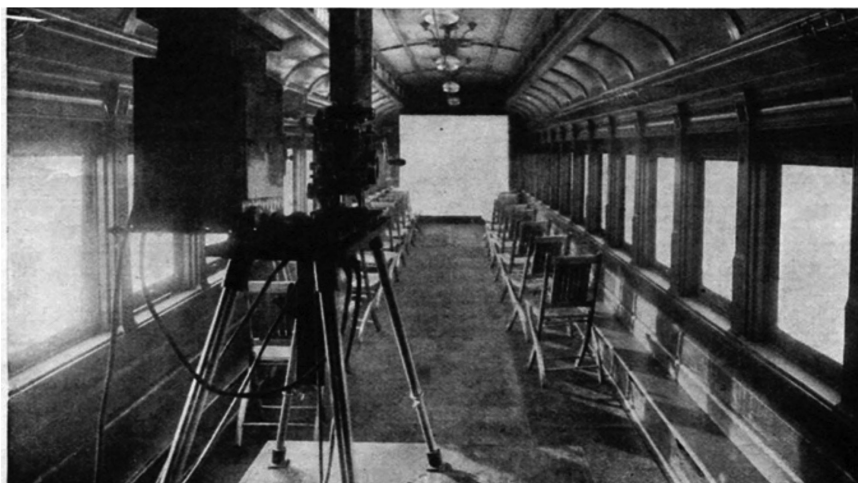


Targeted Audiences

A photograph from *Photoplay*, printed in an issue from September 1915 that was otherwise entirely devoted to the movies, shows a striking instance of multi-sited cinema: a train car designed and outfitted by the Pennsylvania Railroad for the purposes of screening moving pictures. A similar “moving picture car” drew the attention of *Scientific American* (August 1915), but here the seats are filled with “railroad men” watching “motion pictures illustrating unsafe practices” (fig. 4.1).¹ Conducted in a repurposed space, this screening brought together a readily identifiable, homogenous audience composed of New York Central Railway employees, whose attendance was no doubt compulsory. It was, in other words, a *targeted* screening, aimed at a specific audience rather than at any and all theatergoing customers willing, able, and allowed to purchase a ticket. Not surprisingly, given the vast number of sponsors, sites, and uses of cinema, non-theatrical screenings ran the gamut in this regard, arranged for members of a chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy, affiliates of an engineer society, and leaders of the national African American community, as well as for attendees at a regional medical conference, workers at a particular factory, female residents of small towns interested in corset fitting, legislators in formal session, and on and on.

Sponsored cinema, put to a variety of purposes and utilizing a range of screening sites, aimed in almost all cases at reaching discrete, circumscribed audiences—also a goal of at least some early twentieth-century advertisers and magazine publishers, not to mention a host of mediamakers through the rest of the century and beyond. In contrast, during the 1910s, the movies in the US were commonly associated with what was imagined or believed to be—for better or worse—an enormous, inclusive, national audience cycling daily through thousands of theaters. This vision of a public numbering in the millions regularly attending the movies figured in claims about the status of the film business as one of America’s leading industries and in concerns about the menace that it posed. The supposedly



This is the moving picture car of the Pittsburgh division on the Pennsylvania railroad. It is the railroad man's school house, and is equipped with projector and films to show the operation of railroad signal apparatus. C. L. Harrod, of the signal department, suggested the innovation.



Showing railroad men motion pictures illustrating unsafe practices.

FIGURE 4.1. Railway car as screening site: *Photoplay*, September 1915 (top), and *Scientific American*, August 1915 (bottom).

mass popularity and patronage of the movies has long remained central in popular accounts of Hollywood's rise and decline.

In this chapter I examine the distinction between these two ways of addressing, constituting, and configuring audiences, as articulated in arguments concerning the censorship of moving pictures and as played out on the ground in specific exhibition practices. Rather than catalogue or categorize the many audiences of sponsored, multi-sited cinema, I will examine the parameters and broader implications of this widespread practice during the 1910s by focusing on several examples, including the theatrical and non-theatrical screening of the most profitable, highly publicized, and actively resisted film from the period, D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). My major case study will be the extensive efforts of the National Association of Manufacturers to reach various audiences with its "industrial betterment" campaign. Using moving pictures to address, constitute, reaffirm, and capitalize on a plurality of differently configured, delimited, distinctive audiences reflected and helped create in the 1910s a particular version of America as diverse and divisible—quite unlike the purportedly homogenizing effect of the movies as mass entertainment.

THE MOVIES ARE IN THE REACH OF ALL

In November 1915, an article in *Photoplay* announced what by this date might have seemed to be a truism about the miraculous but entirely explicable popularity of the movies in America:

A few years ago we classed motion picture ventures along with circuses and side-shows. Few of us would have for a moment dreamed that in 1915 there would be over 20,000 motion picture theaters in our country alone, amusing millions of fans every day. This phenomenal development has come about, not so much because of the judgment of the men in the game and their careful planning, but because the business is basic . . . movies supply a natural demand and give value at a low price . . . the Movies are in the reach of all. Any business that is founded on dimes and nickels and a natural demand for play is bound to succeed.²

This ostensibly airtight connection between personal demand and marketplace supply meant that "all" Americans could elect to go to a moving picture theater and buy an inexpensive ticket that afforded them an hour or two of access to the individual and social experience of moviegoing. The result, reasoned the "photoplay philosopher" in *Motion Picture Story Magazine* in 1912, was an unprecedented "intermingling" that under other circumstances might have seemed a threat to social stability: "Usually, every amusement attracts a single class of patrons, and we do not find bootblacks intermingling with bankers, and millionaires with paupers; but the photoplay seems to be equally interesting to rich and poor, intellectual and unintellectual, black and white, young and old. Not only this, so fascinating

is the Motion Picture that the rich and the educated are willing to rub elbows with the very lowliest in order to enjoy themselves at this wonderful place—the photoshow.”³

This vision—more utopic than dystopic—of the movie theater as a unique space that attracted and brought together Americans across class, race, education, and occupational differences was in part grounded in the mundane, regularized policies driving theatrical film exhibition, whether in an urban neighborhood or in a small college town, like Bloomington, Indiana, whose population in the mid-1910s was around ten thousand. During 1915, two moving picture theaters with the same ownership were situated right off Bloomington’s town square: the Princess (opened in 1913 and seating 913) and the Harris-Grand Opera House (opened in 1907 and seating 1,210). Both venues advertised daily changing, multi-film programs, frequently offered serials, and increasingly booked feature films. The Harris-Grand also regularly included a vaudeville act on its bill and sometimes hosted a touring stage production.

The competition for these theaters came from Bloomington’s other, much more atypical picture show, the Union Theater (sometimes called the Union Photo Play Theater), housed inside the student union building on the campus of Indiana University (which then enrolled approximately 1,500 students).⁴ An editorial in the *Indiana Daily Student* boasted—and may have been correct in claiming—that “this movie theater is the only one of its kind in the country. There is no other college or university that has established a moving picture show on the campus which is used purely for purposes of entertainment.”⁵ Scheduling screenings on Wednesday and Friday evenings, the Union Theater highlighted its feature film offerings from Paramount and George Kleine, presented with musical accompaniment by a three-piece “orchestra” (piano-violin-flute or piano-saxophone-drums). While definitely aimed at students and operated with the approval of and on the grounds of Indiana University, the Union Theater (like the Princess and the Harris-Grand) also regularly advertised its programs in local newspapers as it sought broader patronage from the community at large (fig. 4.2). I have found no evidence that any screenings in 1915 at this on-campus site were offered solely for students or otherwise explicitly restricted to certain patrons.

In fact, only once during 1915 did any of Bloomington’s movie theaters explicitly restrict attendance and thereby target a particular group of spectators. In line with the national advertising campaign I discussed in chapter 2, the local shop that sold Gossard corsets rented the Princess Theater and arranged a special ticketed but free 2:00 p.m. screening “for ladies only.”⁶ While the widespread implementation of Gossard’s marketing strategy points to the potential for movie theaters to serve as multi-use venues, the ladies-only matinee staged in Bloomington also stands as an exception that proves a more general rule: profit-minded film exhibitors sought to fill the seats of their theaters, day-in and day-out by not restricting attendance, thereby inviting everyone and anyone to buy a ticket of admission and take a seat

Announcement !!

