a competitive advantage as a “technology of attraction” that re-coded it as a cultural technology capable of shaping conduct. Thus, film went from a contingent means of public address to a necessary element in the Y’s public pedagogy. Critically, a diagram emerges articulating the concrete block Y secretary-film-working class to the changing history of liberalism as an abstract block of capacity-communication-power. What makes possible the movement between the concrete and the abstract is the circulation of pastoral power that allows the liberal state to govern at a distance by instilling intimate pedagogical relationships between spiritual guides (experts) and a population. The dispersion of pastoral power throughout the social body explains the institutional role of the YMCA in social welfare and the articulation of film to these programs as a prosthetic supplement to the secretary’s voice and touch. Liberalism’s incorporation of pastoral power necessitated the circulation of expert knowledge and the delivery of bodies to those forms of expertise so that populations might govern themselves with limited state intervention. While some communication scholars find it necessary to advocate a balance between the temporal and dialogic dimensions of oral culture with the spatial dissemination of mass media, the media history of the YMCA demonstrates how such a balance is implicated in the modernization of pastoral power.66

The Industrial Department disappeared after the 1920s, taking away many of its welfare services. Organizational disputes and duplication between local city YMCAs and the Industrial Department’s special programs and buildings, shifts in the corporate programs associated with welfare capitalism, and the massive increase in federal responsibilities for social and economic security due to the Great Depression were all factors in the decline of the Industrial Department and the slow evacuation of
the YMCA as a major provider of welfare programs. The conservative memory of the progressive era recalls the YMCA as an example of a successful faith-based welfare service to argue that their re-birth can replace the legacy of modern liberalism's reliance on “welfare-statism.” Today, a neo-liberal state is replacing a modern one by deploying faith-based organizations to generate new pastoral relationships free from market and cultural distortions blamed on the welfare state. What we are witnessing in the USA is the post-modernization of pastoral power—the subsuming of social welfare to the market logics of neo-liberalism as a governing rationality. Bemoaning the lack of entrepreneurial spirit in social work, David Stoesz writes:

As the human service sector of postindustrial society unfolds, what had once been public utilities during the industrial era are being converted into social markets. Firms now control substantial portions of markets in hospital management, HMOs, home health care, child day care, even corrections . . . It is the rare social worker, indeed, who has the vision and gumption to set up a human service corporation.

Today, proliferating screens, digital cameras, and editing equipment entail a new era of film-making, exhibition, distribution and spectatorship. For some, this situation is more akin to the early cinema of working-class film-makers than the classical Hollywood system. As this paper has demonstrated, the YMCA’s early twentieth-century uptake of film as a cultural technology facilitated the modernization of pastoral power within the governing logics of the liberal state. Today, the arrival of digital media alongside neo-liberalism calls for an assessment of media forms and communication practices in the post-modernization of pastoral power and, perhaps, the possibility of a future revolt of the audience.

Notes

[3] The first reported film exhibition was at a local Brooklyn YMCA in 1907. Five years later, the Y commissioned the Edison Company to prepare “a series of reels bearing on the work of the . . . Association in its outreach to working men and boys.” Moving Pictures and Working Men (New York: Industrial Department International Committee of the YMCA, 1912), 24, Box 10 Industrial Records, Motion Picture Pamphlets. Kautz Family YMCA Archive, University Libraries, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.
[6] This paper works from a Foucauldian perspective on liberalism. As such, it imagines liberalism not as a political ideology but as a governing rationality capable of harnessing specific techniques for the shaping of conduct, the purpose of which is to create the conditions promoting individual freedom. See the essays in Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and


[10] For the Deleuzian inspired approach to articulation theory that guides this paper, see Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 37–69.


[13] It is important to note the shifts in the emphasis of welfare capitalism between the 1870s and the end of the 1920s. Two such shifts include: (1) a move away from outsourcing employee programs toward the establishment and rationalization of in-house personnel management departments and (2) a move away from “character-building” programs to financial incentives.

[14] In September of 1913, employees of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company in Ludlow, Colorado went on strike. In response, Rockefeller evicted strikers from company-owned houses. The strikers, in turn, built a “tent village.” The Ludlow massacre describes the killing of 24 men, women and children by company agents.


[23] *Use of Industrial and Educational Motion Pictures in the YMCA Practical Program*, 12.


[25] *Use of Industrial and Educational Motion Pictures in the YMCA Practical Program*, 2.

[26] *Use of Industrial and Educational Motion Pictures in the YMCA Practical Program*, 8.


[30] The constitution of this interpersonal sphere as a series of communicative practices may be one of the most important effects of the YMCA's social welfare programs; see Zornitsa D. Keremidchieva, “Making Citizens From Scratch: Americanization, Communication and the YMCA” (paper presented at the Department of Communication Studies, Wednesday Noon Research, University of Minnesota, 15 October 2003), 8–9.


[35] *Use of Industrial and Educational Motion Pictures in the YMCA Practical Program*, 10.

[36] *Use of Industrial and Educational Motion Pictures in the YMCA Practical Program*, 10.


[45] *Use of Industrial and Educational Motion Pictures in the YMCA Practical Programs*, 6.
[50] *Use of Industrial and Educational Motion Pictures in the YMCA Practical Program*, 4.
[51] *Use of Industrial and Educational Motion Pictures in the YMCA Practical Program*, 13.
[52] *Use of Industrial and Educational Motion Pictures in the YMCA Practical Program*, 20.
[53] *Use of Industrial and Educational Motion Pictures in the YMCA Practical Programs*, 7.
[54] *Motion Pictures and Working Men*, 23.
[60] *Use of Industrial and Educational Motion Pictures*, 3.

For a first-class book on the ideological mystifications of the market rhetoric underwriting the neo-conservative cultural critique of the welfare state, see James Aune, Selling the Free Market: The Rhetoric of Economic Correctness (New York: Guilford, 2001).

For a discussion of postmodernism as a shift from the formal to the real subsumption of social life to the logics of capital, see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000). The “post-modernization of pastoral power” is my concept; it is a corollary to what they refer to as the material ontology of bio-political production.