UNION

PHOTOPLAY THEATRE

ON THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS
STUDENT BUILDING

- ☐ We extend to all the new students and to our patrons a hearty invitation to our first production this season.
- ☐ The Union Photoplay Theatre is maintained by the Indiana Union, an organization to which every man in the University belongs.
- ☐ The Program is exclusively Paramount, the very last word in high class photoplays, featuring such stars as Mary Pickford, Marguerite Clark, Blanch Sweet, Geraldine Farrar, Pauline Frederick, John Barrymore, Carlyle Blackwell, Myrtle Stedman, Maude Allen and Hobart Bosworth.
- ☐ Every Cent of the Net Profits goes directly into the Students' Loan Fund of Indiana University.
- ☐ These High Class Productions, which show regularly for twenty-five and fifty cents, will always be shown at this theatre for ten cents.

Paramount Pictures can only be seen at the University Picture Show

SPECIAL MUSIC
EXPERT PROJECTION
COURTEOUS TREATMENT
APPROVED BY ALL THE FACULTY

FIGURE 4.2. Announcement for Union Photoplay Theatre, 1915.

with other moviegoers. In practice, this industry-wide business policy might conceivably have allowed for the sort of “intermingled” audience described in *Motion Picture Story Magazine*, but it was much more likely to result in audiences whose makeup varied in certain ways from show to show, theater to theater, and locality

to locality in terms of a host of variables, including age, sex, race, class, education, religion, ethnicity, regionality, and occupation.⁷

At the same time, there is no question that direct or indirect practices of racial segregation deeply qualified if not fully undercut the egalitarian and communitarian potential of what historian Michael McGerr refers to as the “democratic mingling” resulting from this purportedly open, inviting access to movie theaters.⁸ One result, as the research of Jacqueline Stewart, Allyson Nadia Field, and Cara Caddoo has convincingly demonstrated and as we saw in the discussion of St. Louis in chapter 1, was the emergence of film exhibition in and out of theaters aimed specifically at African Americans living under Jim Crow conditions.⁹ In addition, while hailing “everyone,” the commercial film industry had a considerable investment in what Shelley Stamp has called “cultivating cinema’s female audience,” as evidenced in a range of promotional strategies as well as film production cycles.¹⁰ Exhibitors also cultivated, at various times and in various ways, other segments of the audience, including children, the well-to-do, and people with “refined” tastes.¹¹ Such aims co-existed with policies and pronouncements that beckoned to and boasted of an inclusive, broad, vast, and purportedly unrestricted nationwide cohort of moviegoers that was quite different than the targeted audiences sought and served by cinema outside the movie theater. This distinction also informed the discourse concerning censorship of motion pictures, which often hinged on the role of moving pictures and moviegoing in relation to an emerging mass public and to the type of diversity that mattered in America.

CENSORSHIP AND THE CONGLOMERATED AUDIENCE

In framing its “model ordinance for regulating motion picture theatres” the National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures in 1913 took as a premise that “all motion pictures at present are made for the entire American public, young and old, cultured and ignorant, and while this condition lasts every motion picture performance must be a compromise between the demands of children and adults.”¹² Hence the absolute need, this organization concluded, for laws governing the licensing and “scientific regulation” of theaters.¹³ Rendering moving picture shows safe remained a major concern in 1915, according to the National Board of Censorship’s statement of “Policy and Standards,” because “the fact that the same picture goes to all audiences gives rise to some of the greatest problems of the national board. These audiences are composed of a conglomeration of people, ranging from 3 to 80 years of age, and representing social traditions and educational influences, some modern and some antiquated, some native and some foreign.” Bearing in mind what it called the “diversified public” for moving pictures meant that the board “can not judge films exclusively from the standpoint of children or delicate women or the emotionally morbid or neurasthenic

or of any one class of audience.”¹⁴ According to this line of argument, a form of “compromised” commercial entertainment based on attracting a “conglomeration of people” totaling millions weekly puts already vulnerable children and women at risk, as well as vastly limiting the prospects for what the moving picture might be and do.

A few months later, the indefatigable advocate for federal censorship and critic of the National Board of Censorship, Wilbur F. Crafts, put the matter even more concisely when testifying before the House of Representatives Committee on Education concerning a proposed Federal Motion Picture Commission: “theatrical conditions are such that at present every film goes to the whole American audience—men, women, and children.”¹⁵ “Whole” presumably signified for Crafts not only the presence of male and female viewers of all ages but also the widespread availability of motion pictures geographically and demographically across the United States—that is, the “theatrical” audience understood in terms of an aggregate plurality.

The way these declarations about movie audiences frame American diversity is striking, factoring in age, impressionability, gender, and sex, as well as a broad array of “traditions” and “influences” bespeaking educational level, immigrant status, and even the degree of “modernity”—and, notably, leaving race and religion out of the equation, perhaps because they were so obvious as to be taken for granted.¹⁶ According to the National Board of Censorship and its arch-enemy Crafts, a defining condition of the solidly ensconced motion picture industry was that it made readily available films marketed to and intended to be consumed by “the whole American audience,” an audience not understood as an undifferentiated mass or an imagined nation but rather as a “conglomeration of people,” a “diversified public.” This business strategy was deemed to be a dangerous problem meriting immediate correction because every ticket-buying American was subjected to the same images and stories created by an industry seeking to maximize profits, while not all films were fit for all members of the heterogeneous moviegoing public.¹⁷ Perhaps not surprisingly, Crafts does not mention that this “whole” American audience for mainstream theatrical cinema excluded the indigent, those who had no ready access to movie theaters, and in many cases African Americans and other people of color.

A similar understanding of the moviegoing audience informed the most significant legal case involving film in the 1910s: the US Supreme Court’s far-reaching decision in *Mutual Film Corp. v. Industrial Commission of Ohio* (1915), which refused to grant First Amendment rights to the motion picture and thereby allowed censorship of films at the state level to proceed. While acknowledging that “motion pictures may be used to amuse and instruct in other places than theaters—in churches, for instance, and in Sunday schools and public schools,” the court insisted that state censorship was constitutional and necessary in part because the potentially “insidious” danger motion pictures posed as “spectacle”

and as a “business” venture was rooted in the “audiences they [films] assemble, not of women alone nor of men alone, but together, not of adults only, but of children.”¹⁸ According to the court, by the mid-1910s two incommensurate types of cinema were found in the US: on one hand, theatrical moving pictures indiscriminately drawing adults and children as well as men and women, and, on the other hand, the noncommercial use of the medium in “other places than theaters” that presumably served more narrowly constituted audiences, but warranted little more than an aside as the justices deliberated on the case at hand.

According to the statute upheld by the Supreme Court, Ohio’s state censorship board was tasked with passing judgment on “all motion picture films to be publicly exhibited and displayed in the state of Ohio,” which perhaps assumed a distinction between screenings that were public and those that were not.¹⁹ The ordinance did not specify what might count as non-public exhibition—screenings in a private residence? an office? an asylum? a members-only club? Laws in other states were somewhat more explicit. The statute creating a mechanism for film censorship in Kansas indicated that “films used in institutions of learning are exempt from the provisions of the act.”²⁰ In Pennsylvania, state censorship was legally required for “any place where films, reels, or views are exhibited,” with the notable exception of “exhibition of or use of films, reels or views for purely educational, charitable, fraternal, or religious purpose, by any religious association, fraternal society, library, museum, public school, or private school, institution of learning, or any corporation of the first class.”²¹ These laws codify distinctions based on sponsorship and use, privileging certain purposes and non-theatrical sites. Schools and religious associations and the other specified locations were not required to submit prints and pay fees to the Pennsylvania censorship board, but still had to comply with the state’s criteria for what constituted permissible films.

Like these state censorship boards and the Supreme Court, Crafts and the National Board of Censorship raised the possibility of alternate modes of exhibition. Both assume that the film industry’s approach to its audience is a product of current “theatrical conditions,” a phrase I take to mean how films were then being produced for, distributed to, and exhibited in America’s ubiquitous, commercially run movie theaters. The National Board of Censorship posited that different arrangements were conceivable based on delimiting audiences, notably by creating venues restricted to only adult spectators or arranging screenings explicitly designated for children.²² (On rare occasions—when, for example, scheduling children’s matinees and programs like *Twilight Sleep*—certain theaters did limit audiences in these ways.) Crafts broached another, more ambitious option: a nationally available non-theatrical cinema. Regular screenings in YMCA-style “evening schools” as well as a “nation-wide series of one-night-a-week recreational films in churches and welfare societies” would, Crafts argued, provide Americans with a much-needed alternative to the thousands of storefront nickel-odeons, repurposed live-entertainment theaters, or purpose-built picture palaces

that offered moving pictures as their primary fare—sites that constituted the cornerstone of the increasingly consolidated and, for him, ideologically suspect American commercial film industry.²³ In effect, Crafts was calling for a cinema fully independent of Hollywood, comprised of a network of non-profit, safe, institutionally overseen, familiar sites committed to responsibly and regularly providing mass entertainment as well as instructional moving pictures suitable for the diverse population of the United States. This model of cinema, Crafts suggests, would offer audiences an opportunity to opt out of the dangerously homogenizing experience of moviegoing promoted by the film industry and join a more healthy but equally national, mass audience gathered to view films in churches and YMCAs.

In practice, however, non-theatrical cinema during the 1910s rarely addressed an aggregate audience, a diversified but still conglomerate public such as Crafts described when he testified to Congress. A free screening of entertainment or “recreational” films open to all comers at a community social center or in the auditorium of a metropolitan department store or hosted by merchants in the square of a small Midwestern town might seek to attract a mix of spectators somewhat akin to a nearby moving picture show. “Everybody welcome! Everything free!” declared an advertisement for a YMCA screening of motion pictures about fire and fire prevention in Scranton, Pennsylvania.²⁴

But the desideratum for multi-sited cinema was much likelier to be a more narrowly defined, more homogeneous audience, linked by one or more variables, including sex and age, but also occupation, race, religion, educational level, social class, place of birth, current residence, union or club membership, leisure-time interests, consumer habits, political affiliation, and so on. If not unlimited, the possibilities for how particular audiences could be envisioned and hailed were extraordinarily broad—and at the same time historically specific. Strategies to achieve this end varied. The makeup and the size of the audience could, for instance, be delimited by the location, size, access to, and availability of the site itself—a “ghetto” playground, for example, or a convention hall, classroom, or business office. Admission could be restricted to members and invited guests; even “free” events might require tickets, usually available from a local sponsor. Certain groups could be encouraged, requested, or required to attend.

The purchase of a projector for home use could also be understood as a way to escape the conglomerated theatrical audience. Advertising assured readers of the *Saturday Evening Post* that a Premiere Pathéscope and titles drawn from the Pathéscope rental library offered owner/projectionists the flexibility to satisfy “every taste, every mood, any age and all occasions.” Just as important, this investment made it possible for small invited audiences to enjoy “private” screenings of individualized programming at home in “absolute *safety* and *comfort*,” suggesting that theatrical screenings provided nowhere near enough comfort or safety.²⁵

THE BIRTH OF A NATION IN AND OUT
OF THE THEATER

Beyond the home, the prospects for targeting particular audiences were vast. Consider the perhaps unlikely example of *The Birth of a Nation* during 1915 and 1916, when it was the most widely seen film in theatrical release.²⁶ Griffith's melodramatic paean to white supremacy generated protest from African Americans in city after city, while local newspapers reported favorably on smashed box office records and wildly enthusiastic audiences. The circulation of *The Birth of a Nation* in Indiana was typical. Strident public efforts by community groups and African American leaders to prevent the screening of the film in South Bend, for example, went for naught.²⁷ When *The Birth of a Nation* was booked for a week's run in South Bend's multi-use Oliver Theater, tiered ticket prices were comparable to major touring stage productions, ranging from twenty-five cents for the gallery to two dollars for prime main floor seats—in line with what advertisements insisted were the “highest class theaters” across the state.²⁸ While this pricing suggests that audiences who could afford these tickets were highly stratified by social class, the extensive newspaper coverage and advertising for *The Birth of a Nation* offers no indication that any theater in Indiana explicitly restricted attendance by age or by additional racist efforts beyond the Jim Crow practices already in place. Indeed, a newspaper account from South Bend specifically noted that the “aggregation of spectators” “from pit to dome” became one “audience,” as the film unrolled and “waves of applause swept” the theater.²⁹ Nothing prevented white children from attending, as evidenced in a letter-to-the-editor published in the *Indianapolis News* that took Griffith to task for the historical inaccuracies of *The Birth of a Nation*. The Civil War veteran who voiced this concern argued that the real danger of the film was its effect on the “good sprinkling of children of school age” in the audience when he saw the film in Anderson, Indiana.³⁰ Children might even be actively encouraged to see *The Birth of a Nation*, as was the case in Elwood, Indiana, where, “at the request of parents,” the superintendent of schools announced that he would excuse students who were attending matinee screenings of the film at the city's opera house.³¹ Restrictions based on race could have been implemented in the Midwest more informally, site-by-site, as had been the case in New York City, according to the *New York Age*. This African American newspaper reported that the management of the Liberty Theatre (where the film would have a record-setting engagement) “fearing that irresponsible colored citizens will show their resentment against the exhibition of ‘The Birth of a Nation’ by resorting to violence . . . has adopted a policy of excluding as many colored people as possible. Only a few have been able to secure admittance, and several of them were taken for white.”³²

Advertisements in 1916 claimed that *The Birth of a Nation* had attracted “millions” of spectators in its theatrical engagements, but this film also garnered attention because of a highly restricted, narrowly targeted non-theatrical

screening, when *The Birth of a Nation* was projected on the white wood-paneled wall in the East Room of the White House on February 18, 1915. Described in a syndicated newspaper account as having been “arranged” by President Woodrow Wilson’s daughters “for the benefit of their [recently widowed] father and several members of the Cabinet,” this “private moving picture exhibition” was “presented as a possible means of diverting the President for one evening from the cares of his office.”³³ Griffith and Thomas Dixon (author of *The Clansman*, the source novel for Griffith’s film) were also likely present at this screening, suggesting their stake in facilitating the event.³⁴

The following day Griffith and Dixon attended a second invitation-only exhibition of the film in the nation’s capital, this time under the auspices of the National Press Club, whose membership was limited only to select white male journalists. This organization, which a year earlier had heard Woodrow Wilson deliver a much publicized talk about his experiences as president, had since 1914 occasionally arranged for its members special non-fiction moving picture programs.³⁵ The Press Club screened at its assembly room the Williamson submarine films, Kinemacolor’s *With the Fighting Forces in Europe* (1914), the non-fiction feature *Uncle Sam at Work* (1915), and even what was described as newly shot footage demonstrating “Twilight Sleep,” billed here as the “painless” childbirth method.³⁶ Six months after viewing *The Birth of a Nation*, members of the Press Club, joined by invited Army and Navy officers, would watch a special private screening of Vitagraph’s *The Battle Cry of Peace* (1915), designed to wake up America from its misguided pacifism.³⁷

For *The Birth of a Nation* screening, the Press Club used the spacious Banquet Room on the top floor of the Raleigh Hotel, where some five hundred attendees, including journalists, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, the secretary of the Navy, more than thirty senators, and approximately fifty members of the House of Representatives, were reported to have “cheered and applauded throughout the three hours” required to show the “gigantic picture.”³⁸ For newspapers across the country in February 1915, these two non-theatrical Washington screenings of *The Birth of a Nation* were definitely newsworthy, likely because of where they occurred and who comprised the audience. In hindsight, these invitation-only events appear even more significant, for they indicate the opinion leaders in government and the media that Griffith successfully sought to reach, and they bear witness to the political and racial climate in the United States that proved to be so welcoming to the film despite the protests of African Americans.

There is no telling how many other times *The Birth of a Nation* was screened non-theatrically by the end of 1910s, well before it was subsequently exhibited outside of commercial movie theaters for quite different purposes by, most notably, the KKK and the Museum of Modern Art.³⁹ One additional noteworthy example of what the *New York Sun* called the film’s “private exhibition” occurred in October 1915. While *The Birth of a Nation* continued its Broadway engagement,

Grace Methodist Episcopal church in Manhattan hosted “through the courtesy of D. W. Griffith” a special screening of the film for “a vast audience of Methodist ministers from all over the State.” The *New York Times* reported that “the picture was shown” at this landmark church “in every detail as at the Liberty Theatre, with orchestral accompaniment.”⁴⁰ Which aspect of this event, then, might have most strongly registered as a signifier of non-theatrical difference? That the site was a prominent church with a recent history of screening moving pictures? That the screening was presented thanks to Griffith and under the auspices of the Reverend Christian Reisner, the headline-grabbing minister of Grace Methodist Episcopal and author of *Church Publicity: The Modern Way to Compel Them to Come In* (1913)? That the “vast” audience was “private” and composed of Methodist clergymen?⁴¹ In this case, as in a great many instances of film exhibition beyond the movie theater, there was a marked correlation between site, sponsor, and targeted audience. Box office revenue was surely not the immediate goal, though there was the good possibility that ministers who watched *The Birth of a Nation* at Grace Methodist Episcopal might go on to promote the film directly or indirectly among their parishioners.

THE VARIETIES OF NON-THEATRICAL PRACTICE

Significantly, the private showing of *The Birth of a Nation* at the White House was in this period among the most widely noted and perhaps the most impactful example of a non-theatrical screening aimed a quite specific audience, not least of all because it was referenced by Griffith and defenders of the film, like the attorney who successfully argued that *The Birth of a Nation* should be shown in Boston despite NAACP protests.⁴² This targeted screening was, however, no more typical than any of the other examples introduced throughout this book. The audiences targeted in this period were just as varied as the sites of cinema outside the movie theater, and this variety is essential, I propose, for thinking about how non-theatrical cinema was historically put into practice. The following examples drawn from newspaper and trade press accounts begin to suggest the range of audiences gathered in specific sites, on particular occasions, under certain auspices:

- At Footguard Hall, the armory in Hartford, Connecticut, moving pictures shot at the Aetna Life Insurance Company’s home office (in Hartford) were shown as part of the annual social meeting of the Aetna Life Club, “composed of the clerks, officers, and agents” of the company.⁴³
- The annual dinner for employees of the Dover Press, an event hosted by the company at its offices in Fall River, Massachusetts, included “grand opera and tango music” on a phonograph during the meal; after dinner, “an hour and a half was then devoted to four reels of motion pictures describing the process of paper making from the winter lumbering in Maine to the completed stock in the store room at the factory.”⁴⁴

- In Charlotte, North Carolina, the local chapter of the Patriotic Order of Sons of America at its hall watched “four reels of moving pictures representing ‘Washington at Valley Forge.’” Produced for commercial release by Universal in 1914, this film was described in a notice that ran in a Charlotte newspaper as being “in full keeping with the principles of the Order, helping to inculcate into the minds of those present the one great principle that the Order stands for, that is, patriotism. These pictures were enjoyed to the fullest by all present.”⁴⁵
- In an attempt to “increase [student] interest in the Corn, Pig, Canning, and Poultry Clubs,” the Junior Extension and Home Economics Department of Louisiana State University sent its “automobile motion picture machine” during three days in November 1915 to eight public schools in Monroe, Louisiana, where students saw moving pictures as part of a program that included stereopticon slides, a lecture, and a demonstration of up-to-date canning methods.⁴⁶
- At the David Rankin School of Mechanical Trades in St. Louis, Missouri, the annual meeting of the city’s Foundrymen’s Club featured a screening of *From Mine to Molder*, a film that was produced in Indianapolis and sponsored by the iron and steel company, Roger, Brown & Co. A representative of this company provided a “lecture on the pictures.”⁴⁷
- “Nearly 100 bankers, brokers and selling agents” from New York City and Boston touring the Bigelow-Hartford Carpet Company headquarters in Thompsonville, Connecticut watched at one of the company’s mills a “special film of the help at work.”⁴⁸
- *The Silent Plea* (1915), a three-reel Vitagraph film dramatizing the tribulations of a widow whose two young children suffer dire consequences after they are taken from her and deposited in an orphan asylum, was screened at the conclusion of hearings concerning “widowed mothers’ pensions” being held by the New York State Senate Judiciary Committee and Assembly Social Welfare Committee in Albany, New York. The audience included legislators and “representatives of many charitable, reform, church and settlement organizations.” “Not a few legislators and spectators were moved to tears,” reported the *New York Sun*. Vitagraph promoted this film as having been produced “in co-operation” with a representative of the New York State Commission for the Relief of Widowed Mothers. *Moving Picture World* called this screening of *The Silent Plea* “an event we had earnestly hoped for”—delivering to this influential audience an impassioned “plea for widowed mothers” that was, in addition, a demonstration of the “screen’s possibilities for good.”⁴⁹
- In Cincinnati, at the Monday night meeting of the Ben Franklin Club, composed of the city’s printers, club members watched moving pictures detailing “the process of paper making, from the cutting of the logs to the operations at the pulp mill, and thence through the mills to the completion of various grades of paper. The pictures were supplied by one of the larger paper concerns near Cincinnati.”⁵⁰

- H. L. Brownell, the Safety Inspector of the Chicago Railways Company, screened thirty to forty slides and three reels of motion pictures depicting “almost every kind of street car and automobile accident” as part of his presentation to experts attending two sessions, on “Education” and on “Fire Prevention,” of the Second Safety Congress at the National Conference for Industrial Safety held at New York City’s Hotel McAlpin in conjunction with a meeting of the Association of Iron and Steel Electrical Engineers. Moving pictures were also used by other speakers discussing, for example, the design and utility of fire escapes.⁵¹
- The program at the widely publicized conventions of the Laymen’s Missionary Movement of the Southern Presbyterian Church held in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Dallas, Texas, in February 1916 featured a “demonstration in moving pictures of missionary education in the Orient.” This footage was shot during an official tour of Asia by the general chairman of this organization and included what the *Montgomery [AL] Advertiser* called “a wonderful display of stirring scenes in China, Japan, and Korea, the first moving-picture of missionaries at work. . . . Doctors in hospitals operating, athletes in action, and the ‘Burden Bearers’ of the East in vivid and real pictures.” The convention also scheduled a presentation by the secretary of the Missionary Education Movement, entitled, “The Possibility of Moving Pictures in Missionary Education.” Attendance of committed Presbyterian men purportedly topped two thousand at each of the conventions.⁵²

Beyond pointing to the varieties of non-theatrical cinema, these examples indicate that how and why certain audiences were targeted could depend on the aims of sponsors, follow directly from the uses to which moving pictures were being put, and/or be a consequence of where films were screened. Drawing from this admittedly small sample we can formulate a number of questions that open up broader lines of inquiry concerning the practice of targeted screenings, particularly in contrast to theatrical exhibition:

- **Who attended?** The number of spectators at non-theatrical events could vary considerably, and audiences could be constituted according to a host of different criteria, including economic or political status, place of employment, trade or occupation, and/or shared values (like nativist patriotism or a commitment to Protestant missionary efforts). Did contemporary accounts of the screenings offer information about the size and the makeup of the audience? To what extent did the site and occasion dictate the constitution of the audience? To what degree and by what means was attendance restricted?
- **Why did audiences attend?** Was attendance mandatory, required, expected, or optional? Did attendance signify commitment, affiliation, allegiance, obligation? Was attendance a condition of employment or an opportunity for developing greater expertise? Were people gathered solely or primarily to see

moving pictures? The answers to these questions would differ for a convention as compared with an event featuring moving pictures organized by an employer, like the Dover Press or the New York Central Railroad, or compared with the screening of a sponsored industrial film during a regularly scheduled meeting of a group like the Ben Franklin Club.⁵³

- **If the reason for exhibiting films was not to generate box office revenue, then what motivated targeted screenings?** What were the professed or implied aims of the sponsor in these screenings, particularly when the events were unrelated to the marketing of products like corsets, automobiles, or cash registers to potential consumers? Providing useful, relevant, and/or simply interesting information was a common rationale that could in practice subtend quite different goals, such as when *The Silent Plea* was screened in an attempt to influence legislators debating the social issue that was dramatized in this film or when *Washington at Valley Forge* was screened as a way of “inculcating” the values of the Patriotic Order of Sons of America.
- **Was the screening part of a broader campaign?** Singular events that included moving pictures were quite different than orchestrated campaigns aiming to reach audiences across a number of different sites. For example, newspapers reported that the statewide tour by Louisiana State University Extension Service’s mobile moving picture car in 1915 “visited 89 schools in twelve parishes and rendered programs with the auto-stereopticon and moving picture machine to an estimated attendance of 15,550 school children, school patrons and farmers.”⁵⁴ The moving pictures screened at the conventions of the Laymen’s Missionary Movement of the Southern Presbyterian Church were planned to be widely distributed as self-styled “propaganda,” with the goal of reaching “straight down into the normal work and life of every congregation,” beginning with 3,000 Presbyterian churches in the South and expanding to “all [Protestant] denominations.”⁵⁵ The moving pictures and slides Brownell screened at the Second Safety Congress had already been used, he declared, for “twelve exhibitions in the city parks of Chicago” that reached “at least fifty thousand people,” with plans to “give these exhibitions in the three hundred schools in the city of Chicago, as fast as we can give them.”⁵⁶
- **Were films shown to a particular non-theatrical audience repurposable for differently configured audiences?** The moving pictures screened at the company-sponsored social event for employees of the Aetna Life Insurance Company—and perhaps also the “film of the help at work” shown to the representatives of financial institutions as part of their tour of the Bigelow-Hartford factory—were most likely not intended to have broader utility. Certain of the other titles mentioned above circulated much more widely, in and out of the moving picture theater. *Washington at Valley Forge*, for instance, was produced by Universal in 1914, exhibited in theaters nationwide, and subsequently screened non-theatrically for audiences at high schools

and YMCAs as well as the Charlotte, North Carolina, chapter of the Patriotic Order of Sons of America.⁵⁷ An industrial like *From Mine to Molder* was designed to have a long non-theatrical shelf-life during which it eventually reached a range of audiences, from attendees at the American Foundrymen's Association's 1912 national convention to the Engineer's Club of Plainview, New Jersey, and public school pupils in Buffalo, New York in 1924.⁵⁸

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS: MOTION PICTURES FOR INDUSTRIAL BETTERMENT

The extensive, well-publicized deployment of film by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) offers a notable example of how a sponsor sought to maximize the utility of its moving pictures by targeting a range of specific audiences. Founded in 1895, this trade association "became known," in historian Jennifer A. Delton's words, "for its staunch, often extreme conservatism" as it lobbied to promote the interests of "industrial capitalism" and used its periodical, *American Industries: The Manufacturers' Magazine*, to attack organized labor and oppose all manner of government "interference" with business.⁵⁹ At the same time, indicative of what Delton claims were the association's "progressive, modernizing" reform efforts, NAM positioned itself as the champion of state-funded vocational education and greater safety in the workplace—keys to achieving what it called "industrial betterment." Offered as a generous public service, NAM's initiatives in the name of this "common cause" exemplify the increasing role in American politics of special interest groups,⁶⁰ while also constituting a well-orchestrated public relations effort, undertaken in part to demonstrate the association's concern for the worker and his/her family, even as NAM's spokesmen attacked unionization, demonized labor leaders, and railed against the minimum wage.⁶¹

Beginning in 1912, visual media played an important role in NAM's efforts on behalf of industrial betterment, through the stereopticon slides it circulated and its sponsorship of three films made "in co-operation" with the Edison Company: *The Workman's Lesson* (released July 5, 1912), *The Crime of Carelessness* (released December 30, 1912), and *The Man He Might Have Been* (released January 20, 1913).⁶² NAM also promoted and distributed the Thanhouser production, *An American in the Making* (released April 22, 1913), a paean to the successful Americanization of an immigrant peasant thanks in part to well-devised industrial safety practices.⁶³ An intertitle identifies *An American in the Making* as having been "Produced under the direction of the Committee of Safety of the United States Steel Corporation"; NAM's promotional material claims that US Steel had "prepared" this film for NAM.⁶⁴

NAM's involvement was directly acknowledged as well in the films that Edison produced for the organization. The title card of *The Workman's Lesson*, for example, identifies this one-reel "drama" as having been "Produced in Co-operation with

Co-operation in Industrial Betterment

A Moving Picture Entertainment under the Auspices
of the National Association of Manufacturers

ACCIDENT PREVENTION

FIRE PREVENTION

INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

Brief Addresses by Experts

"THE WORKMAN'S LESSON"

"**T**HE Workman's Lesson" unfolds a story that bears out the old saying, "It's hard to teach an old dog new tricks." Old Wenzel, who works in the machine shop of a big plant lives in a nearby cottage with his daughter Lischen. A young Italian, Bokko, who is out of work, passes the Wenzel cottage and stops to pluck a flower from the flower bed.

in the safety device that covers the chuck, though old Wenzel snorts with contempt for it.

The acquaintance between Bokko and Lischen ripens to love. They become betrothed. Then, one day in the shop, Bokko, influenced by Wenzel's contempt, leaves the safety device open. There is an accident; his arm is badly mangled. Old Wenzel blames himself, realizing that he was the one who led Bokko into carelessness.

Upon Bokko's discharge from the hospital he



The foreman explains the safety guard and shows the danger of not using it.

Lischen appears to protest and the two become acquainted. As a result, Bokko comes again after Wenzel returns from work and the latter agrees to try to help him to get a job.

Bokko, with Wenzel's help secures the job and is put to work at a big lathe. He is interested



Back from the hospital after the accident. The lesson of the empty coat sleeve.

at once repairs to the home of his sweetheart, and while greeting her, old Wenzel sees the empty sleeve hanging at Bokko's side and breaks down. But Bokko, throwing back his coat, discloses his bandaged but now nearly normal arm. Old Wenzel has been taught an impressive lesson.

Reproduction of page of program of an Industrial Betterment Meeting, given by
National Association of Manufacturers.

FIGURE 4.3. *The Workman's Lesson*, NAM pamphlet, 1913.

the National Association of Manufacturers." This connection was consistently noted in Edison's trade magazine copy and in newspaper ads run by exhibitors, as if the involvement of NAM somehow increased the credibility, topicality, and

value of *The Workman's Lesson* as a timely film both dramatic and informative. Promotional material for *The Workman's Lesson* appearing in newspapers like the *Times-Democrat [New Orleans]* claimed that "besides being an interesting feature story, the picture shows how thousands of lives and limbs can be saved by the intelligent use of safety appliances in manufacturing plants and it is to help along the good work that the great Edison film has been made."⁶⁵ The story that (melo)dramatizes this instruction focuses on a small family unit—a perky stay-at-home daughter and her elderly father, a factory worker who helps a young man get hired at the factory and encourages him to disregard the "new-fangled safety devices" that the foreman demonstrates on the shop floor. After he is betrothed to the daughter, an accident almost costs the young man his arm and the distraught older worker must face the consequences of not relying on modern safeguards and ignoring management's advice when it comes to industrial safety. The unambiguous message of *The Workman's Lesson* was entirely consistent with the information provided by NAM concerning "Accident Prevention and Industrial Insurance" in each issue of *American Industries*.

NAM regularly boasted that *The Workman's Lesson* had been shown in "fully 7,500 motion picture theaters all over the country"—a claim impossible to verify, though newspaper advertisements indicate this film was widely screened in theaters as part of standard multi-film programs through December 1912, and it continued to appear sporadically in theaters well into 1914.⁶⁶ Non-theatrical screenings for more delimited (though often quite large) audiences began only a few months after Edison released *The Workman's Lesson* in July 1912. This film was exhibited in October 1912, for example, at the Union Safety First meeting at Convention Hall in Kansas City, Missouri, with attendance restricted to only "employees of thirteen railroad lines centering in Kansas City, who are residents in the Kansas City district, together with their families." The *Wall Street Journal* claimed the meeting drew twelve thousand "railroad men, including shop workers, switchmen, firemen, engineers, general managers, vice-presidents and presidents."⁶⁷ Shown during the Saturday evening time slot, *The Workman's Lesson* and an instructional reel entitled *Right and Wrong Way to Do Train and Shop Work* were part of a program that included a stereopticon lecture and talks by representatives of all the participating railroads.⁶⁸ The following year the general safety committee of Carnegie Steel sponsored some twenty-five programs for its employees in Pennsylvania and Ohio that included musical performances as well as *The Workmen's Lesson* and stereopticon lectures detailing "dangerous" practices and safety measures initiated by the company. Held at public venues like the opera house in New Castle and Carnegie Music Hall in Pittsburgh, these events could be tailored to the individual locality. In New Castle, for example, lectures and screenings on safety were paired with performances by an Irish dialect comedian and a "colored quintette." In Pittsburgh, "scenes in the mills in the Pittsburgh district, which are noted for their orderliness, brought applause from the workers, as did pictures of many Carnegie Steel Company veterans."⁶⁹ A more narrowly constituted audience was present when *The*

Worker's Lesson was shown in November 1912—along with a stereopticon lecture by a “safety engineer” from NAM—to more than five hundred employees of the Underwood Typewriter Company at a specially arranged evening meeting held in the dining room of the company’s factory in Hartford, Connecticut.⁷⁰

Perhaps encouraged by the distribution of *The Workman's Lesson*, NAM “co-operated” with (or simply hired) Edison to produce two additional films: *The Crime of Carelessness*, in which a fire caused by human error destroys a factory and almost wrecks the lives of a betrothed couple who work there because the husband-to-be disregards no-smoking rules and the factory owner fails to maintain open fire exits (and perhaps also because a safety inspector doesn’t sufficiently take the owner to task for violations);⁷¹ and *The Man He Might Have Been*, in which—according to the synopsis circulated by Edison and NAM—a boy “with a longing for knowledge and the better things of life which industrial education brings” is prevented by his father from pursuing this dream and set on the downward path to a “fruitless life” in which “hopelessness” leads to ill-fated “recklessness.”⁷²

Like *The Workmen's Lesson*, *The Man He Might Have Been* and, particularly, *The Crime of Carelessness* were distributed as part of Edison’s regular theatrical output and slotted into a variety of multi-reel programs.⁷³ Thus during its first months in distribution during 1913, *The Crime of Carelessness*, bearing the imprimatur of NAM and sometimes promoted as an “educational picture everyone should see,” was booked for one or two days at movie theaters, where it was paired with, for example, three comedies and “plenty of new music” (in Wilmington, North Carolina) or with a comic bicycle act, the first episode of *Pathé Weekly*, and a one-reel action melodrama set on the Mexican border (in Hinton, West Virginia).⁷⁴ While advertisements indicate that *The Crime of Carelessness* continued to be exhibited theatrically as late as February 1915,⁷⁵ NAM also aimed for wide circulation of the film to targeted audiences outside of moving picture theaters, a practice begun six weeks after its theatrical release, when *The Crime of Carelessness* was shown at a hotel in Indianapolis as part of the annual dinner of the Manufacturers’ Bureau of Indiana.⁷⁶

For NAM, “industrial advancement through motion pictures” that “spread the gospel of industrial conservatism” would benefit employees and employers alike by “wakening the public conscience and the public intelligence.”⁷⁷ Plans outlined in *American Industries* initially called for NAM to serve as a “clearing house for expert advice” and to “accumulate a circulating educational library of motion picture films and machines for the benefit of our members” or to create a special train that would carry photographs and displays and be equipped with a “motion picture car” capable of seating one hundred.⁷⁸ In fact, at a meeting in July 1912, NAM’s board of directors approved a motion to create the “Industrial Betterment Special”—a “train of six cars . . . devoted to moving pictures and exhibits of safety appliances, industrial education, fire prevention and export trade.”⁷⁹ Newspapers

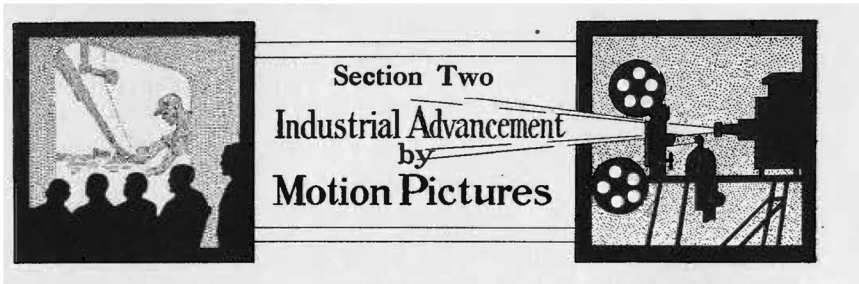


FIGURE 4.4. *Industrial Betterment Activities of the National Association of Manufacturers*, 1913.

carried the story of this novel “Industrial Gospel train,” repeating information provided by *American Industries*, but I have found no evidence that this plan was actually put into practice.⁸⁰

A 1913 pamphlet entitled *Industrial Betterment Activities* laid out the strategy that NAM ultimately adopted for its campaign, which hinged on making available certain resources “freely and without cost beyond incidental expense . . . to organizations of employers and workmen alike, to boards of trade, chamber of commerce, etc. for the better understanding of industrial conditions, for the saving of life and energy and for the improvement of the welfare of the nation.”⁸¹ Interested parties could contact any of the qualified speakers—members of safety committees, corporate officers, and state officials—whom NAM had identified and listed in the pamphlet. Also available was a library of 516 Accident Prevention Lantern Slides that were designed to be used with illustrated lectures (as well as other slide sets from International Harvester and Kodak), and a portable photograph exhibit covering safety devices.⁸² Central to NAM’s efforts were *The Crime of Carelessness*, *The Workman’s Lesson*, *The Man He Might Have Been*, and *An American in the Making*, which were frequently packaged together, as when they were screened at the 1913 meeting of the American Pulp and Paper Association at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City or at a special “Industrial Betterment Conference” that attracted “several hundred employees of Detroit manufactories.”⁸³

At its annual gathering the following year, NAM’s president boasted that

[b]y means of lectures, pamphlets, addresses; by means of moving pictures depicting the consequences of carelessness in mechanical industry, the dangers of negligence in the matter of fire prevention, the value of industrial education, and other subjects, we have been able to spread the gospel of industrial responsibility resting upon both employer and employee. We have been able to reach tens of thousands of young men and young women in all parts of the United States, and we have impressed them by the remarkable effects of moving pictures with the fundamental principles of self-protection and protection to others, and the results of a higher, individual citizenship. This work we have dedicated to the American people.⁸⁴

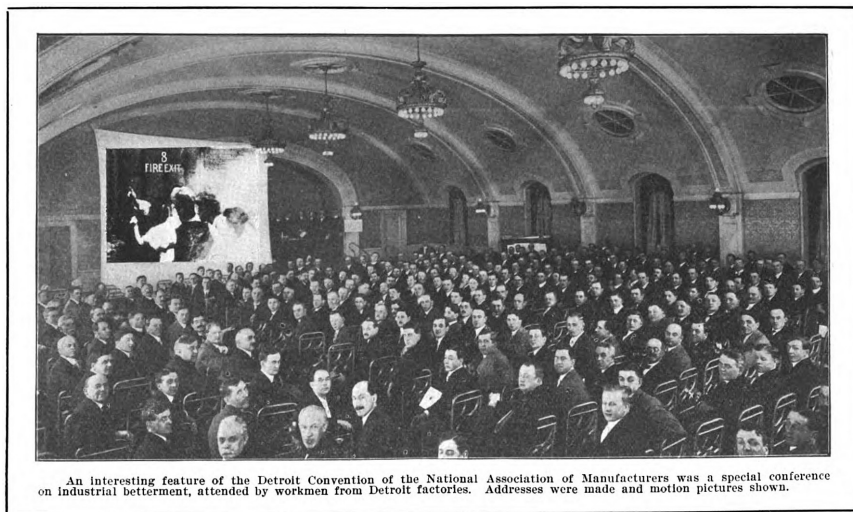


FIGURE 4.5. NAM national convention, *American Industries*, June 1913.

NAM's sponsorship of moving pictures, declared its 1914 annual report, had yielded "extremely satisfactory" results—both in terms of the "lessons" delivered to "thousands of people" and also the "wide publicity of a very desirable kind" generated for the organization.⁸⁵

Industrial Betterment Activities quotes testimonials lauding the effectiveness of NAM's films in venues ranging from schools and churches to YMCAs, municipal social centers, and factories. The pamphlet references screenings attended by, for example: workers from one factory together with their families in Middleton, Ohio; boys and girls at a social center in Des Moines, Iowa; folks living in South Carolina cotton and lumber mill communities; and—in separate screenings—businessmen, male factory workers, and the wives and children of factory workers in Racine, Wisconsin.⁸⁶ The regular reports in *American Industries* trumpeting the demonstrable usefulness of motion pictures in the service of "industrial advancement" indicate that NAM measured the success of its program in terms of the various sites and occasions where its films were exhibited and the different audiences reached, thus encouraging potential local sponsors (including but not limited to individual manufacturers and trade associations) to conceive of screenings as targeted events.

One very common strategy was for a business like the Dupont Powder Company in Hannibal, Missouri, or the Inland Steel Company in Crosby, Minnesota, to arrange private on-site exhibition of NAM films for its employees.⁸⁷ On other occasions, screenings were part of more ambitious events, such as when "between 600 and 700 foremen, superintendents, and owners of factories" gathered for an "industrial betterment meeting," given under the auspices of the Bridgeport

[Connecticut] Manufacturers' Association with the full involvement of NAM personnel.⁸⁸ NAM films reached what were likely more diverse audiences when screened as part of public campaigns like the "Safety First Congress" in Columbus, Ohio, conducted by the State Industrial Commission or when shown at a special event held under the auspices of the Nevada Industrial Safety Association at the premier theater in Reno, Nevada.⁸⁹

An even broader audience had the opportunity to watch NAM's films at what was billed as the first International Exposition of Safety and Sanitation in the US, held in December 1913 under the auspices of the American Museum of Safety in the Grand Central Palace, a major site for exhibitions in midtown Manhattan. Open to the public at large, though catering to people whose work required an up-to-date awareness of sanitation and safety concerns, this exposition attracted, according to *American Industries*, an average daily attendance of 11,300 (2,800 of whom were children), including a "a fair proportion of manufacturers, safety engineers, works superintendents and foremen, and public health officials from various states." Among the prime attractions were "model factories" from Switzerland and Holland, live demonstrations by NYC firemen, and a self-styled "theater" operated by NAM with its motion pictures regularly scheduled four times a day (along with a film from the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company). *American Industries* claimed this theater "was crowded continuously, the average daily attendance being 1,750."⁹⁰

Apart from being made available for events focused directly on "industrial betterment" and workplace safety, NAM's films also were screened during meetings of, for example, the National Exposition of Chemical Industries, the Lehigh Valley [PA] Medical Society, and the Child Welfare League in New York City.⁹¹ This wider circulation increased when these films began to be distributed by the National Safety Council, the YMCA and extension programs of state universities in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, South Dakota, and Kansas.⁹² (In fact, the director of the YMCA's Industrial Motion Picture Bureau would later explain that the work of this important non-theatrical distributor began in earnest in 1914 when, "through the courtesy of the National Association of Manufacturers a nucleus of three films was secured.")⁹³ However local sponsors might have accessed prints, the broad circulation of the NAM films means the association's Industrial Betterment campaign reached a large number of spectators in a variety of sites that served quite different audiences. Or so it appeared from regular reports in *American Industries*, which noted, for instance, that between January and March 1915, NAM films were screened by Berea College in rural Kentucky, Sing Sing penitentiary, Park Presbyterian church in Newark, New Jersey, Commonwealth Edison Company in Chicago, the Massachusetts Employees Insurance Association, and the Chamber of Commerce in South Bend, Indiana.⁹⁴

While NAM initially sought to orchestrate events showcasing Industrial Betterment by making available prepared slide sets, motion pictures, and a list of

endorsed speakers, local sponsors could have considerable leeway in arranging screenings and addressing specific audiences. For example, when the men's club of the Congregational Church in St. Joseph, Michigan (population around 6,500) in March 1915 screened *The Workman's Lesson* as part of a program procured through the National Safety Council, this NAM title was paired with *The Hazards of Trainmen* (a film produced by the Rock Island Railroad company). A Victrola provided musical accompaniment and local speakers offered introductory remarks and described the activities of the National Safety Council. With a vote on prohibition fast approaching in St. Joseph, the men's club took advantage of the opportunity to project "a number of 'dry' [pro-prohibition] slides." The audience for this event was limited to men and boys (no doubt only white males—this did not need to be specified in announcements), with "men employed in the industries of the city specially invited" and seating in the balcony of the church auditorium set aside for forty "newsboys." The total attendance was 162.⁹⁵

Arranged as a form of outreach and public service (and perhaps membership recruitment) by the men's club at the Congregational church in St. Joseph, this event well illustrates some of the factors involved when targeted cinema was put into practice in the 1910s. As was almost always the case with this type of screening, unfortunately, newspaper accounts do not mention the reception of the films by the 162 spectators seated in the pews. But there is much we can know about this multiple-media event that combined moving pictures with slides, recorded music, and live speeches, starting with the basic point that neither *The Workman's Lesson* nor *The Hazards of Trainmen* was produced directly or exclusively for use in Congregational churches or for screening to newsboys or to working-class men in a mid-sized American city. NAM's film was made to be widely exhibited, and two years after Edison initially released *The Workman's Lesson* for theaters, the film was still readily accessible for use by a church group in a small city in the upper Midwest. Further, the exhibition of these two films in St. Joseph required that this particular congregation was willing and capable of hosting a screening, allowing for a site-specific event that was multiply sponsored—by the National Association of Manufacturers and the Rock Island Railroad, by the National Safety Council, and by the men's club of St. Joseph's Congregational Church. The intended audience for this event was quite specifically demarcated, explicitly restricted to men and boys (and no doubt limited de facto by race), identified by occupation and class, invited to attend, and upon arrival segregated by age. Further, we can assume that the Men's Club judged that the people it gathered at the church would benefit from the messages the program offered about workplace safety, responsible employee behavior, and the need to support prohibition. Beyond the fact that there was a projector casting moving pictures onto some sort of reflective surface, this event at St. Joseph's Congregational Church shared nothing significant with film exhibition as understood and daily practiced at any movie theater in the vicinity.

CONCLUSION

That film exhibition beyond the theater very rarely aimed at reaching the movies' mass public but instead targeted a diverse range of distinct audiences—linked by any number of variables—may call to mind the niche marketing and narrowcasting associated with post-network television and digital media many decades later.⁹⁶ A more contemporary analogy to targeted non-theatrical cinema is magazine publishing in the early twentieth century, though non-theatrical screening events were quite different than magazines, most obviously in that the individual, self-paced, private experience of reading a magazine contrasted to the social experience of screenings arranged for people together in one space. Yet this comparison is worth examining, I would argue, especially if we look beyond the handful of high-circulation, nationally available general-interest magazines that have garnered much attention by Richard Ohmann and other scholars as key sources in the history of gender, consumer culture, and corporate capitalism in America.⁹⁷ For unlike *Collier's* and major news weeklies and advertising-driven “magazines for the millions” such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, scores of periodicals in the period were aimed at more narrowly focused readerships. The University of Illinois's digital “Farm, Field, and Fireside Collection,” for example, contains twelve “historically significant” US farm weeklies published in the mid-1910s and that hardly covers all the relevant titles that might fall under this category.⁹⁸ Specialized periodicals such as I have referenced thus far—from *Motion Picture Story Magazine* and *Exhibitors' Times* through *American Motorist*, *Shoe and Leather Facts*, *American Industries*, *School Board Journal*, and *System: A Magazine for Business*—each required a well-defined readership, drawn from an American population that was divisible well beyond the categories deployed in the census.⁹⁹

“Magazines provided an ideal venue for advertisers by offering segmented, self-selected audiences, communities constituted by status-defined tastes and interests,” writes Susan L. Mizruchi, who sees this market logic as indicative of what she terms “American multiculturalism” and the “exceptional diversity of American society.”¹⁰⁰ While Mizruchi gauges diversity in terms of ethnicity and race, Janice A. Radway and Carl F. Kaestle take a broader view, demonstrating in their contribution to the multi-volume *History of the Book in America* that in “the expansion of publishing and reading in the United States” during the late nineteenth into the early decades of the twentieth century, “what emerged in addition to the mass-market newspapers, magazines, and books . . . was a variety of specialized networks for printing, publishing, and circulating material that often were quite focused and had more narrow audiences.”¹⁰¹ Print culture, according to Radway and Kaestle, developed in and responded to a society “pushed and pulled by contradictory pressures that, on the one hand, led to greater centralization and intensified nationalism and, on the other, produced differentiation, specialization, and alternative forms of identification.”¹⁰² We can see some evidence of a similar

“contradictory” pull toward centralization and differentiation in the history of American cinema, evident in the localized business of theatrical film exhibition and, even more, in the many audiences that were gathered and addressed in non-theatrical screenings through the resources and on-the-ground efforts of sponsors.

“Long before the recent attention to demographics,” Rick Altman observes in *Film/Genre*, “the national audience was being carved into a series of overlapping populations, defined not by their ‘primary’ identity as citizens, but by temporary and shared interests or characteristics.” Print media was central to this process as it became “possible for every club, political group and trade union to have its own publication.”¹⁰³ In this increasingly fragmented (and mediated) America, members of the national moviegoing audience, particularly fans, who were not actually co-present at screenings were, Altman argues, able to participate in a self-selected “constellated community” linked by and through commercial film genres. Focusing on audience differentiation based on the “invisible bonds among fans of the same genre,” Altman’s approach overlaps with the argument that Hollywood actively recognized and addressed discrete, identifiable segments of the moviegoing public through production and marketing strategies as well as through distribution practices.¹⁰⁴ Lea Jacobs and Andrea Comiskey, for example, track the circulation of several films through small and large US cities to demonstrate that “the hypothesis of a newly formed ‘mass audience’ for the movies in the 1920s is not tenable. Indeed, the distribution system that took hold in this period was predicated on refined and far-reaching differentiations of the audience.”¹⁰⁵ That Hollywood paid increasing attention to the different sectors of national market and that fan communities (imagined or otherwise) thrived is not incommensurate with claims that movie theaters were billed as being open to everyone and anyone and that in the 1910s the movies attracted and profited from an aggregate, conglomerated audience.

Top-down “differentiations” of the audience such as Jacobs and Comiskey describe in relation to Hollywood were also evident in the decisions by newspaper publishers to craft, in Julia Guarneri’s phrase, “features that explicitly invited women, immigrants, teenagers, and children into their reading audience.”¹⁰⁶ Advertisers encouraged this way of delivering content and therefore capturing certain sectors of the reading public, an approach to audiences at the heart of what has been called “focus” advertising and “market segmentation.” A key statement for this strategy appeared in the *Journal of Marketing* in 1956, but directing advertising toward circumscribed, homogeneous groups of consumers can be traced back to the turn of the century.¹⁰⁷ Pamela Walker Laird, in her history of American advertising and consumer marketing, convincingly argues that forward-thinking advertising agencies saw in magazines the opportunity to “reach people according to their demographics and interests,” as well as by factors such as “geography, ethnicity, or occupation.”¹⁰⁸ Advertising on street cars might hold out the promise of cost-effectively grabbing the attention of “all classes, all the people, all the time,”

but certain textbooks and practitioners in the 1910s insisted on the importance of market segmentation, even while touting branding and trademarks as a way of reaching a general (or mass or national) market (fig. 4.6). John Lee Mahlin, for example, based his 1914 textbook on the notion that “advertising is selling the group,” a task made easier since “we are all fortunate in being members of so many social groups.”¹⁰⁹ The president of the Advertising Men’s League of New York City was more explicit, telling a meeting of the Efficiency Society in 1912 that “the entire public may be separated off in various divisions in different headings. For instance: age—some things are for old people some are for young; sex—some things are for women and not for men; education, wealth, nationality and those other divisions into which we can segregate our public, determine available markets, and then we can definitely approach them by selecting the most directing advertising mediums and get to the seat to be captured.”¹¹⁰


Like the proliferation of specialized periodicals, advertising grounded in the idea of market segmentation offers an analogy (and perhaps a model) for the differentiation of the American populace into any number of more “narrow” and more reachable non-theatrical audiences.¹¹¹ Yet as we have seen, “selling the group” was only one of many uses to which multi-purpose cinema was put. That moving pictures were deployed for varied ends at a wide array of sites in an attempt to reach a host of differently constituted audiences reflects (1) the diversity of a rapidly increasing American population in the early twentieth century, understood in terms not only of race, class, age, and sex, but also occupation, religion, region, taste, avocation, income level, and group affiliation; and (2) sponsors who saw the production, distribution, and/or exhibition of moving pictures as a viable and effective means of identifying, creating, reaffirming, enlarging, serving, influencing, and communicating with the many differently configured audiences in America—schoolchildren visiting a steel plant in Joliet, Illinois, or “poor Jewish immigrant” adults at the Educational Alliance in New York City; professionals gathered at meetings of advertisers or architects or engineers in Louisville, Kentucky; members of the National Mouth Hygiene Association or the Illinois State Medical Society; the “most untidy and demented patients” at the state hospital for the insane in Kankakee, Illinois; or the well-to-do seeking rejuvenation at the Battle Creek [MI] Sanitarium, and on and on.¹¹² Non-theatrical cinema outside the theater operated in and reflected a diverse *and* divisible America.

As we have seen, certain legal, technological, political, and financial factors limited the scope and scale of this other cinema. Yet the range of purposes well beyond direct advertising or corporate public relations to which film might be put, the varied role of sponsors, and the innumerable potential screening sites and occasions all encouraged efforts to deliver moving pictures to a wide array of distinctive, specifiable, delimited audiences. So did the relative lack in the US of centralized church or state mechanisms wielding strong regulatory (and financial) control over the use of moving pictures outside the movie theater. The prospects

YOU CAN TALK TO
ALL CLASSES—
ALL THE PEOPLE
ALL THE TIME
only by using
Street Car Advertising
 "THE GOLDEN ROUTE TO SUCCESS"

And you can talk to **ALL** the people for **LESS** THAN **HALF** it will cost you to talk to **HALF** OF **THE PEOPLE** any other way, or all other ways combined. We mean **JUST THAT**.
 * Read it again—analyze it!
 Street Car Advertising is **SUPREME** as the most **ECONOMICAL** and most **EFFECTIVE** National Advertising Service.

THE WAY
 TO ROMAN CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONAL
 BUYERS
 WITH THE RIGHT VEHICLE
 THE REST IS EASY



THE HEAD OF EVERY ROMAN CATHOLIC SEMINARY, COLLEGE, ACADEMY, SCHOOL, HOSPITAL, HOME AND ASYLUM IN THE UNITED STATES ARE ON TRUTH MAGAZINE'S SUBSCRIPTION LIST. ♦

AUDIT BUREAU OF ♦
 CIRCULATIONS AUDIT
 SUPPLIED ON REQUEST.

JOHN J. O'KEEFE, PRESIDENT
 TRUTH MAGAZINE, INC.
 412 EIGHTH AVE.,
 NEW YORK.

IN ADDITION THERE ARE 70,000 CATHOLIC FAMILIES—A REFINED CULTURED HOME PEOPLE, WHO PAY \$2.75 A YEAR IN ADVANCE FOR TRUTH MAGAZINE ♦

Are You Reaching the Swedes?

The Swedish *population* of the United States is larger than the entire population of the State of Connecticut, almost as large as the State of Kansas; larger than the combined populations of Pittsburgh and St. Louis, almost as large as Philadelphia.

The per capita *purchasing power* of the Swedes stands above the national average, and their mode of living is as far advanced as the average American's. A recent test by question blanks sent to the subscribers of SVENSKA AMERIKANAREN HEMLANDET, brought out the following:

- 53½% own improved farms
- 32½% own homes in towns
- 16½% own rented houses in towns
- 15½% are in business or profession
- 59½% have money in bank or invested
- 45½% have pianos in their homes
- 11½% own automobiles
- 35½% carry \$1,000 or more life insurance
- 25% have children in high school or college

The most effective and least expensive medium by which to reach these people is *their favorite publication*—the one they pay one dollar a year in advance for and read like a letter from home—the one in which they have absolute confidence.

SVENSKA AMERIKANAREN HEMLANDET

*The greatest Swedish
 weekly ever published*

Over 70,000 net paid Circulation

The first weekly publication to respond to the A. B. C. call for circulation statement.

Published Thursdays at 208 N. Fifth Ave., Chicago

FIGURE 4.6. General and targeted advertising, *Judicious Advertising*, December 1911, February 1915, December 1916.

for deploying moving pictures to reach discrete, identifiable audiences must have looked promising, indeed, if one could conceive of individual spectators not as part of the mass audience, the general public, or the conglomerated crowd, but as combinable and recombable into recognizable cohorts constituted through

recruitment or enticement, obligation or mandatory attendance, shared aspirations or casual circumstance, personal investment or acknowledged commonality.

Targeting these many specific audiences was not predominantly undertaken in the service of imposing governance from afar and above, promoting class solidarity, furthering progressive causes, or contributing to what historian Charles F. McGovern argues was a concerted effort to foster “mass consumption” and “unite a nation in a citizenship based on purchasing, entertainment, and display.”¹¹³ Notwithstanding the activity of prominent, powerful sponsors like the National Association of Manufacturers, the American military, and university extension services, the practice of putting useful cinema to use in the 1910s was almost always intermittent and irregular. Once we take into account idiosyncratic events like the church screening for workers and newsboys at the Congregational church in St. Joseph, Michigan, then targeted cinema as a whole looks much more varied, unsystematic, and haphazard than anything that might pass as rigorous, systematic segmentation of the mass audience. Such events cumulatively expanded the range and the presence of moving pictures in the United States without, however, constituting a coherent, recognizable alternative to institutionalized commercial cinema and to the shared, national culture of the movies.¹¹⁴